
Analysis of teachers' pedagogical competence in improving the quality of learning

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Abstract

This research aimed to assess the educational abilities of teachers in terms of planning learning activities, implementing the teaching process, and making efforts to increase student motivation in learning. The research employed a qualitative approach to gather data through interviews, observations, and document collection. The data analysis process encompassed information reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The subjects who became informants were the principal, his deputy, and educators. The results indicate that educators' pedagogical expertise in compiling learning activities is evident in their preparation of the lesson plan. However, several teachers often do not bring it, so the learning objectives are not achieved optimally. When learning, teachers demonstrate an understanding of the material by studying the textbook's contents. However, problems still exist in class management, and there is a lack of discipline regarding time usage. To increase students' enthusiasm for learning, teachers create opportunities for active participation by utilizing information and communication technology, establishing effective communication with them, and conducting reflection to enhance the quality of learning.

Keywords

Learning planning, pedagogical competence, teacher competence, teaching implementation

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Introduction

The world of education is currently facing various challenges. The results obtained have not been able to provide a smile that can make the name of the Indonesian nation proud; the quality of teaching and learning is questionable, and student learning motivation is still very low (Balqis et al., 2014). This situation must be addressed immediately to create a more effective learning experience.

Teacher competence is based on Law Number 20 of 2005, concerning teachers. This law requires four competencies, including (1) pedagogical competence, which is managing student learning, designing and implementing educational activities, evaluating learning outcomes, and helping students actualize their potential. (2) Personality competence is the ability of a steady, stable, wise, mature, and authoritative personality to be a role model for students and have noble morals. (3) Professional competence is the ability to master learning materials broadly and deeply to guide students toward meeting the competency standards set out in the National Education Standards. (4) Social competence is the ability of teachers as part of society to communicate and interact effectively with students, fellow educators, education personnel, parents/guardians of students, and the community (Syoviana, 2025).

Learning is an active process in which students combine experiences by solving real problems around them. Learning activities are an active process to gain new knowledge, information, and experience. After completing the learning process, individuals will develop specific skills, abilities, attitudes, and values. Learning is an effort or exercise to achieve specific skills (Sagala, 2012). In its implementation, learning activities are individual activities in gaining knowledge, skills, and behavioral changes through processing learning materials.

From the statement above, it is concluded that learning activities require continuous practice; through this practice, someone can gain experience. This experience will later help individuals develop specific skills. To create an optimal learning experience, the learning process should consider various aspects, such as methods and media in learning, regional characteristics, evaluation techniques, parental involvement, student conditions, student motivation, and teacher readiness and opportunities in teaching. The learning process that actively involves students in learning increases interaction and collaboration between students and expands access to information.

According to Hamalik (2012), learning is a system originating from various elements, such as humans, tools, materials, facilities, and mechanisms that interact to achieve learning objectives. Therefore, having a profound understanding of students is crucial for effectively implementing the learning process. Such knowledge includes understanding the psychology of child development, health conditions, and parental abilities. These elements are part of the understanding teachers must master to improve pedagogical competence in the learning process.

Literature Review

Pedagogical competence

Pedagogical competence is one of the four core competencies required of every professional teacher in Indonesia. According to Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers

and Lecturers, pedagogical competence is a teacher's ability to manage student learning, including understanding students, designing and implementing learning, evaluating learning outcomes, and developing students to actualize their potential. In this context, teachers serve as transmitters of material and as facilitators, motivators, guides, and evaluators of students' learning processes (Jagtap, 2016). Hamalik (2012) also emphasized that teachers with high pedagogical competence can create a conducive learning environment, establish effective communication, and develop learning strategies tailored to student characteristics. This aligns with the student-centred learning approach, which positions students as active participants in the learning process.

