

# THE PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE OF TEACHERS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR INDICATORS OF LEARNING QUALITY AT SMP NEGERI 2 PARIGI GOWA REGENCY

**Herlin Pebrianti Yuanita Ponto<sup>1</sup>, Marjuni<sup>2</sup>, St. Syamsudduha<sup>3</sup>, & Umar Sulaiman<sup>4</sup>**

Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia

Correspondence email; <sup>1</sup>[herlinpebriantiponto@gmail.com](mailto:herlinpebriantiponto@gmail.com), <sup>2</sup>[marjuni@uin-alauddin.ac.id](mailto:marjuni@uin-alauddin.ac.id),

<sup>3</sup>[st.syamsudduha@uin-alauddin.ac.id](mailto:st.syamsudduha@uin-alauddin.ac.id), <sup>4</sup>[umar.sulaiman@uin-alauddin.ac.id](mailto:umar.sulaiman@uin-alauddin.ac.id)

## ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand teachers' experiences in enhancing their professional competencies and the implications for the indicators of learning quality at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi, Gowa Regency. Employing a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, this research delves into how teachers perceive and implement professional competencies in their daily teaching practices. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with 10 teachers with varied teaching experiences. Data analysis was performed using thematic analysis to identify key themes emerging from the participants' experiences. The findings reveal that teachers possess a high awareness of the importance of developing professional competencies to improve learning quality. Several key themes emerged, including: (1) the significance of enhancing teaching skills, (2) challenges in implementing effective curricula, and (3) the role of institutional support in professional development. The results indicate that improving teachers' professional competencies significantly influences the quality of interactions and student engagement in the learning process. This study suggests the need for stronger institutional support, such as training programs and seminars focused on continuous professional competency development. Thus, the quality of education at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi can be more effectively achieved and sustained.

**Keywords:** Teacher professional competencies; learning quality indicators; qualitative method; phenomenological approach; SMP Negeri 2 Parigi.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers are a key element in the education system, particularly in schools. Other components such as curriculum, facilities, infrastructure, and funding will be meaningless if the essence of learning namely the interaction between teachers and students is not of quality (Iskandar, 2018). Teachers also play a decisive role in determining student success, especially in relation to the learning process. They are the most influential component in shaping the creation

of a quality educational process and outcomes. Any attempt to improve education quality will not yield significant results without the support of professional and competent teachers (Marjuni, 2016)

Competence, according to Uno, refers to the ability and skills. It is further defined as mastery of knowledge regarding tasks, skills, attitudes, and appreciation required to support success. (Uno, 2016) Mulyasa emphasizes that competence is a core component of professional standards alongside a code of ethics, which functions as professional regulation established through specific procedures and supervisory systems. (Mulyasa, 2009)

Professional competence is one of the essential elements in determining the quality of education in Indonesia, including at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi. In the context of education, teachers' professional competence encompasses knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for conducting effective and efficient teaching. The Republic of Indonesia Law No. 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers stipulates that teachers must master four main competencies: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional. These four competencies are interrelated and each contributes to the quality of learning received by students.

Improving the quality of learning at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi faces several challenges, including variations in teachers' competence levels, curriculum changes, students with diverse backgrounds and abilities, limited resources, and insufficient support. In classroom practice, teachers with professional competence are better able to deliver higher quality learning processes.

The primary focus of this study is to explore how teachers' professional competence contributes to indicators of learning quality at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi, including students' learning outcomes, active participation in the learning process, and students' satisfaction. Previous studies have indicated that professional competence plays a critical role in determining learning quality. Sustainable professional development and the use of effective teaching methodologies contribute significantly to student achievement (Kholifah, 2023). However, field observations show that not all teachers are able to optimally apply the competencies they possess in the learning process.

Based on this background, it can be assumed that the quality of learning provided by teachers is still insufficient to meet students' learning needs. Therefore, this study, entitled "Teachers' Professional Competence and Its Implications for Learning Quality Indicators at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi", seeks to further explore the significant contributions of teachers' professional competence to improving learning quality at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi.

## **2. METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, aiming to understand the meanings and experiences expressed by teachers regarding their professional competence and its implications for improving learning quality. Data were collected through in-

depth interviews with 10 teachers from various disciplines and diverse teaching backgrounds. The interviews were conducted in an open and relaxed atmosphere to encourage participants to share their experiences honestly. Phenomenology was chosen because it focuses on individuals' subjective experiences and how they interpret those experiences. The primary instrument used in this study was in-depth interviews, guided by a semi-structured interview protocol.

