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The Role of Teacher Competence in Improving the Quality of Learning in Public Elementary Schools

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Abstract

The quality of learning in elementary schools depends heavily on four core teacher competencies: pedagogical, professional, social, and personality. This study aims to identify the specific role of each of these competencies in improving the quality of elementary education. It aims to analyze the role of teacher competencies—pedagogical, professional, social, and personality—in improving the quality of the learning process in elementary schools. This study used a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies in several public elementary schools. It was found that pedagogical competency enables teachers to design learning that is engaging, innovative, and relevant to student characteristics. Professional competency is reflected in mastery of material and the ability to select effective strategies and media. Meanwhile, social and personality competencies play a crucial role in creating harmonious interactions, building emotional closeness, and fostering a positive and conducive learning environment. The overall quality of learning has been shown to be significantly influenced by the integrated application of these four competencies. The quality of learning in elementary schools is significantly influenced by the full integration of teachers' pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competencies. Therefore, improving teacher professionalism through training, mentoring, and continuous evaluation is an essential step to advance the quality of elementary education.

Keywords: teacher competence, pedagogical skills, professional development, learning quality

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INTRODUCTION

Elementary education serves as the primary foundation for the development of students' morals, cognition, and basic skills. In today's rapidly changing educational landscape, particularly in the current technological era, the role of teachers as learning facilitators is vital (Zulkarnaen, 2024). To meet these demands, teachers must master four interrelated competency domains: pedagogical, professional, social, and personality, which collectively determine the quality of their professionalism.

Although the government has launched various initiatives to improve teacher quality in Indonesia, actual results on the ground demonstrate serious challenges. As evidence, data from national-scale evaluations, such as the National Assessment (AN) conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, indicates that elementary school students' literacy and numeracy achievements still fall short of ideal targets. This empirical data highlights the disparity between efforts to improve teacher capacity and actual student learning outcomes.

Theoretically, highly competent teachers are expected to be able to dynamically manage classrooms, integrate technology, and create optimal learning experiences. However, this study identified two major gaps:

1. Practical Application Deficit: There is a real difficulty for many teachers in applying the competency knowledge acquired (e.g. through training) into everyday classroom practice, especially in terms of effective classroom management and the use of digital media.
2. Limited External Support: The implementation of this competency is often hampered by institutional factors such as a lack of technological support facilities, low mastery of digital technology among teachers, and a lack of consistent *support systems* from school management, an area that has not been fully discussed in previous literature.

Therefore, this study aims to go beyond general studies by specifically investigating the implementation mechanisms of the four competencies, identifying specific obstacles faced, and formulating actionable strategies to address these issues.

Based on the gap analysis above, the main focus of this study is: How does the synergistic contribution of teacher competencies (pedagogical, professional, social, and personality) affect the quality of learning in elementary schools, and what strategic steps are needed to optimize the development of these competencies?

The goals to be achieved are:

1. Explaining the implementation and real contribution of the four teacher competencies in teaching and learning activities in elementary schools.
2. Identifying the main obstacles that hinder the optimal implementation of teacher competencies.
3. Developing effective strategic recommendations to maximize the development and application of teacher competencies to improve the quality of basic education.

The strength of this study lies in its comprehensive approach, not only examining teacher competencies in isolation but also analyzing the interaction of all four in addressing modern challenges such as classroom management and technological literacy. The novelty of this research is the provision of a solution framework that focuses on practical and sustainable optimization strategies, providing specific recommendations for institutional policies and teacher professional development programs.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach aimed at in-depth exploration of the role of teacher competence in improving the quality of learning in elementary schools. This approach was chosen because it allowed researchers to directly understand the experiences and teaching practices of teachers in the field. Data collection was conducted through interviews, observations, and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted with teachers and the principal to obtain verbal information, while observations were conducted during teaching and learning activities. Documentation was

obtained from various supporting documents, such as lesson plans (RPP) and student learning evaluation results.

Informants in this study were selected purposively, considering certain criteria, such as having at least three years of teaching experience. The research location was determined based on accessibility and relevance to the topic being studied. The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model from "Miles and Huberman , " which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data accuracy, triangulation was conducted in terms of both data sources and data collection techniques.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This discussion and analysis section extensively presents and interprets research findings that highlight the crucial role of the four pillars of teacher competency, namely pedagogical, professional, personality, and social in the context of improving the quality of learning processes and outcomes at the Elementary School (SD) level. The results of the empirical data analysis are reviewed in depth and linked to the main theoretical framework regarding teacher standards, as mandated by the Republic of Indonesia Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, and outlined in its derivative regulations, Permendiknas No. 16 of 2007. Overall, the findings indicate that comprehensive mastery of these four competency domains has a very positive correlation and synergistic nature towards achieving optimal educational quality.