Pedagogical competence consists of several important elements. According to Mulyasa (2019), these elements include:

- **Understanding student characteristics**
Teachers must understand students' physical, intellectual, social, emotional, moral, and spiritual aspects. This understanding is essential to tailor the learning process to students' needs and potential.
- **Mastery of learning theories and learning principles**
Teachers must understand learning theories such as behaviourism, constructivism, cognitivism, and humanism to design effective learning.
- **Curriculum development**
Teachers must be able to develop lesson plans and select methods appropriate to learning objectives.
- **Educational learning activities**
Teachers must design and implement meaningful, contextual, and motivating student learning activities.
- **Student potential development**
Teachers are expected to be able to guide students as they develop according to their interests and talents.
- **Effective communication with students**
Empathetic and respectful two-way interactions are crucial for building emotional closeness and a comfortable learning environment.
- **Evaluation and reflection of learning**
Teachers must be able to conduct formative and summative assessments and evaluate the learning process for continuous improvement.

Teachers' pedagogical competence plays a strategic role at the elementary level, such as at SDIT Al Ihsan Koto Baru. According to Piaget, elementary school-aged children are at the concrete-operational stage of development, so they learn best through direct experience, real-life examples, and collaborative activities. Therefore, teachers must adopt an approach that prioritises hands-on activities, integrated thematic learning, and project-based learning. Mulyasa (2013) added that effective learning in elementary schools must consider the principles of child development, such as a strong sense of curiosity, dependence on the social environment, and the need for encouragement and recognition. Teachers with strong pedagogical competence can align learning strategies with these needs, motivating students and ensuring optimal development.

Although teachers understand the importance of pedagogical competence, in practice, many challenges remain. These include limited facilities, administrative burdens, heterogeneity in student characteristics, and a lack of ongoing training. Research by Balqis et al. (2014) showed that many teachers still struggle to develop comprehensive and in-depth lesson plans, particularly regarding authentic assessment and learning differentiation. Furthermore, teacher self-reflection on learning effectiveness has not yet become a culture. Only a few teachers systematically reflect and use it to improve the quality of learning.

In the digital era, teachers are required to master conventional methods and to adapt to developments in information technology. Technology can be a tool to enrich learning methods and increase student participation. Teachers with strong pedagogical competence can use Learning Management Systems (LMS), educational applications, learning videos, and even artificial intelligence (AI) to support learning activities.

Sugiyono (2020) stated that ICT-based pedagogical competence includes teachers' abilities to design, manage, and evaluate digital learning interactively and enjoyably. Interactive media, such as Kahoot-based quizzes, animated presentations, or Islamic videos, effectively convey material and values at Islamic Elementary Schools (SDIT).

Strategies for improving pedagogical competence

To improve teachers' pedagogical competence, various strategies can be implemented, including

- **Continuous professional development:** Regular workshops, seminars, and thematic training help teachers update their knowledge and skills.
- **Academic supervision:** Principals or supervisors can conduct supervision to provide concrete feedback on teachers' teaching practices.
- **Collaboration in teacher learning communities:** Regular discussions between teachers can provide a means for reflection, sharing experiences, and finding joint solutions to learning problems.
- **Reflective journals:** Teachers write about their learning experiences as a form of self-reflection and documentation of their professional development.
- **Utilisation of digital media:** Teachers can learn independently through online learning platforms such as *Rumah Belajar*, *SIPLab*, *Guru Belajar dan Berbagi*, or other educational MOOCs.

Integration of Islamic values in learning

Specifically in Islamic Elementary Schools (SDIT), education emphasises cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects. At SDIT Al Ihsan Koto Baru, Islamic values such as etiquette, morals, and spiritual discipline are integral to learning. Therefore, teachers' pedagogical competence also includes integrating Islamic values into teaching and learning activities naturally and contextually.

This observation is reinforced by Achadah et al. (2022), who stated that character education based on religious values must begin early and be internalised in the learning

process, not as additional material. Teachers must be role models in morals and worship and be able to link learning concepts to relevant Islamic teachings. For example, in math lessons, teachers can incorporate the value of honesty in calculations, or science lessons, relate the greatness of God's creation to natural phenomena.

Although teachers understand the importance of pedagogical competence, in practice, many challenges remain. These include limited facilities, administrative burdens, heterogeneity in student characteristics, and a lack of ongoing training. Balqis et al. (2014) showed that many teachers struggle to develop comprehensive and in-depth lesson plans, particularly regarding authentic assessment and differentiation. Furthermore, teacher self-reflection on learning effectiveness has not yet become a culture. Only a few teachers systematically reflect and use it to improve the quality of learning.

