



Teachers' Pedagogical Competence as a Strong Predictor of Learning Quality in Elementary Education

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Abstract: This study investigates the effect of teachers' pedagogical competence on learning quality in public elementary schools in Tanggungharjo Subdistrict, Grobogan Regency. Employing a quantitative correlational design, the study involved 137 teachers selected through proportional random sampling. Data were collected using validated and reliable questionnaires measuring pedagogical competence and learning quality, and were analyzed using Pearson correlation and simple linear regression with SPSS. The findings reveal a positive and significant relationship between pedagogical competence and learning quality ($r = 0.832$; $p < 0.001$), indicating a very strong association. The coefficient of determination shows that pedagogical competence contributes 69.3% to the variance in learning quality. The regression equation ($Y = 27.769 + 1.045X$) suggests that improvements in pedagogical competence are directly followed by increases in learning quality. These results highlight the critical role of pedagogical competence as a key determinant of instructional effectiveness and emphasize the importance of targeted professional development programs to enhance teaching quality in elementary education.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini menganalisis pengaruh kompetensi pedagogik guru terhadap kualitas pembelajaran di SD Negeri se-Kecamatan Tanggungharjo, Kabupaten Grobogan. Penelitian kuantitatif dengan desain korelasional ini melibatkan 137 guru yang dipilih melalui proporsional random sampling. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan angket validitas serta reliabilitasnya, kemudian dianalisis dengan korelasi Pearson dan regresi linier sederhana menggunakan SPSS. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kompetensi pedagogik guru berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap kualitas pembelajaran ($r = 0,832$; $p < 0,001$), dengan kontribusi sebesar 69,3%. Persamaan regresi yang diperoleh adalah $\hat{Y} = 27,769 + 1,045X$. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa kompetensi pedagogik merupakan determinan utama kualitas pembelajaran dan menjadi dasar bagi pengembangan program peningkatan profesional guru yang lebih terarah. Semakin tinggi kompetensi pedagogik guru dalam memahami karakteristik peserta didik, merencanakan, melaksanakan, mengelola, dan mengevaluasi pembelajaran, semakin baik kualitas pembelajaran di sekolah dasar. Hasil ini juga memperlihatkan pentingnya dukungan sekolah dan pelatihan berkelanjutan agar kompetensi pedagogik diterapkan secara konsisten dalam praktik pembelajaran di kelas nyata.

A. Introduction

The quality of learning is widely recognized as a central indicator of the success of basic education, as it directly reflects students' achievement of competencies, engagement in the learning process, and cognitive development. In elementary education, learning quality is largely determined by the effectiveness of classroom instruction, where teachers play a pivotal role (Fauth et al., 2014; Stronge, 2018). Teachers' pedagogical competence encompasses the ability to understand student characteristics, design and implement instruction, select appropriate strategies and learning media, manage classroom dynamics, and conduct continuous assessment and reflection (Praetorius et al., 2018). As emphasized by Mulyasa (2021), pedagogical competence constitutes a fundamental dimension of teacher professionalism and serves as a direct determinant of instructional effectiveness. Consequently, enhancing teachers' pedagogical competence is not only a professional requirement but also a strategic necessity to ensure meaningful and high-quality learning experiences in elementary schools.

The importance of pedagogical competence becomes more evident when examined in specific empirical contexts. Field data from public elementary schools in Tanggungharjo Subdistrict, Grobogan Regency, reveal that the quality of learning remains at a moderate level, with an average score of 64.75, despite teachers demonstrating relatively high pedagogical competence, with an average score of 86.40. This discrepancy presents a critical issue: theoretically, higher pedagogical competence should be associated with improved learning quality. Teachers who possess strong pedagogical skills are expected to design more effective learning activities, facilitate student engagement, and implement appropriate assessment strategies. Tilaar (2009) and Mulyasa (2021) argue that the quality of education is fundamentally determined by the quality of classroom learning processes, which are directly influenced by teachers' competence. However, the observed mismatch between competence and learning quality suggests that the relationship is not always linear or automatically realized in practice. This condition raises an important question regarding the extent to which pedagogical competence actually contributes to learning quality, thereby necessitating empirical investigation.