A. Analysis of the Contribution of Each Competency Pillar to the Quality of Learning

This research successfully dissects how each competency dimension provides specific contributions that accumulate to create superior learning environments and outcomes.

1. Pedagogical Competence as a Direction of Learning Strategy

Pedagogical competence is an essential foundation for educators because it embodies a teacher's fundamental ability to manage the entire spectrum of student learning processes (Rosni, 2021). Findings obtained through classroom observations and qualitative interviews clearly emphasize that teachers with superior pedagogical competence are able to implement a student *-centered learning philosophy* . This implementation is realized through a mechanism of highly detailed adaptation of teaching strategies and methods according to the varying characteristics, potential, and learning needs of each individual student.

Teacher Narrative Quote (G-03): "My learning plans always start from the analysis of the diagnostic assessment results at the beginning of the material cycle. For example, when teaching integers, I realized that there were three different understanding groups in the class. Therefore, I allocated a visual approach through manipulatives for students with average speed, cooperative strategies for groups that require discussion, and independent project-based exploration tasks for students with above-average abilities. This differentiation ensures that the material is maximally accessible to all students, making learning very targeted and inclusive."

This quote serves as empirical evidence that a deep understanding of pedagogical dimensions—which includes strategy formulation, adaptive method selection, and formative and reflective evaluation of learning outcomes (Dwiyanti, 2024)—is directly proportional to increased learning effectiveness at the elementary school level. This competency domain also stimulates teachers' methodological creativity in integrating

media, task variations, and technology, thereby substantially increasing students' intrinsic motivation and active cognitive engagement (Cahyanti et al., 2024).

2. Professional Competence as Subject and Curriculum Authority

Professional competence serves as the main benchmark of teacher authority. This competency is crucial for teacher selection and serves as a fundamental foundation for ongoing career development and professionalism (Sari et al., 2023). Data analysis shows that teachers' depth and breadth of mastery of the subject matter enable the transformation of knowledge that is not only scientifically accurate but also contextual and relevant to students' lives.

Table 1. Correlation between Professional Competence Level and Knowledge Transformation Quality

Level of Mastery of Material	Characteristics of Pedagogy during Delivery	Learning Quality Output
Superior (Critical)	Able to contextualize theory, link inter-disciplinary knowledge, and conduct in-depth elaboration.	Students' comprehensive conceptual understanding, knowledge application skills, and substantial improvement in academic achievement.
Adequate (Textual)	Limited to textbook explanations, lack of real-world examples or integration of contemporary issues.	Understanding is superficial, students have difficulty solving contextual problems, and learning outcomes tend to stagnate.

The teacher's ability to present material in a structured, interesting manner, supported by a solid understanding of the curriculum, as regulated in the Minister of National Education Regulation No. 16 of 2007, is a determining factor that explicitly contributes directly to improving students' academic achievement.

3. Personality Competence as an Ethical Role Model

Mastery of personality skills is an absolute necessity for educators, providing multiple benefits not only to teachers' professional integrity but also to school stability and, most importantly, to student character development (Ananda et al., 2023). This competency domain is manifested through consistent, stable, mature, and wise teacher behavior, as well as the ability to serve as authoritative role models.

Principal Narrative Quote (KS-01): "We identified that teachers who consistently and transparently demonstrate integrity, are fair and impartial, and possess high professional ethics, successfully cultivate an orderly classroom atmosphere organically. The level of student discipline in these teachers' classes is consistently recorded as higher, and incidents of deviant behavior occur less frequently. The effects of this mature teacher personality are very effective in reducing the burden of academic stress on students."

These qualitative findings strongly indicate that teacher personality functions not only as a moral aspect but also as a control variable influencing the psychological and social climate in the classroom. Such teachers are able to maintain their own professional commitment and teaching performance, which cumulatively contributes to improving the overall quality of learning (Hariansyah, Fitria, and Puspita, 2021).

4. Social Competence as a Bridge for Educational Ecosystem Interaction

Social competence, as stipulated in Article 28 paragraph (3) point d of the National Education Standards, refers to a teacher's capability to interact and communicate effectively and efficiently with all components of the education ecosystem—from students, colleagues, educational staff, parents/guardians, to the wider community. This capability is considered crucial in efforts to build constructive collaboration and support the creation of a supportive and harmonious learning environment. (De Smet et al., 2021)

Field research data shows that teachers with strong social competence are able to facilitate open, two-way communication with students' parents. This communication provides teachers with valuable insights into students' backgrounds that influence learning challenges. Furthermore, social competence is a key prerequisite for collaboration between teachers through the formation of professional learning communities (*PLCs*), which are vital mechanisms for the ongoing improvement and *mentoring* of professional and pedagogical competence.