Methodology

This research used a qualitative method to investigate the condition of the research object in a natural setting. The method applied in this research was descriptive qualitative, involving data collected in words or images rather than numbers (Danim, 2002). Descriptive research aims to describe phenomena—whether intentionally engineered by humans or occurring naturally (Moleong, 2000). This research adopted a descriptive method because it focused on describing the analysis of teachers' pedagogical competence in the teaching process of children at SDIT Al Ihsan, located in Palo Padang, Koto Baru Subdistrict, Dharmasraya Regency, West Sumatra Province.

Data collection techniques included observation and in-depth interviews that involved participant engagement. The instruments used for data collection included observation sheets and field notes. An interview guide served as a tool for direct interaction techniques. Meanwhile, documentation included various media related to the research, such as photographs of teaching activities, children, and other relevant aspects of pedagogical competence in early childhood education. This research was derived from an analysis of teachers' pedagogical skills in the teaching process at SDIT Al Ihsan, located in Palo Padang, Koto Baru Subdistrict, Dharmasraya Regency, West Sumatra Province.

Findings and Discussion

Understanding student character from a physical, intellectual, emotional, moral, and cultural perspective

This research was conducted at SDIT Al Ihsan, Dharmasraya Regency, to understand the character of fifth-grade students from five main perspectives: physical, intellectual, emotional, moral, and cultural. Data collection was conducted through direct observation of 20 students, in-depth interviews with six homeroom teachers, and students filling out questionnaires.

Physical characteristics, this research was conducted at SDIT Al Ihsan, Dharmasraya Regency, to understand the character of fifth-grade students from five main perspectives: physical, intellectual, emotional, moral, and cultural. Data collection was conducted through

direct observation of 20 students, in-depth interviews with six homeroom teachers, and students filling out questionnaires.

Intellectual character, most students showed healthy and active physical conditions. Observation showed that 17 out of 20 students (85%) had adequate stamina and actively participated in lessons and outdoor activities such as morning exercise and sunnah sports. Homeroom teachers noted that students with healthy living habits tended to be more focused and did not tyre while studying.

Emotional character, students of SDIT Al Ihsan showed substantial intellectual abilities. Based on the questionnaire results, 14 students (70%) demonstrated logical, analytical, and creative understanding, especially in thematic lessons and project-based science. The homeroom teacher noted that the tafhid-based learning approach and the integration of science and Islam, encouraged students to think systematically and responsibly during their learning process.

Moral character, the students' moral character is considered good and is the school's focus. Around 16 students (80%) demonstrate honest, disciplined, and responsible behavior. Based on interviews with homeroom teachers, Islamic values such as congregational prayer, manners towards teachers, and polite language are applied consistently. However, discipline in completing assignments on time is challenging for some students.

Cultural character, students showed high appreciation for local and Islamic cultural values. Around 15 students (75%) participated in culture-based school activities such as Islamic speech competitions, calligraphy art, and traditional games. The homeroom teacher assessed that the strengthening of cultural character was relevant to the learning themes which included local Minangkabau and Islamic values.

Table 1. Recapitulation of character understanding of grade v students at SD IT Al Ihsan

Character aspects	Key indicators	Number of positive students	Percent age (%)	Class teacher statement
Physique	Active, fit, focused on learning	17 of 20	85%	Generally active and not easily tired; healthy lifestyle plays a role
Intellectual	Logical, creative, analytical understanding	14 of 20	70%	Science-based learning and memorization encourage responsibility
Emotional	Manage emotions, be patient, do not get angry easily	12 of 20	60%	Religious activities have a positive impact, but there are still those who are easily disappointed
Moral	Honest, disciplined, responsible	16 of 20	80%	Islamic values are implemented well, but assignments still lack time
Culture	Appreciation of local culture and Islam	15 of 20	75%	Local culture and Islamic based activities are embedded contextually

Data source: observation results at SDIT Al Ihsan

An interview conducted on May 7, 2025, with Ustadzah U. She stated that her field practice was based on the provisions in the PK Guru guidelines regarding understanding student characteristics from various aspects. In the interview, Ustadzah U also added that she had tried to improve students' interests and talents through direct interaction, including having dialogues with them, implementing exams after the learning process, and actively supporting students in exploring and recognizing the potential of everyone. In the second interview with the same source, he added that he often inserts humor when teaching so that children feel the lesson is enjoyable and they feel more relaxed in learning.