A substantial body of research has demonstrated that teachers' pedagogical competence positively influences learning quality and student outcomes (Rustan & Irfandi, 2022; Rosyada et al., 2025; Rahmawati, 2020; Hidayah, 2021). More recent studies further indicate that pedagogical competence plays a crucial role in promoting student engagement and instructional effectiveness, particularly when teachers implement active learning strategies and formative assessment practices (Arifin et al., 2025; Wuryandoko et al., 2024; Iskanto et al., 2024; Dwiyantri & Robandi, 2024). These findings collectively affirm that pedagogical competence is a key factor in improving educational quality. However, despite the growing volume of research, several limitations remain evident. Most previous studies have examined pedagogical competence in conjunction with other variables, such as leadership, school climate, and teacher motivation, which often results in overlapping effects and makes it difficult to isolate its independent contribution to learning quality

(Sulistiyorini et al., 2025; Wandani et al., 2024). Furthermore, although pedagogical competence has frequently been linked to student achievement, relatively few studies have quantitatively measured its direct effect on learning quality using a single predictor model. This limitation is particularly pronounced in the context of elementary education, where teachers hold a more comprehensive role in managing the learning process. Therefore, a more focused analytical approach is needed to clarify the independent influence of pedagogical competence.

Addressing these gaps, the present study offers a distinct contribution through its focused analytical design. The novelty of this study lies in the use of a single-variable regression model that isolates pedagogical competence as the sole predictor of learning quality. By removing the influence of additional variables, this approach allows for a clearer estimation of the magnitude of pedagogical competence's direct contribution. Such an approach is critical because the explanatory power of pedagogical competence is often obscured in multi-variable models where multiple predictors interact. In addition, this study is situated within a specific and well-defined context, namely public elementary schools in Tanggungharjo Subdistrict. This contextual specificity enables a more grounded and nuanced understanding of how pedagogical competence operates within real classroom settings. Rather than merely reaffirming that pedagogical competence is important, this study seeks to provide precise empirical evidence regarding how strongly it influences learning quality in a localized educational context.

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in teacher competence theory, which positions pedagogical competence as a central determinant of effective teaching and learning processes (Mulyasa, 2021; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). This perspective is reinforced by Tilaar (2009), who emphasizes that the overall quality of education is inseparable from the quality of learning experiences created by teachers in the classroom. Pedagogical competence enables teachers to align instructional practices with students' developmental needs, select appropriate learning strategies, and create an environment that supports active and meaningful learning. It also supports teachers in conducting continuous assessment and reflection, which are essential for improving instructional practices. In this regard, pedagogical competence is not merely a technical attribute but a comprehensive capability that shapes the entire instructional process. Therefore, examining its direct contribution to learning quality is both theoretically relevant and practically significant.

Based on the empirical background, theoretical framework, and identified research gaps, this study formulates the following research question: To what extent does teachers' pedagogical competence influence the quality of learning? Accordingly, the primary objective of this study is to analyze the effect of teachers' pedagogical competence on learning quality in public elementary schools in Tanggungharjo Subdistrict. The study hypothesizes that pedagogical competence has a positive and significant effect on learning quality. By focusing on this relationship, the study aims to provide a clearer understanding of the role of pedagogical competence as an independent predictor of instructional quality.

This study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. From a theoretical perspective, it strengthens empirical evidence regarding the central role of pedagogical competence in determining learning quality and enriches the discourse on teacher competence in elementary education. From a practical perspective, the findings provide a basis for developing targeted and evidence-based teacher professional development programs aimed at enhancing pedagogical competence. These programs may focus on improving lesson planning, instructional strategies, classroom management, and assessment practices. Furthermore, the findings can inform school leaders and policymakers in prioritizing pedagogical competence as a key area for intervention in efforts to improve learning quality. Ultimately, this study underscores that enhancing pedagogical competence is a strategic pathway toward achieving more effective, meaningful, and high-quality learning in elementary education.

B. Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with a survey method and a correlational design to examine the effect of teachers' pedagogical competence on learning quality. The study was conducted in public elementary schools in Tanggungharjo Subdistrict, Grobogan Regency, Indonesia, from September to November 2025. The population consisted of 137 elementary school teachers, and all participants were selected using proportional random sampling to ensure representative distribution across schools. Data were collected using structured questionnaires with a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The pedagogical competence instrument covered indicators such as understanding student characteristics, lesson planning, instructional implementation, use of media and technology, assessment, and reflective practice. The learning quality instrument included clarity of objectives, student engagement, instructional effectiveness, teaching strategies, and evaluation.

Instrument validity was tested using Pearson product-moment correlation, while reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ($\alpha > 0.70$), indicating acceptable internal consistency. Prior to hypothesis testing, assumption tests were conducted, including normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov), linearity, and homoscedasticity tests, confirming that all statistical assumptions were met. Data analysis was performed using SPSS, including descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression. Simple regression was specifically applied to isolate and quantify the independent effect of pedagogical competence on learning quality. This study adhered to ethical research standards, including voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality of respondents' data. The overall research procedure is illustrated in Figure 1.