Data analysis was carried out using a thematic analysis approach. First, interview transcripts were produced and thoroughly reviewed to understand the context and meaning of participants' statements. Next, relevant themes were identified, categorized, and further analyzed. Ethical considerations were also observed throughout this research. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and were asked to provide consent prior to participation.

### **3. RESULT**

Professional competence refers to the ability to master learning materials comprehensively and in depth, enabling teachers to guide students in meeting competency standards. Professional competence includes several sub-competencies: (1) mastery of subject matter and its scientific methodology, (2) mastery of curriculum structure and subject content, (3) mastery and utilization of information and communication technology in teaching, and (4) the ability to organize subject-specific curricula (Nurtanto Muhammad, 2016). Professional competence is closely related to teachers' mastery of the scientific structure of the subjects they teach, both broadly and deeply, so that they can effectively guide students in acquiring knowledge and skills optimally. This competence is strongly tied to the teacher's role and function in the learning process.

Through thematic analysis of the in-depth interviews, this study identified three major themes that illustrate the dynamics of improving teacher competence: (1) The importance of enhancing teaching skills (2) Challenges in curriculum implementation, (3) The role of school support in professional development and its implications for teaching practices.

#### **The Importance of Improving Teaching Skills**

Teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi emphasized the importance of improving teaching skills to enhance the quality of learning. They recognized the need to continually learn and adapt to various new methods in order to create more meaningful interactions and increase student engagement. This finding is consistent with previous research, which indicated that teacher competence positively correlates with student learning outcomes. According to Kunandar, as cited by Bagou and Suling, a professional teacher is one who understands themselves as a person called to accompany students in the learning process.(Bagou & Suling, 2020). Most teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi had participated in various forms of training organized both by the school and by external educational institutions. One significant outcome was the application of interactive teaching techniques that actively involve students.

Interview findings revealed that teachers believe the ability to understand and apply diverse teaching methods is the key to increasing student engagement and improving learning outcomes. Enhancing teaching skills is not only achieved through formal training provided by the education office or training institutions, but also through teachers' own initiatives in

developing creative and innovative teaching practices. Teachers acknowledged that professional competence, especially teaching skills, is a crucial step in adjusting the learning process to the diverse needs of students. One of the most frequently mentioned skills during the interviews was the use of varied and engaging teaching methods to foster and increase student participation..

Field observations further showed that monotonous teaching methods tend to reduce students' learning motivation. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to seek diverse teaching approaches, whether through personal experience, sharing best practices with colleagues, or attending both online and offline training programs. One commonly adopted technique among teachers was project-based learning. This method has proven effective in improving students' understanding of the material, while also fostering collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving skills.

Beyond teaching methods, teachers also placed emphasis on classroom management skills. Good classroom management not only maintains order but also fosters students' emotional involvement in learning. One teacher, for instance, reported applying more empathetic communication techniques, such as providing constructive feedback, which helped boost students' learning motivation.

In the teaching process, the integration of technology was also regarded as an urgent skill. Several teachers admitted, however, that they still struggled to effectively incorporate technology into learning. Despite these challenges, they sought to maximize available resources and actively shared best practices with colleagues on how to apply technology in teaching. Another focus was the development of more contextual teaching materials that are relevant to students' real-life experiences, making concepts easier to understand and more meaningful

The improvement of teaching skills also involved continuous reflection on classroom practices. Teachers reported that they frequently engaged in peer reflection sessions to discuss their teaching practices and evaluate the methods used. Such reflection helped them to continually learn and develop better teaching strategies.

Overall, this study found that improving teaching skills makes a significant contribution to creating quality learning. Teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi demonstrated a high level of initiative in developing their skills, both through formal training and independent learning. They recognized that, to be effective teachers, they must continuously learn and adapt to changes, particularly with technological advancements and curriculum reforms. Teachers who actively develop themselves are not only able to enhance students' understanding of the subject matter but also succeed in creating an enjoyable learning environment that motivates students to participate actively in the learning process..

### **Challenges in Implementing an Effective Curriculum**

One of the most dominant challenges lies in the fact that curriculum standards often do not align with the diverse conditions and abilities of students. For example, several teachers reported that in a single class, students possess very different levels of understanding, yet the curriculum requires them to achieve the same learning targets within a predetermined

timeframe. As one teacher expressed: "The curriculum is good, but in reality, it is difficult for me to adjust it to students who have diverse backgrounds and different learning needs."

A lack of resources and supporting facilities also presents a challenge in implementing project-based learning or technology-based instruction. Teachers felt that without adequate facilities, it was difficult to optimize curriculum implementation and achieve the intended learning goals. Beyond internal factors, external challenges also affected curriculum application. One of the most significant was parental involvement. Teachers acknowledged that parents play a vital role in supporting students' learning at home, particularly in curricula that require active student participation. However, some parents lacked the time or knowledge to guide their children's learning, which created a gap between school learning and home learning, ultimately influencing student achievement.