Mastering learning theory and principles of educational learning

According to teacher competency standards, teachers can choose various approaches, strategies, methods and techniques for creative educational learning (Nikola, 2021). Based on the guidelines for implementing teacher performance evaluations from the Ministry of National Education, teacher expertise in learning theory and educational principles covers several crucial aspects. Among others are:

Adapting learning to students' age and abilities, all homeroom teachers said that they designed learning activities by considering the developmental stage and abilities of the students. They used various methods such as educational games, simulations, group discussions, and thematic approaches. This helped students understand the material faster because it suited their learning styles.

Continuous assessment of student understanding, all respondents stated that they conduct evaluations routinely through Q&A, worksheets, or formative assessments in the middle of learning. This evaluation determines the next learning strategy to be more effective and on target.

Reflection on learning implementation, as many as 5 out of 6 teachers said they could explain why learning strategies were changed if the initial plan did not go as expected. This reflection was carried out independently or in teacher group discussions. One teacher admitted that he still had difficulty reflecting systematically.

Implementation of tactics to increase learning motivation, all teachers have implemented various ways to increase student motivation, such as giving rewards, inspirational stories, using interesting learning media, and creating a fun classroom atmosphere. This approach has made students more active and enthusiastic in following lessons.

Systematic and structured learning design, five of the six homeroom teachers have made systematic learning plans by clearly compiling objectives, indicators, and learning activity flows. They also convey the learning stages to students at the beginning of the lesson. One teacher admitted she is still used to teaching without explicitly conveying the objectives.

Attention to students who have not mastered the material, most homeroom teachers (5 out of 6) pay attention to students who have not completed their studies by providing exceptional guidance or remediation. They also use the evaluation results to prepare for the next learning. However, one teacher still does not systematically identify students' learning obstacles.

Table 2. *Data on the application of learning principles by six homeroom teachers*

No	Educative learning indicators	Number of teachers implementing	Percentage (%)	Information
1	Adapting materials to students' age and abilities	6 of 6	100%	Using various contextual approaches, according to the student's developmental stage
2	Conducting continuous assessment of student understanding	6 of 6	100%	Evaluation is used to design further learning.
3	Able to explain the reasons for changes in learning strategies (reflection)	5 of 6	83%	Teachers reflect on learning if something does not go according to plan
4	Using tactics to increase student motivation	6 of 6	100%	Using rewards, engaging media, and personal approaches
5	Designing learning systematically and interrelatedly	5 of 6	83%	Some teachers initially convey learning objectives.
6	Pay attention to students who have not mastered the material	5 of 6	83%	Teachers do remediation and reflection for further learning

Overall, the six homeroom teachers who were respondents in this research demonstrated mastery of learning theories and educational learning principles. They have implemented strategies for student development, conducted continuous evaluations, and paid attention to aspects of motivation and individual needs. Although some teachers still need to improve their reflection skills and handling lagging students, this achievement already shows professional and responsive learning practices.

Communicate in a practical, empathetic, and respectful manner towards students

Quality Improvement from Educators expects teachers to have the skills to communicate with students effectively, caringly, and politely. In addition, teachers must also demonstrate enthusiasm and positive behavior and be able to provide comprehensive answers to students' questions or comments. In an interview conducted on May 7, 2025, with Ustadzah P, a teacher at SDIT AL IHSAN Palo Padang, Koto Baru District, Dharmasraya Regency, it was revealed that she had applied these principles in her teaching methods. She revealed that she often discussed with students and provided direction when they academic and non-academic challenges.

Teacher-student communication is the foundation for building a positive learning atmosphere and supporting student character development. This research describes how six

homeroom teachers implement effective, empathetic, and respectful communication in daily interactions with students inside and outside the classroom.

Effective communication, all homeroom teachers said they used clear, simple, and easily understood language for students. They also allowed students to ask questions, respond, or express their opinions in the learning process. This two-way communication strengthened the understanding of the material and increased student participation.

