

Analysis of Professional Teacher Competencies at Dahai State Elementary School, Paringin District, Balangan Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the level of professional teacher competency at Dahai Public Elementary School, Paringin District, Balangan Regency, which includes four main dimensions of teacher competency: pedagogical, personality, social, and professional. The research approach uses a qualitative descriptive method with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation studies of teachers, principals, and supervisors. The results show that teachers at Dahai Public Elementary School have fulfilled most of the professional competency indicators as stipulated in the Minister of National Education Regulation Number 16 of 2007, especially in the aspects of mastery of teaching materials and learning development. However, aspects of digital-based learning innovation and professional reflection still need to be improved. This study emphasizes the importance of continuous strengthening through learning communities and collaborative academic supervision

INTRODUCTION

Basic education is the primary foundation for human resource development, and the role of teachers at this level is the most crucial factor in determining the quality of student learning outcomes. Teacher quality is determined by the level of professional competence, which includes pedagogical, personality, social skills, and mastery of scientific substance. According to Minister of National Education Regulation Number 16 of 2007, teacher professional competence reflects a teacher's ability to master subject matter broadly and deeply, as well as to manage a meaningful learning process. However, various national and international studies indicate that teacher competence in Indonesia remains a fundamental problem in efforts to improve the quality of national education. The results of the 2023 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey showed that Indonesian students' literacy and numeracy skills are still below the OECD average, and this is strongly correlated with low scores on the Teacher Competency Test (UKG), which has not yet reached the national minimum standard.

This situation is also reflected in South Kalimantan, where data from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education shows that 97.15% of teachers have a bachelor's degree (S1/D4) degree, but only 39.7% have a teaching certificate. This gap between academic qualifications and professional legality demonstrates a disparity in formal recognition of teacher competence. In Balangan Regency, particularly in Paringin District, this phenomenon is clearly visible at Dahai State Elementary School (SDN). Based on the Basic Education Data (Dapodik), this school has eight teachers and four educational staff, all non-civil servants with an average length of service of nine years. However, obstacles remain, such as teacher tardiness, lack of time discipline, minimal lesson plan preparation, and weak mastery of learning technology. This condition indicates that the implementation of professional competence at the elementary school level is not yet optimal.

In this context, strengthening teacher professional competence is an urgent need to address the challenges of the curriculum and the demands of the 21st century. Bush and Bell (2002) proposed five essential dimensions of teacher professionalism: commitment to students, mastery of the subject and teaching methods, responsibility for learning, systematic reflection on teaching practice, and involvement in a learning community. These dimensions serve as the analytical framework for this research because they have not been widely used in previous studies, which generally focus on the four basic teacher competencies. Therefore, this research seeks to enrich the academic perspective on teacher professionalism in the context of rural Indonesia.

Several previous studies reinforce this urgency. Research by Witarsa and Rizki (2022) showed that professional competency development programs tailored to individual teacher needs were more effective than general training. Hermansyah and Sumarsono (2021) found that teachers in the Indonesia-PNG border area face significant challenges related to access to training and learning facilities, yet still demonstrate a high level of enthusiasm for developing their professionalism. Suleman (2024) revealed that teachers with strong professional competencies are able to implement the Independent Curriculum more

effectively, while research by Nurharirah et al. (2024) highlighted low teacher motivation for self-development due to workload and a lack of structural incentives. These studies emphasize that contextual factors, motivation, and institutional support are important determinants in the development of teacher professionalism.

Based on these issues, this study aims to analyze the level of professional competence of teachers at Dahai Public Elementary School, Paringin District, Balangan Regency and identify factors inhibiting its implementation. Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the development of educational administration science, particularly in the study of teacher competence in rural Indonesia. Practically, the results of this study can serve as a basis for local governments and educational institutions to design more adaptive, needs-based, and sustainable teacher development strategies.

By combining Bush and Bell's (2002) theoretical framework with an empirical field approach, this research is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of teacher professionalism in rural elementary schools. This approach also contributes to contemporary education literature, which emphasizes the importance of contextualized teacher professionalism as a prerequisite for equitably improving the quality of national education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Teacher Competence and Professionalism

Teacher competence is a set of abilities that reflect the knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes that educators must possess in carrying out their duties. Based on Law Number 14 of 2005 and Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 16 of 2007, teacher competence encompasses four main aspects: pedagogical, personality, social, and professional. Professional competence is the most prominent aspect because it is directly related to mastery of teaching materials, learning strategies, and the teacher's ability to develop continuous professionalism. Rosdiana (2022) emphasized that teacher professional competence includes not only mastery of the subject matter, but also an understanding of student learning characteristics, teaching skills, and the ability to reflect on learning practices.

