

Behind the Classroom Door: Uncovering Teacher Competence in the Kindergarten Learning Process

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Abstract. This study aims to analyse teacher competence in the learning process at Sambinoe Kindergarten, Aceh Jaya District. The research used a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through interviews with three teachers as the main informants. The results showed that teachers have four main competencies, namely pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competencies. However, the application of these competencies has not been fully optimized. Pedagogical competence can be seen from teachers' understanding of children's characteristics and fun learning designs, but the use of learning media and the preparation of lesson plans are still very minimal so that learning becomes less effective and less interesting. Teachers' professional competence is supported by participation in training and seminars, although self-development still relies heavily on individual motivation. Social competence is reflected in teachers' ability to communicate with students, parents and the community, and to introduce local cultural values. Personality competence is reflected in teachers' efforts to be role models and maintain ethics. Overall, teachers' competencies, especially in lesson planning, media innovation and self-development, are improving.

Keywords: *Early Childhood, Learning Process, Teacher Competence.*

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kompetensi guru dalam proses pembelajaran di TK Sambinoe, Kabupaten Aceh Jaya. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara terhadap tiga orang guru sebagai informan utama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru telah memiliki empat kompetensi utama, yaitu kompetensi pedagogik, profesional, sosial, dan kepribadian. Namun, penerapan kompetensi tersebut belum sepenuhnya optimal. Kompetensi pedagogik terlihat dari pemahaman guru terhadap karakteristik anak dan desain pembelajaran yang menyenangkan, namun penggunaan media pembelajaran dan penyusunan RPPH masih sangat minim sehingga pembelajaran menjadi kurang efektif dan kurang menarik. Kompetensi profesional guru didukung oleh keikutsertaan dalam pelatihan dan seminar, meskipun pengembangan diri masih sangat bergantung pada motivasi individu. Kompetensi sosial tercermin dari kemampuan guru berkomunikasi dengan siswa, orang tua, dan masyarakat, serta memperkenalkan nilai-nilai budaya lokal. Kompetensi kepribadian terlihat dari upaya guru menjadi teladan dan menjaga etika. Secara keseluruhan, peningkatan kompetensi guru, terutama dalam perencanaan pembelajaran, inovasi

media, dan pengembangan profesional berkelanjutan, sangat diperlukan agar proses pembelajaran di TK menjadi lebih efektif dan menyenangkan.

Kata Kunci: Anak usia dini, Proses pembelajaran, Kompetensi guru.

Introduction

In the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 137 of 2014 concerning education standards and educational personnel Article 25, the competence of early childhood teachers is developed as a whole, including pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competencies (Republik Indonesia, 2014).

Teacher competence is not only related to the ability to manage learning, but also includes basic skills that directly affect the learning process (Adnan Hakim, 2015). According to David Mc. Clelland, competence is a basic skill that can influence learning outcomes, where superior individuals will be able to plan and implement learning with better results (Bahri, 2019). Thus, teacher competence is an important indicator in creating a meaningful and effective learning process (Rahmatullah, 2016). Furthermore, teacher competence can be interpreted as a manifestation of what a teacher does in carrying out their duties, both inside and outside the classroom (Rahman & Yuzar, 2020). Teachers actions in dealing with various problems during the learning process are strongly influenced by their level of competence.

Therefore, competence is a very important thing that must be considered because early childhood teachers are role models for students, and when teaching must refer to established regulations related to knowledge and education, including the ability to evaluate, plan, implement processes, and assess learning (Fadhillah et al., 2024; Iqbal et al., 2023; Tatto, 2021). An early childhood teacher is considered to have good professionalism if they have four competencies which include personality competence, social competence, pedagogical or educational competence, and professional competence (Zurriyati et al., 2023).