To address these challenges, teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi adopted various adaptive strategies. One approach was to modify learning materials and methods to better suit students' contexts. Teachers also sought to be more creative in utilizing limited resources, such as by creating their own teaching aids or using readily available materials from the school environment. Additionally, teacher working groups were formed to share experiences and provide mutual support in overcoming the challenges they faced.

Teachers also expressed the need for increased support from schools and government in the form of better facilities, as well as more intensive and continuous training. They believed that with stronger institutional support, they would be more capable of implementing the curriculum effectively and achieving the desired educational goals. School principals were also identified as playing an important role in providing motivation and facilitating teachers in facing these challenges. Some teachers mentioned that principals who were proactive and supportive of teachers' initiatives in innovation had a positive impact on their enthusiasm to continue learning and developing professionally.

Overall, the challenges in implementing the curriculum at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi included issues of curriculum flexibility, limited time, inadequate resources, lack of parental support, and varying levels of student motivation. These challenges indicate the need for a more flexible approach and stronger support from multiple stakeholders, including schools, government, and parents. With such support, curriculum implementation can be carried out more effectively, and the goal of quality education can be achieved. Improving teacher training, providing adequate resources, and strengthening institutional support are essential keys to overcoming these challenges and ensuring that every student gains the best possible learning experience.

### **School Support in Professional Development**

School support is one of the crucial aspects that significantly influences the professional development of teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi. The findings of this study indicate that the role of school support goes beyond providing physical facilities; it also involves creating an environment that fosters continuous skill development among teachers. This subsection discusses several key aspects of school support, including the provision of facilities, training and professional development opportunities, encouragement from school principals, and the establishment of a positive working climate.

School support in the form of teaching and learning facilities was highly valued by teachers. Based on interviews with teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi, the facilities provided by the school included comfortable classrooms, laptops, LCD projectors, and other instructional tools. These facilities were considered essential in enabling teachers to implement more creative and interactive teaching methods. One teacher remarked: "With the availability of an LCD projector, I can teach in a more engaging way, using videos and more visual presentations, which makes students more interested and actively involved in the learning process."

School support also encompassed the organization of, and opportunities to attend, training and professional development programs. These trainings covered various topics, ranging from innovative teaching techniques and the use of technology in the classroom to more effective classroom management strategies. Teachers reported that the trainings they attended significantly improved their teaching competencies, particularly in applying innovative and student-centered teaching methods.

Teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi felt that the training they received helped them address challenges in curriculum implementation, particularly in competency-based assessment and in adopting more student-centered approaches. In addition to school-based training, teachers were also encouraged to participate in external training provided by other educational institutions. As one teacher stated: "The school always supports us in attending training outside the school, even assisting with the administrative process. This greatly motivates us to keep learning and developing."

The role of the school principal in providing moral support and motivation was also found to be highly significant in teachers' professional development. According to interview results, the principal of SMP Negeri 2 Parigi played an active role in encouraging teachers to continue learning and developing their skills. Principals frequently expressed appreciation for teachers' efforts and achievements, both formally and informally. Such recognition came in the form of awards during school meetings, public acknowledgment in front of colleagues, and opportunities to attend training programs or educational conferences.

Teachers felt that the appreciation they received from the principal greatly motivated them to continually improve their skills and competencies. One teacher shared: "The principal always supports us by giving recognition and opportunities to learn. This makes me feel valued and inspires me to always do my best." The encouragement and motivation provided by the principal created a positive working environment where teachers felt their efforts were acknowledged and supported, which in turn motivated them to enhance their teaching skills further.

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that school support plays a highly significant role in the professional development of teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi. Such support is not limited to material resources, such as facilities and teaching materials, but also includes moral support, motivation, and the creation of a conducive working environment. The support of the principal and the implementation of programs that encourage collaboration among teachers were particularly influential in strengthening teachers' enthusiasm and motivation to continuously learn and improve their teaching skills.

Strong school support provides a solid foundation for teachers to develop their competencies. Teachers who feel supported are more motivated to innovate in their teaching, experiment with new methods, and ultimately enhance the quality of learning delivered to students. Therefore, investment in teacher professional development support is a strategic step that must continually be strengthened to achieve better learning quality.