From an international perspective, Bush and Bell (2002) emphasize that teacher professionalism cannot be understood solely as theoretical mastery, but must include reflective and collaborative dimensions. They formulated five principles of teacher professionalism, namely: (1) commitment to students and their learning process; (2) mastery of subject matter and teaching methods; (3) responsibility for managing and evaluating learning; (4) the ability to think systematically and reflectively about teaching practice; and (5) active involvement in a professional learning community. This model broadens the meaning of professionalism from mere academic qualifications to reflective practice oriented towards continuous professional development. In line with the concept of reflective practice proposed by Schön (1983), professional teachers are practitioners who are able to learn from experience and transform it into more effective pedagogical strategies.

Factors Influencing Teacher Professional Competence

Teachers' professional competence is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors. Internal factors include educational background, teaching experience, and motivation and commitment to the profession. Nur et al. (2024) stated that teachers with academic qualifications appropriate to their teaching field have a higher tendency to achieve good professional competence. Hamalik (2010) added that long teaching experience can enrich pedagogical skills, but Bush and Bell (2002) cautioned that experience without reflection tends to stagnate and does not significantly improve competence. Meanwhile, Uno (2022) emphasized the importance of intrinsic motivation as the main driver for teachers to continue learning and developing without relying on external encouragement.

From an external perspective, school organizational support plays a crucial role in strengthening teacher professionalism. A collaborative school culture, visionary principal leadership, and a work environment oriented toward continuous learning have been shown to accelerate teacher competency improvement (Uno & Lamatenggo, 2016). Bush and Bell (2002) emphasize that effective school leadership can create a learning organization where teachers are encouraged to continuously experiment and share good practices. Furthermore, the availability of learning resources and systematic professional development programs are also determining factors. One-size-fits-all training programs tend to be less effective than training tailored to individual needs and the school context (Bush & Bell, 2002).

Professional Competence of Elementary School Teachers

Elementary school teachers play a strategic role in shaping the foundation of student learning. Piaget (in Slavin, 2014) explains that children aged 6–12 are in the concrete operational stage, so teachers need to have a deep understanding of children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. Bush and Bell (2002) describe elementary school teachers as foundation builders, namely educators responsible for building the foundation of literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking skills in children. The main challenge faced by elementary school teachers is the need to master various fields of study simultaneously, unlike secondary teachers who specialize in one subject. Therefore, the development of elementary school teachers' professional competencies must consider multidisciplinary, contextual, and reflective aspects to be able to adapt learning to students' needs.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design , because it aims to describe and analyze the phenomenon of teacher professional competence in depth in a natural context. This approach was chosen so that researchers can understand the behavior, perceptions, and experiences of teachers holistically, especially in the environment of Dahai Public Elementary School, Paringin District, Balangan Regency. The research data sources consisted of the principal, teachers, and students, who were selected through a purposive sampling technique based on relevance and direct involvement in learning activities. Data were collected through observation , semi-structured interviews , and documentation studies to obtain a comprehensive picture of the application of teacher professional competence, both from pedagogical, personality, social, and professional aspects. This approach allows exploration of real conditions in the field without researcher intervention, and emphasizes the interpretation of meanings that emerge from empirical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) , which includes data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data from interviews and observations were systematically coded to identify key themes related to teacher professionalism. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and methods by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. Furthermore, member checking with key informants was conducted to ensure the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation of the observed reality. The research location was chosen purposively because SDN Dahai represents an elementary school with diverse teacher characteristics, limited resources, and challenges in implementing professional competency in rural areas. With this methodological design, the research is expected to produce an in-depth and valid description of the dynamics of teacher professional competency and the factors influencing its development at the elementary school level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that teachers at Dahai State Elementary School, Paringin District, Balangan Regency, have achieved most of the professional competency indicators as mandated by *the Minister of National Education Regulation Number 16 of 2007* , although several aspects still need improvement. Based on the results of observations and interviews, teachers have good pedagogical skills in preparing lesson plans, adapting learning strategies to student characteristics, and creating conducive classroom interactions. Personality and social aspects also show high achievements, where teachers demonstrate discipline, responsibility, and harmonious interpersonal relationships with students and colleagues. However, in terms of professional competency, weaknesses are still found in the dimensions of mastery of learning technology, reflective skills, and participation in learning communities. Several teachers admitted that they are not yet accustomed to using digital media optimally and have not actively participated in online training. This condition indicates that teacher professionalism still tends to be oriented towards carrying out administrative tasks, not on in-depth reflection on teaching practices as emphasized by Bush and Bell (2002) in the principle of *reflective professionalism* .