From the results of the initial observations of researchers on July 25, 2023 at Sambinoe Kindergarten is one of the state kindergartens located in a rural area and the most interested in entering the kindergarten while in this village there are 3 kindergartens that are developing, for the number of teachers at Sambinoe Kindergarten 4 teachers, 3 of whom graduated from early childhood education studies program (undergraduate level) and 1 teacher only graduated from . The results of

initial observations that researchers saw that the pedagogical competence in the learning process was already owned by the teacher, but not all aspects of the pedagogical competence were applied, such as in the use of very minimal media and learning processes that rarely use daily lesson plan so that the learning process that occurs is ineffective and boring.

Method

This research employs a qualitative approach, which is suitable for exploring and understanding phenomena in depth and within their natural contexts (Lim, 2025) According to Raco (2010), qualitative research is a type of research that aims to provide a comprehensive and detailed description of the subject or participant within a naturally occurring setting. This approach allows the researcher to gain insights into participants' perspectives, experiences, and interpretations regarding the pedagogical competence of kindergarten teachers in the learning process.

The study was conducted at Sambino Kindergarten, located in Ligan Village, Sampoiniet District, Aceh Jaya Regency, Aceh Province. The selection of this site was based on its relevance to the research focus and accessibility for data collection. The natural school environment provided a rich setting for observing and exploring the actual practices of kindergarten teachers in their daily teaching routines.

The primary data source in this study consists of in-depth interviews conducted with teachers who serve as key informants. Three teachers from Sambino Kindergarten were selected as respondents using purposive sampling, based on their teaching experience and involvement in the learning process. These informants are referred to in the study as Respondent 1 (R1), Respondent 2 (R2), and Respondent 3 (R3). The interviews were conducted using semi-structured interview guides to allow flexibility in exploring relevant themes, while still focusing on core research questions related to pedagogical competence.

To ensure data validity, the researcher applied triangulation techniques, including cross-checking information obtained from the interviews with field notes and documentation available at the kindergarten. Data analysis was carried out through thematic analysis, involving coding, categorizing, and interpreting patterns that emerged from the interview transcripts. The process was iterative and reflective, allowing for a deep understanding of the respondents' perspectives and teaching practices. The qualitative method used in this research provides a rich and nuanced

understanding of the pedagogical competence of kindergarten teachers in a real-world context, enabling the exploration of practices, challenges, and professional insights that cannot be captured through quantitative approaches alone.

Ethical considerations were also prioritized during the research process. The researcher obtained informed consent from all participants, ensured confidentiality of their identities, and used pseudonyms (R1, R2, R3) in reporting the findings. The study strictly adhered to ethical standards for research involving human subjects.

Results and Discussions

Pedagogical Competence of Teachers in the Learning Process at Kindergarten

Pedagogical competence in Sambinoe Kindergarten when in the learning process is already owned by the teacher, but not all aspects in the pedagogical competence are applied, such as in the use of very minimal media and learning processes that rarely use the lesson plans so that the learning process that occurs is ineffective and boring. Teachers during learning often tell students to draw and colour almost every day, teachers also rarely make their own learning media. based on an interview with R 1:

“What I know about the teacher's pedagogical competence includes the teacher's understanding of students, and not only knowledge but also the teacher must be able to design and implement learning, such as fun learning so that students remain enthusiastic about coming to school every day”

Based on the results of the study, it can be understood that the teacher's pedagogical competence is not only in making learning media but also includes the teacher's understanding of learning materials, recognizing the characteristics of each student, knowing the development of students and designing learning that is fun and can provide motivation for students. Teacher pedagogical competence is also one of the distinctive abilities that distinguish teachers from other professions, including understanding the characteristics of students, planning learning, implementing creative and enjoyable learning, and evaluating learning outcomes to develop children's potential (Fitria & Lestari, 2024). Based on an interview with R 2:

“Once in a while I design learning activities but not every day I design learning activities because I forget or don't have time to design learning activities”

Based on the research results above, it can be understood that some teachers at Sambinoe Kindergarten do not design activities for students every day because the

teacher does not have time and forgets to design educational learning activities for students. Teachers in kindergarten are also aware of the importance of designing learning activities, but the teacher does not always do it every day. Teachers are also found in preparing teaching modules and lesson plans, especially in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum (Fadhli et al., 2024). The main obstacles found are teachers' lack of understanding of project-based learning methods, variations in the format of lesson plans (Capah et al., 2025).

