

Strategies to Strengthen Teacher Professionalism Through Competency Development

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Abstract: Education is the main foundation in nation building, and teachers play a strategic role in creating a quality learning process. The professionalism of teachers greatly determines the success of education,

especially in facing the challenges of globalization and technological developments. This article aims to examine the importance of teacher competency development as a strategy to strengthen professionalism in improving the quality of education. This study uses a qualitative approach through the literature review method by examining various academic sources, government policies, and related research results. The results of the study show that the development of teachers' competencies, both pedagogical, personality, social, and professional, must be carried out in a systematic, structured, and sustainable manner. Some of the strategies identified include individual training, observation and reflection, involvement in curriculum development, as well as scientific forums and professional organizations. Programs such as *pre-service education*, *in-service training*, as well as reinforcement through teacher working groups (MGMP) and classroom action research are integral to this process. With comprehensive competency development, teachers are expected to be able to become adaptive, innovative, and professional educators in facing today's educational dynamics.

Keywords: *Teacher Professionalism, Teacher Competency Development*

Introduction

Education is the main pillar in the development of a nation. Teachers play a central role in creating a quality educational process. The success of the educational process is highly determined by the quality of teachers as the spearhead in transferring knowledge, shaping character and developing the potential of students. In the midst of the rapid change of times, especially technological developments and globalization, the guidance on the quality of teachers is getting higher. Teachers are not only expected to be able to master the learning material, but are also required to have pedagogical competence, good personality, adequate social and professional skills. This is in accordance with Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, which emphasizes that teachers must have these four basic competencies to carry out their duties professionally.

Teacher competence is a set of abilities that must be possessed by a teacher, which includes elements of knowledge, skills, ways of thinking, adaptability, attitudes, and values that are believed, in order to support the implementation of their duties and responsibilities in carrying out the profession as a teacher (Ramaliya, 2018). The competencies that teachers must

have have complementary roles in forming a professional and competitive teacher. *First* Pedagogic competencies include an in-depth understanding of students, planning and implementing the learning process, assessing learning outcomes, and efforts to develop Peseta Didik in order to optimize their potential. *Second* Personality competence is a personal ability that reflects the teacher's strong self-integrity, stable emotions, maturity in attitude, wisdom in action, and authority that makes him an example for students and reflects noble morals. *Third* Professional competence is the ability of teachers to master learning materials in depth and comprehensively, including understanding the content of the subject curriculum in schools, the scientific foundation that underlies the material, mastery of its scientific structure and methods, and its relationship with the development of life skills and concern for the environment. *Fourth* Social competence is the ability that teachers have to establish effective communication and interaction with students, fellow educators, education staff, parents or guardians of students, as well as the community and the surrounding environment (Cholid, 2015).

Teacher professionalism can be interpreted as the competence, expertise and skills possessed by an educator in carrying out his duties and responsibilities professionally (Primary, 2021). However, various challenges are faced in an effort to realize teacher professionalism in this era of globalization and digitalization. Changes in the curriculum, the development of information technology and increasing public demands for the quality of education require teachers to continue to improve their competence. Therefore, a systematic and sustainable strategy is needed in order to strengthen the professionalism of teachers, one of which is through comprehensive competency development. Thus, the purpose of writing this article is to comprehensively examine the importance of teacher competency development as one of the strategic efforts in strengthening teacher professionalism.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a *literature review method*. This method was chosen to explore, review, and synthesize various relevant literature sources regarding teacher competency development and strategies to strengthen teacher professionalism. Sources used as references include academic books, scientific journals, research reports, and government policies.

Data collection was carried out through literature searches in digital libraries, national and international journal databases, and official government publications. Data analysis was carried out descriptively by grouping the results of the study based on the main theme, namely teacher professionalism, teacher competence, and strategies to strengthen teacher professionalism. The results of the study are then formulated to provide a complete and comprehensive picture.

Findings and Discussion

Teacher Professionalism

Professionalism comes from the word profession which refers to a type of job that a person chooses or will be undertaken as the field he or she is engaged in. Professionalism is the state, orientation, values, goals, and quality of a skill and authority related to one's work (Lutfi, Sudirman, & Pramitha, 2013). In Law number 14 of 2005 article 1 paragraph 4 states that professionalism is a job or activity carried out by a person and is a source of life income that

requires expertise, proficiency, or proficiency that meets certain quality standards or norms and requires professional education. Thus, professionalism is a person's commitment and attitude in carrying out their profession with full responsibility, based on certain skills, skills, and quality standards and always developing their professional abilities

A teacher is a figure who is attached to a person who is glorified by many people (Hamid, 2020). Teachers are professional educators whose primary task is to educate, teach, guide, direct, train, assess, and evaluate learners. Teachers are the main facilitators in the school environment who play a role in exploring, developing, and optimizing the potential of students to grow into ethical individuals and be able to contribute to society. In addition to delivering subject matter, teachers also have an important responsibility in guiding students to master skills and instill the necessary values in life (Sulistiani & Nursiwi Nugraheni, 2023).