Table 1. Competency Achievement Level of Teachers at Dahai Elementary School, Paringin District

Teacher Competency Aspects	Percentage of Achievement	Category	Key Findings
Pedagogy	82%	Good	Teachers are able to design and implement learning according to the curriculum, but have not consistently reflected.
Personality	90%	Very good	Teachers demonstrate high integrity, discipline, and exemplary behavior in learning.
Social	78%	Good	Teacher interactions with students and colleagues are good, but not yet active in the professional community.
Professional	74%	Enough	Mastery of teaching materials is good, but still weak in the use of technology and scientific publications.

Source: Results of Interviews, Observations, and Documentation at SDN Dahai (2025)

The results above show that the competency of Dahai Elementary School teachers is dominated by strengths in personality and pedagogical aspects, while

professional aspects still need to be strengthened. Further analysis shows that these achievements align with Spencer & Spencer's (2005) *iceberg competency theory*, where basic abilities such as knowledge and skills are visible on the surface, while deeper aspects of reflection, motivation, and professional values still need to be developed. These findings confirm Mulyasa's (2021) view that professional teachers must possess abilities not only in the technical aspects of teaching, but also in sustainable moral, social, and intellectual dimensions. Meanwhile, Bush and Bell's (2002) theory suggests that teacher professionalism consists of five dimensions: commitment to students, mastery of the teaching field, responsibility for learning, systematic reflection, and involvement in the professional community. In the context of Dahai Elementary School, the first two dimensions appear strong, while systematic reflection and community involvement are still weak, indicating that the teacher professionalization process is still at the *developing professional stage*, not yet reaching *mature professionalism*.

Limited technological facilities, access to training, and structural support are the main factors hindering the improvement of teacher professional competence. This is consistent with Fullan's (2016) theory of *systemic reform*, which states that improving teacher professionalism will not be effective without the support of an integrated education system and collaborative leadership. The principal at Dahai Elementary School has attempted to initiate *in-house training* and collaborative reflection, but the program remains constrained by time allocation and digital resources. This situation reinforces reports from the OECD (2023) and UNESCO (2023) that teachers in rural areas often experience limited resources, despite their strong commitment to their profession. In this context, teacher professionalism is not just about certification, but also about the ability to continuously learn, adapt, and innovate. Therefore, the results of this study emphasize the importance of reflection-based *continuous professional development (CPD)*, as recommended in the Merdeka Belajar policy. Thus, teachers at Dahai Elementary School have shown positive progress toward true professionalism, although strengthening the reflective and innovative dimensions is still needed to align with the demands of teacher competency in the 21st century.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study concludes that the professional competence of teachers at Dahai Public Elementary School, Paringin District, Balangan Regency has developed in a positive direction, although not yet fully optimal in all dimensions. Based on the results of observations and interviews, personality and pedagogical competence showed the highest achievement with the category of "good to very good", which is reflected in the discipline, responsibility, and ability of teachers to manage learning according to student characteristics. However, professional and social aspects still require improvement, especially in mastery of learning technology, active involvement in learning communities, and professional reflection activities. These results strengthen the theory of Bush and Bell (2002) that true professionalism is reflected through systematic reflection and continuous collaboration in learning communities. Thus, the professionalism of teachers at Dahai Public Elementary School can be categorized as developing professionals, namely teachers who have a high commitment to their duties, but still need systematic support to reach a level of full professional maturity.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that the local government and the Balangan Regency Education Office strengthen their continuing professional development (CPD) program through needs-based training and reflective mentoring integrated with academic supervision. Principals need to act as instructional leaders capable of facilitating a culture of reflection and collaboration among teachers through in-house training activities and learning community forums. Furthermore, teachers are encouraged to utilize digital technology and online learning platforms as a means of pedagogical innovation and sharing good practices. This recommendation aligns with the views of Fullan (2016) and Mulyasa (2021) that improving teacher professionalism is a continuous process that requires the support of visionary leadership, a collaborative learning ecosystem, and strong individual commitment. Through these steps, it is hoped that teachers at Dahai Elementary School can achieve complete professionalism, adapt to change, and contribute sustainably to improving the quality of basic education in Indonesia.

FUTHER STUDY

This research still has delays, so it is necessary to conduct further research related to the topic Analysis of Professional Teacher Competencies at Dahai State Elementary School, Paringin District, Balangan Regency in order to improve this research and add insight for readers.

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