“That is by looking at the development of students first and then I design learning development activities for students in accordance with the curriculum or semester plan, and the lesson plans”.

A key component of good kindergarten instruction is pedagogical competence, which includes the capacity of educators to plan, carry out, and assess developmentally appropriate learning activities for young students. Since play, exploration, and social contact are the best ways for children to learn at this early stage of development, teachers must embrace child-centred and holistic teaching methods (Impact et al., 2018; Pupíková et al., 2021). Kindergarten instructors with pedagogical competence are able to design inclusive, relevant, and stimulating learning activities that promote kids' cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development because they are aware of the special traits of early childhood development. To pique interest and encourage active engagement, they employ a variety of teaching techniques, including interactive games, storytelling, music, and visual aids.

Based on the results of the research above, what can be understood is that the development activities designed can also be by looking first at the development or needs of students and making the semester program-plan and daily lesson plan as a reference in developing learning activities. This is in line with the principles of child-centred learning and holistic development, which requires teachers to design activities based on careful observation of learner development (Nuraeni et al., 2025).

Teacher Professional Competence the Learning Process at Kindergarten

Professional competence includes mastery of subject matter in breadth and depth and the ability to develop oneself sustainably (Erika et al., 2024). Teacher professional competence refers to the teacher's ability to master the subject matter comprehensively and deeply, which includes understanding the theories, concepts, and principles relevant to the field of study being taught. This mastery allows teachers

to deliver material effectively, answer various questions from students, and relate material to real contexts that can increase students' understanding and interest in learning. In addition, professional competence also includes the ability of teachers to continuously develop themselves through various learning activities, training, research, and self-reflection. Based on an interview with R 1 :

"The teacher's professional competence can support learning or have knowledge that is mastered so that he can develop material creatively so that students feel fun or have enthusiasm every morning to go to school"

Based on the results of the research above, what can be understood is that the professional competence of teachers can support learning and teachers must have mastered knowledge so that learning that occurs can be developed into creative and enjoyable learning. This competency allows teachers to develop creative and fun learning, so as to improve the quality and effectiveness of the child's learning process (Erika et al., 2024; Mala et al., 2025). Based on an interview with R 2:

"In my opinion, professional competence is very important in every teacher at school because professional competence teachers have more sense of responsibility and discipline when going to school"

Based on the results of the research above, what can be understood is that teacher competence is very important to be applied in a kindergarten because professional competence makes it easier for teachers to make the learning process effective and efficient and must also be owned and applied within the teacher so that the teacher has more sense of responsibility and has discipline. therefore teachers must get training, and practical experience which plays an important role in strengthening professional competence (Mala et al., 2025). Based on an interview with R 3:

"Yes, to develop my professionalism I often look for information or knowledge about the professionalism of being a teacher and I also participate in various activities such as seminars and training on the competencies that exist in teachers"

Based on the results of the research above, what can be understood is that to develop the professionalism of a teacher can not only be from other people but also comes from the desire within a person and it can be seen from the presence of teachers in attending various seminars and training that exist to improve teacher professionalism. because the development of PAUD teacher professionalism depends heavily on the motivation and desire of teachers to continue to learn and develop

themselves. Teachers who actively participate in various training programs and seminars show a significant increase in knowledge and skills (Jasmani & Eliza, 2023).