Communication with empathy, five of the six homeroom teachers demonstrated active listening skills and paid full attention when students expressed concerns, questions, or personal problems. They used a calming tone of voice and friendly facial expressions. Teachers tried to put themselves in the students' shoes, especially when facing learning difficulties or social problems.

Communicate with respect, all homeroom teachers agreed that it is important to show respect for students consistently. They call students by their good names, do not belittle them, and do not shout at them under any circumstances. When giving reprimands, teachers deliver them wisely and proportionally to maintain students' self-esteem.

Table 3. Data on communication practices by six homeroom teachers of SDIT Al-Ihsan

No	Communication indicators	Number of teachers implementing	Percentage (%)	Information
1	Use clear and easy to understand language	6 of 6	100%	Language is adapted to students' age level and background.
2	Encourage two-way communication	6 of 6	100%	Provide space for asking questions and responding to student opinions
3	Demonstrate empathy in responding to student complaints/problems	5 of 6	83%	Active listening and emotional support
4	Have a friendly tone of voice and facial expression	5 of 6	83%	Teachers maintain a comfortable classroom atmosphere
5	Do not yell or embarrass students	6 of 6	100%	Reprimands are given wisely and thoughtfully
5	Call students with good and respectful names	6 of 6	100%	Do not use rude or derogatory terms

From the discussion results, the six homeroom teachers demonstrated effective and respectful communication towards students, with most also showing empathy in their interactions. Communication practices like this have created harmonious relationships, comforted learning, and strengthened emotional bonds between teachers and students. However, there is still room to strengthen empathy more evenly among all teachers.

Conducting assessment and evaluation of the learning process and results

Based on the teacher performance assessment guidelines issued by the Ministry of National Education, several key principles exist in conducting assessments and assessments of the learning process and what will happen. First, teachers must develop assessment tools for the lesson objectives listed in the lesson plans to achieve specific competencies. Second, teachers are expected to apply various evaluation techniques and types. Third, teachers need to study the evaluation results to find topics or basic competencies that are still difficult for students to understand, so that the strengths and weaknesses of each student can be identified as a basis for implementing remedial and enrichment programs.

The interview results with Ustadzah R, the Foundation Supervisor, revealed that her practices aligned with the guidelines. In conducting assessments and evaluations, she explained that she often consulted with students about learning methods for future topics, listened to student suggestions to create a better learning atmosphere, assessed student learning outcomes, and applied various assessments for individuals and groups.

Optimizing the teacher's role as an active learning facilitator

In practice at SDIT Al Ihsan, teachers act as material providers and facilitators who create an active, enjoyable, and collaborative learning environment. This aligns with constructivist learning, where students are encouraged to construct their knowledge through experience, reflection, and active involvement in the learning process.

Teachers with high pedagogical competence can create a classroom atmosphere that sparks students' curiosity. For example, using visual and digital media and an integrative thematic approach with Islamic values enriches the material and connects the lesson to everyday life. This aligns with Mulyasa's (2013) opinion that teachers must be able to create contextual and meaningful learning so that students know and understand and can apply that knowledge. The implications of classroom management for learning quality are significant: Effective classroom management is an important indicator of pedagogical competence. Based on field findings, some teachers still face challenges managing their classes and disciplining students efficiently, particularly regarding time management and organizing student activities. Teachers' ability to develop realistic and flexible lesson plans is crucial. Structured yet adaptive plans enable teachers to achieve learning objectives even in dynamic classroom conditions.

Furthermore, a spiritually based classroom management approach, such as practicing prayer before and after lessons, polite speaking, and dedicated time for reflection, has been proven to help create a psychologically conducive environment. Children feel valued, calm, and motivated to learn. Teachers are technical organizers and builders of a positive learning culture—reflection is an instrument for continuous improvement. One of the leading indicators of a pedagogically competent teacher is their ability to reflect. The reflection process does not occur at the end of the semester and can be undertaken whenever a teacher recognizes a discrepancy between lesson planning and implementation. Interviews revealed five teachers regularly reflect independently or through teacher working group (KKG) discussions. This reflection then contributes to adjustments in teaching methods, media

selection, and individual approaches to students. Reflective teachers can recognize successes and obstacles and use them for improvement. Thus, the learning process transforms into a dynamic cycle that undergoes continuous refinement.