Teacher professionalism refers to the quality of expertise possessed by teachers in carrying out their duties and professional responsibilities. This is reflected in their seriousness in work, high motivation, and mastery of relevant knowledge, insights, and skills. In addition, the professionalism of teachers can also be seen from their ability to make decisions independently, focus on educational services, and play a role as part of a quality professional community (Ismail, Candra, & Ananda, 2024)

A professional teacher is characterized by a number of characteristics, including having a mature and constantly developing personality, being able to arouse students' interest in learning, and mastering science and technology in depth. His professionalism always grows sustainably. Professional teachers also have the ability to manage and adjust the curriculum, relate it to the conditions of the surrounding environment, and encourage students to learn independently. In addition, professional teachers also have the willingness to change traditional mindsets to be more innovative and open to innovation, as well as to understand and be able to effectively implement various modern learning approaches (Wasitohadi, 2024).

Teacher Competency Development

Development is an effort to improve the technical, theoretical, conceptual, and moral abilities of individuals through education and training activities to meet the demands of a job or position (Dimiyati, 2022). In addition, development can also be interpreted as a process that aims to optimize its potential to be better and have a higher use value. Development is a process to improve the abilities, skills, and expertise of employees in accordance with the goals of the organization/institution through education and training that is organized and continuous (Marhamah, 2022).

Competence comes from the word *competency* in English, which means *Ability* (ability), *capability* (Ability), *proficiency* (expertise), *qualification* (proficiency), *eligibility* (meet the requirements), *readiness* (readiness), *Skill* (skills), and *adequency* (matching). Competence is a combination of knowledge, skills, and fundamental values that are reflected in a person's mindset and actions consistently and continuously. This allows individuals to become competent, namely having the abilities, skills, and value bases needed to carry out a task or work well (Febriana, 2019). So it can be concluded that competence is the overall ability that a person has in the form of knowledge, skills, and values that are reflected in patterns of thought and

actions consistently and continuously, which allows individuals to carry out tasks or work well and in accordance with set standards.

Teacher competence is a qualitative picture of the nature of teacher behavior that is full of meaning (Jahidi, 2014). Teacher competence is a set of comprehensive abilities that an educator must possess to carry out his or her role professionally. This competency includes various important elements, such as mastery of knowledge relevant to the field being taught, skills in designing and implementing learning, critical and reflective thinking skills, and the ability to adapt to changes and developments in the world of education. In addition, teacher competencies also include professional attitudes, social sensitivity, moral responsibility, and internalization of values that are believed to be the foundation of ethics in education. By having these competencies, teachers are expected to be able to create an effective learning environment, guide students optimally, and contribute positively to improving the quality of education.

Based on Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers Article 10 paragraph (1) teacher competence includes pedagogic competence, personality competence, social competence and professional competence.

1. Competence in Education

Pedagogic competence is a basic ability that is very important for a teacher in carrying out the learning process. This competency includes a deep understanding of the characteristics of students, both from cognitive, emotional, social, and cultural backgrounds. Teachers who have pedagogic competence are able to design and implement learning that is in accordance with the needs and potential of students. In addition, teachers are also skilled in assessing learning outcomes objectively and consistently, as well as following up in the form of guidance or development of students so that their potential can develop optimally.

2. Personality Competencies

Personality competence refers to the personality qualities of teachers that reflect moral integrity and exemplary in action. Teachers must have a strong personality, be emotionally stable, and mature in thinking and behaving. A wise, responsible, and authoritative attitude is a characteristic of a teacher who is able to be a role model for his students. In addition, personality competence is also reflected in behaviors that show noble morals, such as honesty, discipline, and politeness in interacting with all parties in the educational environment.

3. Social Competence

Social competence describes the ability of teachers to build communication and establish good relationships with various parties involved in the world of education. Teachers must be able to interact effectively with students, create a conducive classroom atmosphere, and build harmonious cooperative relationships with fellow educators and education staff. Not only the school environment, teachers also need to establish positive communication with parents or guardians of students, as well as play an active role in community life. This ability is very important to create synergy between schools, families and communities in supporting the growth and development of students as a whole.

4. Professional Competencies

Professional competence is the ability of teachers to master in depth the learning materials they teach. This includes an understanding of the content of the curriculum, scientific concepts, structure, and scientific methods as well as the latest developments in the field. Professional teachers not only deliver subject matter, but are also able to relate the content of the lesson to the real-life context, thereby encouraging students to develop life skills. In addition, teachers are also required to continue to improve their competence through continuous self-development, both through training, seminars, and other scientific activities.

Efforts to develop and improve the professionalism of teachers are a step to support teachers who have not met professional qualifications in order to achieve them. Therefore, improving the professional competence of teachers means providing support or opportunities to them through various programs and activities organized by the government. The development of teachers' professional competencies is not only focused on coaching in the administrative aspects of staffing, but must emphasize more on improving professional competence and teachers' commitment as educators. Glickman stated that a professional teacher is characterized by two main things: a high level of ability and a strong commitment. Therefore, efforts to develop teacher professionalism need to be focused on the development of these two aspects (Sukron, 2022).