Social Competence in the Learning Process in Kindergarten

Teachers' social competence is their ability to interact effectively and harmoniously with students, peers, parents, and the school social environment. This competency includes good communication skills, empathy, familiarity, and the ability to build positive relationships that support children's social and emotional development (Siregar et al., 2024). Based on an interview with R 1:

"In my opinion, social competence is about the ability of teachers to interact with colleagues, the community and most importantly with students"

Based on the results of the above research, it can be understood that social competence involves the ability of teachers to interact with various parties, such as colleagues at school, the community around the school environment, and most importantly with the students themselves. Teachers' social competence also plays an important role in creating a positive and inclusive learning environment (Hanipa, 2024). Based on an interview with R 2:

"The way I communicate with the community is very easy and easy, every morning when students are dropped off at school I always invite good communication with the community as well as the parents of students and always mingle with the community"

Based on the results of the research above, what can be understood is that the teacher every morning when parents bring students to school, then the teacher invites parents of students to interact with the community or parents of students and the community. Because open communication and cooperation between teachers and parents is very important to create a conducive learning environment (Maya et al., 2024). Based on an interview with R 3:

"The way I implement various programs to increase or recognize socio-cultural diversity, here we also teach students about typical Acehese dances, so that students can get to know socio-cultural diversity"

Based on the results of the research above, what can be understood is that introducing socio-cultural diversity to students is very important, especially in introducing it to students, it can all be started by introducing various customs of their own culture such as introducing typical Acehese dances. Teachers who actively introduce local cultures, such as Acehese traditional dance, can create an inclusive

and harmonious learning environment, while reducing cultural conflicts in the classroom (Muhammad, 2024).

Teacher Professional Competence in the Learning Process in Kindergarten

Teacher personality competence is the ability of a steady, stable, mature, wise, and authoritative personality, as well as being a role model for students with noble character. This competency includes good attitudes, behaviour, and social interactions with students, which have a direct effect on student character building.

Indicators of teacher personality competence include a strong personality and personal integrity, maturity, wisdom, noble character, and sensitivity to change and renewal in the learning process (Nafisa et al., 2025). Based on an interview with R 1:

“Teacher personality competence is one of the most important things and refers to how a teacher acts in accordance with religious, legal, social and cultural norms”.

Based on the results of the above research, what can be understood is that personality competence is one of the most important competencies and refers to the way teachers act in accordance with religious, social and cultural norms. Therefore, the importance of this personality competence is because a teacher is not only an academic guide for students, but also an example and role model in everyday life. Based on an interview with R 2:

“In my opinion, to implement personality competence, it is enough to be a role model for students and participate in various activities such as seminars and training”.

Based on the results of the research above, what can be understood is that to apply personality competence, one of them must be a role model for students and participate in various activities such as seminars and training. Attending seminars and training is one way to continue to develop yourself in the personality aspect. Seminars and training can provide new insights, skills, and knowledge that can improve teacher personality competence (Afrianti, 2024). Based on an interview with R 2:

“Be a role model and provide good motivation and always behave well in front of students and also when at school”.

Teacher professional competency in the kindergarten learning process is defined as a teacher's mastery of educational information, teaching abilities, and professional attitudes that promote successful and meaningful early childhood education (Gallego & Caingcoy, 2021). This competency comprises a thorough comprehension of curricular details, the ability to create and deliver compelling

learning experiences, and the ability to evaluate and reflect on teaching methods (Tatto, 2021). Professional competence in early childhood education also includes understanding how to integrate play-based learning with fundamental academic principles, as well as managing a classroom in a way that fosters a safe, inclusive, and supportive atmosphere (Dewi et al., 2020; TARIDI & DONO, 2019). Kindergarten teachers must be adept at communication, collaboration with parents and colleagues, and continual professional development in order to keep their knowledge and methods up to date.

Based on the results of the above research, what can be understood is that being a teacher is a very noble thing and teachers must also be good role models, always provide motivation that can increase enthusiasm in students and also behave well in the school environment.

Conclusion

Teacher competencies at Sambinoe Kindergarten have covered four main aspects, namely pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competencies. However, the application of these competencies is not optimal, especially in the use of learning media and the preparation of daily lesson plan which are still minimal. Teachers generally understand the importance of designing learning that is fun and developmentally appropriate, but time constraints and understanding of learning methods are the main obstacles. Teachers' professional competence can be seen from their efforts to attend training and seminars, but self-development still relies heavily on personal motivation. Teachers' social and personality competencies are quite good, reflected in positive interactions with students, parents and the school environment, as well as being role models for students.

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