B. Synthesis Analysis of Interactive Relationships Between Competencies and Strategic Implications

A synthetic analysis of all empirical findings convincingly confirms that these four teacher competencies do not operate independently, but rather are integrated within a holistic and inseparable synergistic framework. High learning effectiveness and success are the result of the dynamic interaction and maintained balance among these four dimensions.

Core Competencies	Primary Function	Synergistic Mechanisms in Teaching Practice
Pedagogy	Classroom management, facilitation of learning processes, and implementation of adaptive strategies.	It relies heavily on input from Professionals (for content accuracy) and Personalities (for consistency and authority in managing classroom dynamics).
Professional	Depth of knowledge, accuracy of teaching materials, and understanding of the curriculum.	Optimized through Pedagogic *delivery* (transformation of content into effective learning activities) and enhanced through Social collaboration.
Personality	Integrity, role model, ethical building, and positive classroom climate.	Becoming a determinant of the quality of relationships in Social (building public trust) and a driving force in Pedagogy (motivating students' intrinsic participation).
Social	Effective communication, collaboration and interaction with all relevant parties.	Facilitating Professional development (sharing innovations and best practices) and ensuring the implementation of Pedagogy (through parental and community support).

The primary implication of these findings is the need for a sustainable and integrated teacher competency strengthening and development program. Training programs should not focus solely on technical-cognitive aspects (pedagogy and professionalism), but should also encompass improvements in character, ethics, and interpersonal skills (personality and social skills).

The emerging strategic recommendation is the need for a transformative role for the principal as a learning leader and primary mentor for teachers. Structured academic supervision, as emphasized by Natalia (2023), and the establishment of effective teacher learning communities, must become standard practice. Furthermore, systematic support from the Education Office must be intensified through the provision of relevant training facilities, career development facilitation, and the formulation of policies that explicitly encourage reflection and innovation in teaching practice, in order to achieve quality learning that is relevant and aligned with student needs.

CONCLUSION

This section presents a substantial summary that includes the main findings of this research, its theoretical implications for the development of educational science, as well as recommendations for practical action aimed at all interested parties in order to advance the quality and professionalism of teachers.

This study definitively demonstrates that multidimensional teacher competencies—encompassing pedagogical, professional, personal, and social domains—are essential determinants that operate through synergistic interaction mechanisms to improve the quality of teaching and learning processes at the primary education level. The collected evidence underscores that teachers who achieve optimal mastery of these four domains not only succeed in effective classroom management and adaptation to students' unique learning needs but also ensure the scientific accuracy of the material taught. Furthermore, these competencies play a vital role in creating an ethical and supportive classroom atmosphere and facilitating constructive collaboration with all elements involved in the education system. Ultimately, the convergence of all these competencies has been shown to have a significant positive impact on improving students' academic learning outcomes, generating internal motivation, and encouraging the use of innovative teaching methodologies.

From a scientific perspective, the findings of this study provide a valuable contribution to enriching the conceptual understanding of teaching professionalism in Indonesia. The results of this study empirically strengthen the legal basis stipulated in the Republic of Indonesia Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, which explicitly places these four competencies as fundamental prerequisites for an educator. Further analysis reveals that Personality and Social Competencies function as moderating factors or key variables that control the level of success of the implementation of Pedagogical and Professional Competencies in real-world practice. The synergistic relationship model discovered offers a more modern view, moving away from the interpretation of competencies as a collection of abilities that are simply added together (*additive*), towards a holistic framework that demands the achievement of harmonization between the cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions of teachers.

For educators, there is an urgent need to focus on Differentiated Skills Enhancement, which is active engagement in self-development oriented toward pedagogical reinforcement, particularly in designing tailored instruction based on

diagnostic assessment data. Furthermore, *Peer Learning Enhancement* through regular participation in Professional Learning Communities (*PLCs*) is highly recommended as a vital mechanism for the exchange of experiences, technology adoption, and peer mentoring.

For the principal, their role must be expanded to that of instructional leader. This is realized through *Coaching- Based Academic Supervision* , where the principal needs to provide guidance and support, such as conducting periodic *coaching clinics* . The principal also has the responsibility to create a school culture that supports collaboration and upholds integrity as a means of strengthening personal and social competencies.

The Department of Education needs to develop an integrated Performance-Based Certification System (including Pedagogical and Professional evaluations supported by observational reviews of Personality and Social practices in the field) to ensure the sustainability of competency quality. The agency is also advised to design Integrated Training that encompasses not only academic content but also non-technical skills such as leadership and communication to strengthen educators' Social and Personality Competencies.

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