Teacher competency development is carried out by considering several things, namely

1. Advances in science and technology, especially in the context of globalization and information flow
2. To address deficiencies that were not identified during the selection process
3. Forming a professional attitude
4. Improve professional skills
5. Strengthen the emotional relationship between teachers and principals.

Practically, various activities that can support the improvement of teachers' professional competence include: providing guidance and assignments, participating in education and training programs, taking courses, continuing studies to a higher level, getting promotions, taking part in job training, rotation in positions, participating in conferences, participating in training, attending workshops, seminars, and getting professional coaching through supervision in teaching activities (Firmadani, 2022).

Strategies for Strengthening Teacher Professionalism

In an effort to improve the quality of education, strengthening the professionalism of teachers is a very important aspect. Teachers as the spearhead of the implementation of education are required to constantly improve their capacity and quality, both scientifically and in learning practice. One of the main strategies in strengthening teacher professionalism is through competency development, including the development of pedagogical, personality, social and professional competencies. The development of this competency not only aims to improve the performance of teachers in managing learning, but also to form the character of educators who are able to be exemplary, innovative, and adaptive to changes and challenges of the times. Therefore, a precise, structured and sustainable strategy is needed so that the

strengthening of teacher professionalism can be realized optimally.

According to (Syarifuddin K, 2024 : 51) To achieve the four competencies of teachers, it is necessary to pay attention to several models of teacher competency development, namely:

1. *Individual Guided Staff Development* , teachers can assess their learning needs and are able to learn actively and direct themselves. The teachers learn based on the assessment of the personnel of their needs.
2. *Observation / Assessment* in learning provides important information for teachers about the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The data obtained from these activities can be used by teachers to reflect and analyze what has gone well and what needs to be improved, with the main goal of improving student learning outcomes. Through this reflection process, teachers can improve the way they teach and make the next observation more useful and directed.
3. *Involvement in a development/improvement process* , learning in adults will be more effective if they are aware of the need to know something or when they are faced with a problem that needs to be solved. Therefore, teachers should gain new knowledge and skills by being directly involved in the process of improving school quality or in curriculum development activities, so that learning becomes more meaningful and relevant to their duties.
4. *Training* , in the process of training, there are positive techniques and behaviors that are worthy of being emulated by teachers when teaching in the classroom. Through this teaching, teachers can develop and adjust their behavior by imitating effective practices to be applied in learning activities in their respective classrooms.
5. *Inquiry* (examination), professional development is the study of cooperation by teachers themselves for problems and issues arising from efforts to make their practice consistent with the values of the field of education.

According to (Candra, Suhardi, & Amiruddin, 2023 : 96) There are four programs that can be used as a strategy to improve the quality of education through teacher professional development, namely:

1. *The Pre Service Education Program* is an effort to improve professionalism by selective screening of prospective teachers by paying attention to their quality and morals.
2. *The in Service Education program* is to motivate teachers to obtain higher education through further education. Teachers should be encouraged to increase their knowledge of the development of educational issues, to avoid the possibility that teachers will fall behind in the field of education. Therefore, teachers are obliged to update and improve their education to raise their professional level.
3. *The Program in Service Training* is an activity in the form of trainings, training, workshops, courses, seminars, discussions, either carried out by internal institutions or external institutions.
4. *The Program on Service Training* is through follow-up activities or *Follow Up* which are carried out by holding periodic or routine meetings between teachers and in order to always maintain professional peer relationships, family spirit and social solidarity.

Teacher competency development can be carried out through various alternative methods that have been recommended by the Directorate General of Primary and Secondary Education, Ministry of National Education. Some of them include programs to improve teachers' academic qualifications, certification and equalization programs, integrated competency-based training, and educational supervision activities. In addition, teachers can also develop themselves through the empowerment of working groups such as MGMP (Subject Teacher Deliberation), following *symposium*, conventional training, reading and writing scientific articles or journals, and being active in scientific forums. Development can also be carried out through research, especially Classroom Action Research (PTK), internship programs, following the development of current issues through the media, as well as by being actively involved in professional organizations and building collaboration with peers (Ramaliya, 2018).

Conclusion

Teacher competency development is a very important strategic step in strengthening teacher professionalism and improving the quality of education as a whole. Various models and programs have been developed to support this, ranging from individual training, observation and reflection of learning, involvement in curriculum development, effective teaching technique training, to joint study of problems in the field. Programs such as *pre-service education*, *in-service training*, and follow-up activities through teacher forums are a means to improve teachers' insights, skills, and professional attitudes. Support from educational institutions is also present through various initiatives such as qualification improvement programs, certifications, MGMP, symposiums, and classroom action research, all of which are shown so that teachers are able to adapt, be innovative and become role models in the world of education with planned and sustainable strategies, the development of these competencies is an important foundation in forming teachers who are not only academically competent, but also strong in personality, social and professional.

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