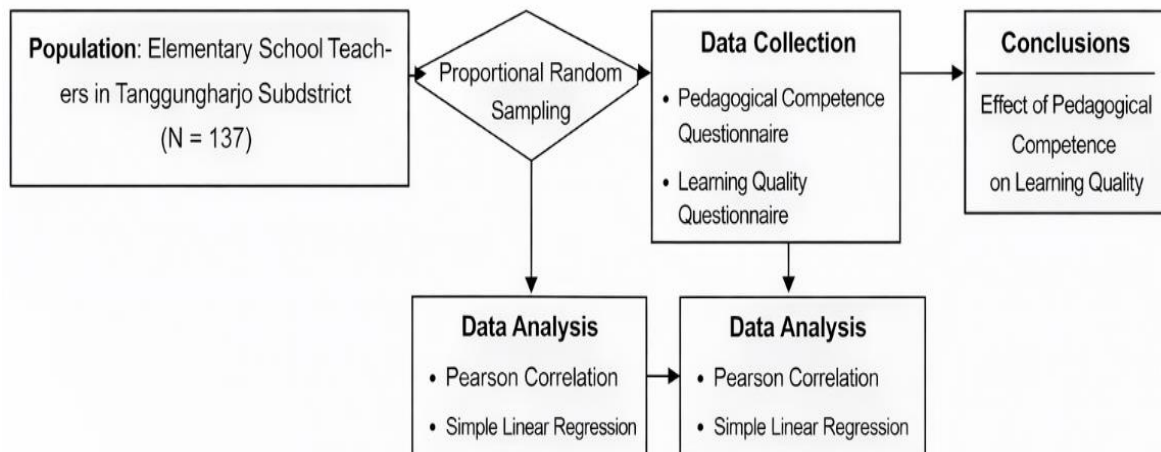


Figure 1. Research Flow of Pedagogical Competence and Learning Quality

The figure illustrates the research procedure, starting from population identification, proportional random sampling, data collection through questionnaires, and data analysis using Pearson correlation and simple linear regression, leading to conclusions regarding the effect of pedagogical competence on learning quality.

C. Result

The Influence of Teachers' Pedagogical Competence on the Quality of Learning

In this study, it is assumed that the variable of teacher pedagogical competence affects the quality of learning, so the hypothesis is tested, namely that teacher pedagogical competence (X) affects the quality of learning (Y). Hypothesis testing uses simple linear regression analysis using the SPSS program.

Table 1. Correlation between Pedagogical Competence and Learning Quality

		Learning Quality (Y)	Pedagogical Competence (X)
Learning Quality (Y)	Pearson Correlation	1	.832**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	137	137
Pedagogical Competence (X)	Pearson Correlation	.832**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	137	137

Hypothesis testing was conducted to determine the effect of teachers' pedagogical competence (X) on learning quality (Y). The results of Pearson's correlation analysis showed a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.832$ with a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). These results indicate that there is a positive and significant relationship between teachers' pedagogical competence and learning quality, with the level of relationship falling into the very strong category.

Table 2. Determination of Pedagogical Competence on Learning Quality

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.832	.693	.690	25.573

Furthermore, the determination test results showed an R Square value of 0.693. This means that teachers' pedagogical competence contributed 69.3% to the variation in learning quality, while the remaining 30.7% was influenced by other factors outside the variables studied.

Table 3. Regression of Pedagogical Competence on Learning Quality

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	27.769	13.177		2.107	.037
1 Pedagogical Competence (X)	1.045	.060	.832	17.442	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Learning Quality (Y)

The results of simple linear regression analysis show that teachers' pedagogical competence has a positive and significant effect on learning quality, with a t-value of 17.442 and a t-table of 1.977, and a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). Thus, the hypothesis stating that teachers' pedagogical competence affects learning quality is accepted. The regression equation obtained is: $Y = 27.769 + 1.045X$. The regression coefficient of 1.045 indicates that every one-unit increase in teacher pedagogical competence will be followed by a 1.045-unit increase in learning quality. The descriptive analysis showed that the mean score of pedagogical competence was 216.96 (SD = 36.612), indicating a high level of pedagogical competence among teachers.

D. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that teachers' pedagogical competence has a positive and significant effect on the quality of learning in public elementary schools in the Tanggunharjo Subdistrict. This result confirms that higher levels of pedagogical competence are associated with improved instructional quality in the classroom. The regression analysis further revealed a very strong contribution, with a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.693, indicating that 69.3% of the variance in learning quality can be explained by pedagogical competence, while the remaining 30.7% is influenced by other factors outside the scope of this study.

This substantial contribution suggests that pedagogical competence functions as a dominant internal factor within schools, potentially exerting a stronger influence than structural variables such as infrastructure, curriculum policy, or administrative support. This finding can be explained by the central role of teachers in managing the instructional

process. Pedagogical competence directly shapes essential components of learning quality, including lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment practices. When teachers demonstrate strong pedagogical competence, they are more capable of creating meaningful learning experiences, fostering student engagement, and improving instructional effectiveness. This result is consistent with global evidence that identifies teacher competence as one of the most influential in-school determinants of instructional quality (OECD, 2020; OECD 2023; Hattie, 2009; Schleicher, 2018).