### **The Relationship Between Professional Competence and Learning Quality**

The enhancement of professional competence has been shown to exert a significant influence on the quality of teaching and learning. Continuous improvement in pedagogical skills enables teachers to exercise greater flexibility in employing a range of instructional methods and strategies tailored to students' needs. As highlighted by Muh. Muizzuddin, the development of teacher professionalism is an imperative that can no longer be negotiated. Anyone who seeks to sustain their position as an educator must be both willing and able to pursue ongoing professional growth. Without such development, teachers would be unable to fulfill their critical role as determinants of educational quality, which in turn has far-reaching implications for the future of the nation.(Muizzuddin, 2019)

Professional competence is intrinsically linked to the quality of instruction delivered. Findings from a study conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi demonstrate that the higher a teacher's level of professional competence, the greater the quality of learning experienced by students. Professional competence in this context encompasses a broad range of dimensions, including instructional skills, classroom management, the integration of technology, and the capacity for innovation in learning strategies.

Teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi who exhibit higher levels of professional competence demonstrate a stronger ability to apply diverse pedagogical approaches suited to students' varying needs. Such teachers successfully create learning experiences that are engaging and interactive, thereby fostering greater student participation. As one teacher remarked, "When I employ more varied teaching techniques, students become more enthusiastic and grasp the material more quickly." This observation underscores the notion that a high degree of professional competence empowers educators to construct more effective and stimulating learning environments.

Furthermore, the study reveals that professionally competent teachers exhibit greater flexibility in aligning instructional content and methods with students' diverse learning profiles. These teachers are able to identify differences in learners' abilities and adapt their approaches accordingly. This responsiveness is particularly salient within the framework of student-centered curricula, which require teachers to tailor instructional strategies to ensure equitable access to learning, regardless of whether students progress quickly or more gradually.

Another crucial aspect of professional competence lies in classroom management. Teachers with well-developed management skills are able to establish learning environments that are both conducive and motivating. As one teacher noted, "Effective classroom management is not merely about maintaining discipline, but about fostering an atmosphere that encourages students to participate confidently." Such management practices enable teachers to

sustain students' focus, minimize disruptions, and ensure that all learners are provided with meaningful opportunities for active engagement.

Overall, the relationship between professional competence and learning quality is both strong and reciprocal. Teachers with well-developed professional skills are better positioned to design learning experiences that are meaningful, relevant, and enjoyable. They demonstrate flexibility in adapting instruction to student needs, effectiveness in managing classrooms, and proficiency in utilizing technology to deepen students' understanding of subject matter. Consequently, initiatives aimed at strengthening teachers' professional competence must be regarded as a central priority in broader efforts to enhance the quality of education.

In conclusion, teachers' professional competence plays a decisive role in determining the success of classroom instruction. Institutional support—in the form of training programs, adequate facilities, and motivational leadership—remains essential to facilitate teachers' professional growth. As competence levels continue to rise, it is anticipated that the overall quality of teaching and learning at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi will correspondingly improve, ultimately providing students with more positive and meaningful educational experiences.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This study provides a comprehensive account of the various factors contributing to the enhancement of teachers' professional competence and its impact on the quality of learning at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi. In the introduction, it was explained that the research employed a phenomenological approach to understand teachers' lived experiences in developing their professional competence. The focus of the study was directed toward the improvement of teaching skills, the challenges of curriculum implementation, and the role of school support in professional development.

The method adopted in this study was in-depth interviews with ten teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi. The phenomenological approach enabled the researchers to explore, in greater depth, the experiences of teachers—how they addressed the challenges of classroom practice, and how they perceived the influence of institutional support on their professional growth.

The results of the study indicate that the improvement of teaching skills was identified as a central concern among teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi. They recognized that varied instructional methods are essential in engaging students and enhancing their understanding of subject matter. Such improvement was achieved through both formal training, conducted internally and externally, as well as through teachers' personal initiatives in adopting creative methods. This demonstrates a strong awareness among teachers of the importance of teaching skills, as well as their commitment to creating interactive and enjoyable learning environments.

The relationship between professional competence and the quality of learning at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi emerged clearly from the findings. Teachers with higher levels of professional competence were able to design lessons that were more engaging, relevant, and enjoyable for students. Competence in this sense encompassed not only pedagogical skills but also classroom management and the effective use of technology to support learning. Strong and sustained school support provided teachers with the resources and encouragement needed to continue



developing their professional competence, ultimately contributing to improved instructional quality at the school.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of investing in teachers' professional development to ensure the continuous improvement of educational quality. School support, enhanced teaching skills, and curricular flexibility were identified as key elements in achieving better educational outcomes. By strengthening professional competence, it is expected that the quality of learning at SMP Negeri 2 Parigi will continue to improve, thereby providing students with a more positive and meaningful educational experience.

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