As an Islamic-based school, SDIT Al Ihsan places the integration of religious values as a key pillar in the teaching and learning process. Teachers' pedagogical competence here is assessed by academic ability and the extent to which they can incorporate spiritual values into every learning activity. For instance, students learn logical concepts or calculations in mathematics lessons, which they then connect to pertinent verses of the Quran. In science lessons, students are encouraged to reflect on the majesty of Allah's creation. With this approach, students develop intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. The evidence demonstrates that teachers at SDIT Al Ihsan employ a holistic approach to education, based on the principles of comprehensive Islamic education (kaffah).

An individualized approach to addressing different student characteristics

The ability of a teacher to adapt teaching methods and strategies to the individual characteristics of their students also reflects their pedagogical competence. At SDIT Al Ihsan, teachers understand that each child has a different learning style, comprehension speed, and emotional needs. Therefore, teachers implement a differentiated approach by providing various activities such as group discussions, educational games, project work, and independent reflection.

Observation data show that quieter students are active in written or visual-based activities, while extroverted students excel more in oral or group work. Teachers respond to these differences flexibly, not relying solely on one learning model. This confirms [Kunter et al. \(2013\)](#) that pedagogically competent teachers can adapt their instruction to support the optimal development of each student.

Formative assessment serves as the foundation for intervention. Assessment measures learning outcomes and serves as a basis for making subsequent teaching decisions. At SDIT Al Ihsan, teachers routinely conduct formative assessments such as daily quizzes, Q&A sessions, or observations during discussions. The data are then used as a reference for providing remedial or enrichment programs. The success of formative assessment depends heavily on the teacher's ability to develop instruments that align with learning objectives and analyze the results objectively. Teachers who identify aspects students have not mastered will more easily develop targeted guidance strategies. In other words, professionally conducted formative assessments provide tangible evidence of applying pedagogical competence.

Building Healthy Socio-Educational Relationships with Students. In interviews, teachers expressed the importance of maintaining favourable interpersonal relationships with students. They use empathetic communication, listen attentively, and provide space for open dialogue, which fosters healthy teacher-student relationships, where students feel valued and are unafraid to express their opinions or ask questions. Positive communication provides a strong psychological foundation for learning. When students feel emotionally safe and comfortable, they are more receptive to learning. Teachers also find it easier to provide guidance and foster discipline without an authoritarian approach.

Challenges and opportunities for improving pedagogical competence

Although most teachers at SDIT Al Ihsan have demonstrated strong pedagogical competence, challenges must be addressed. These include some teachers' inexperience in preparing comprehensive and systematic lesson plans, limited written reflection skills, and delays in developing strategies for addressing students experiencing learning difficulties.

Opportunities for improvements can be addressed through coaching clinic programs, internal training, or lesson studies that allow teachers to learn from each other and share good practices. With a collaborative approach, each teacher can continuously develop their pedagogical skills.

Pedagogical Transformation Based on School-Parent Collaboration. To create meaningful learning, relying solely on teachers in the classroom is not enough. Parents also play a crucial role in reinforcing the values instilled in the school. Teachers at SDIT Al Ihsan actively communicate with parents through class WhatsApp groups, student progress reports, and regular meetings. This collaboration is a concrete manifestation of the three-center approach to education (family, school, and community) recommended by Ki Hajar Dewantara. Learning becomes more integrated when teachers and parents work together and comprehensively impacts student development.

Conclusion and Recommendations/Implications

Based on the theoretical review presented, teachers' pedagogical competence is a key factor in improving the quality of learning. Teachers who possess this competence are capable of understanding the characteristics of their students and designing learning processes that are systematic and contextual, as well as implementing and evaluating instruction accurately and continuously. In the context of SDIT Al Ihsan Koto Baru, strengthening pedagogical competence goes beyond the technical aspects of teaching. It also involves the integration of Islamic values such as *adab* (proper manners), *akhlak* (ethics), and spiritual approaches. This demonstrates that learning quality is not solely determined by academic achievement and by the development of students' character and moral values. Thus, professional and pedagogical competent teachers can create meaningful, relevant, and impactful learning experiences that support students' holistic development—intellectually, socially, emotionally, and spiritually.

Disclosure statement

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest.

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