Furthermore, these findings align with previous empirical studies that highlight the critical role of pedagogical competence in enhancing learning quality and student outcomes. Arifin et al (2025) reported that pedagogical competence significantly improves instructional effectiveness and learning quality. Similarly, König et al (2021) found that teachers' pedagogical knowledge strongly predicts instructional quality and student achievement. While Kunter et al (2013) demonstrated that professional competence of teachers directly affects instructional quality and student development. In addition, Blömeke et al (2015) emphasized that pedagogical competence directly influences instructional practices and classroom effectiveness, while Guerriero (2017) and Liu and Liao (2019) confirmed its importance as a key determinant of teaching quality and educational effectiveness. These consistent findings reinforce the position of pedagogical competence as a central factor in improving educational outcomes.

However, compared with previous studies, the coefficient obtained in this study appears relatively higher. This difference may be attributed to the homogeneous research context, in which all respondents were drawn from the same educational level and geographic area, resulting in more consistent instructional conditions. Moreover, pedagogical competence may play a more prominent role in elementary education, where teachers are directly responsible for managing most aspects of the learning process. Importantly, the use of a single-variable regression model in this study allows for a clearer estimation of the independent contribution of pedagogical competence, which is often obscured in multi-variable models. This finding highlights the importance of isolating pedagogical competence as an independent predictor to better understand its direct impact on learning quality.

Despite these strong findings, the high coefficient also raises the possibility of common method bias, as both pedagogical competence and learning quality were measured using self-reported questionnaires from the same respondents. This may inflate the strength of the relationship due to shared measurement sources rather than purely reflecting actual causal effects. Although the instruments demonstrated acceptable validity and reliability, future research is recommended to incorporate multiple data sources, such as classroom observations, student performance data, or external evaluations, to enhance the robustness of findings and reduce potential bias.

Overall, these findings strengthen the theoretical perspective that pedagogical competence is a key determinant of learning quality and plays a dominant role in shaping effective teaching practices. This implies that efforts to improve learning quality should

prioritize the development of teachers' pedagogical competence as a strategic and impactful intervention in elementary education.

E. Implication

The findings of this study imply that improving teachers' pedagogical competence should be treated as a strategic priority in efforts to enhance learning quality in elementary schools. Because pedagogical competence explains a substantial proportion of the variance in learning quality, school leaders and education authorities should design targeted professional development programs focused on lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, assessment, and reflective practice. The results also suggest that competency-based training should be continuous rather than occasional, supported by mentoring, peer collaboration, and classroom observation so that improvements are sustained in daily practice. At the policy level, these findings support the use of teacher competency data as a basis for identifying development needs and allocating resources more effectively. In practical terms, strengthening pedagogical competence may produce more direct and measurable gains in instructional quality than relying solely on structural improvements.

F. Limitation and Suggestion for Further Research

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the data were collected using self-report questionnaires completed by teachers, which may introduce response bias because respondents might overestimate their pedagogical competence and perceived learning quality. In addition, the use of a single data source for both variables increases the possibility of common method bias, which may inflate the observed relationship. Second, although the study found a strong and significant association, the correlational design does not allow for causal inference. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as evidence of association rather than direct causation. Third, the study was conducted in a specific educational and geographic context, namely public elementary schools in one subdistrict, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other school levels or regions.

Future research is recommended to address these limitations through more robust methodological approaches. Experimental or quasi-experimental designs could be used to examine causal relationships between pedagogical competence and learning quality more directly. Researchers are also encouraged to apply Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to explore more complex relationships, including possible mediating or moderating variables such as teacher motivation, leadership support, organizational climate, or digital literacy. In addition, a mixed-method approach combining surveys with classroom observations, interviews, or focus group discussions would provide richer and more contextualized insights into how pedagogical competence is enacted in real classroom practice. Expanding

the study to different educational levels, schools, and regions would also improve the external validity and generalizability of future findings.

G. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that teachers' pedagogical competence has a positive and significant effect on learning quality in public elementary schools in Tanggunharjo Subdistrict. The relationship between the two variables is very strong, as indicated by the correlation coefficient and the coefficient of determination, which shows that pedagogical competence contributes substantially to variations in learning quality. This means that the higher the teachers' pedagogical competence in understanding student characteristics, planning and implementing instruction, managing the classroom, using learning media, and conducting assessment and reflection, the better the quality of learning produced in elementary schools. These findings confirm that pedagogical competence is a strategic internal factor in improving instructional quality and should therefore be strengthened through continuous professional development, targeted training, and systematic school support.

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