

Analysis of Teacher Competence and Professionalism at SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Utara

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Abstract: This study aimed to analyze the competence and professionalism of teachers at SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Utara. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of teachers' competencies and professional practices in the school environment. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, with the school principal serving as the primary informant. The data were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results revealed that teachers demonstrated adequate pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competencies. Teachers were capable of preparing instructional plans, implementing learning activities effectively, mastering subject matter, maintaining discipline, and establishing positive communication with students, colleagues, and parents. The school also supported teacher professional development through internal training programs, participation in seminars, and the use of digital learning platforms. Nevertheless, several challenges were identified, including limited facilities, financial constraints, and personal factors affecting teacher participation in professional development activities. The study concludes that teacher competence and professionalism at SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Utara are generally in good condition and contribute significantly to improving the quality of teaching and learning processes as well as the overall quality of education.

Keywords: teacher competence, teacher professionalism, qualitative research, secondary education, educational quality

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Introduction

Education plays a fundamental role in improving human resources and promoting national development. The quality of education is strongly influenced by teachers because they serve as the main actors in the teaching and learning process. Teachers are expected not only to transfer knowledge but also to facilitate learning, develop students' character, and create meaningful learning experiences. Therefore, teacher competence and professionalism have become important indicators of educational quality.

Teacher competence generally includes pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competencies that enable teachers to perform their instructional duties effectively. Professional teachers continuously improve their knowledge, teaching skills, and professional attitudes to respond to educational changes and technological developments. The growing demands of twenty-first-century education require teachers to integrate innovative teaching strategies, digital technologies, and continuous professional development into classroom practices.

Several previous studies have investigated teacher competence and professionalism. Antera (2021) emphasized that professional competence is a crucial component of teachers' effectiveness and instructional performance. The study explained that teachers' competence influences teaching quality and educational outcomes. Furthermore, Haenilah et al. (2023) reported that pedagogical competence reflection significantly improves teacher professionalism and instructional practices. Their findings indicate that reflective activities contribute positively to teachers' professional growth and classroom effectiveness.

Other studies also highlight the importance of professionalism in educational quality. Syukri et al. (2023) found that academic supervision contributes positively to teacher professionalism and school quality improvement. Similarly, Nugraha and Dekawati (2023) demonstrated that teacher professionalism and school culture significantly affect educational quality. In addition, Keshmiri et al. (2023) identified professionalism as a multidimensional construct involving competence, commitment, communication, and ethical behavior.

Although previous studies have provided valuable findings, several limitations remain. Most studies employed quantitative approaches and focused primarily on measuring the relationship between teacher competence and educational outcomes. Limited studies have explored teacher competence and professionalism through qualitative

investigations that consider school contexts, leadership support, communication patterns, and professional development activities. Furthermore, studies conducted in regional or rural schools remain relatively scarce, particularly in the context of schools located in the Nias region.

SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Utara represents a school that actively supports teacher development through training programs, seminars, Learning Management System (LMS) utilization, and professional development activities. However, empirical evidence regarding teacher competence and professionalism in this school has not yet been documented. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this research gap by providing a comprehensive qualitative analysis of teacher competence and professionalism within the school context.

This study aims to analyze the competence and professionalism of teachers at SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Utara. Specifically, the study investigates teachers' abilities in planning and implementing instruction, mastering subject matter, maintaining professional responsibilities, establishing communication and collaboration, and identifying school efforts and challenges in improving teacher professionalism. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of educational quality and provide practical implications for schools, teachers, and future researchers.

Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore teacher competence and professionalism at SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Utara, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The qualitative approach was selected because it allows researchers to obtain in-depth information regarding teachers' competencies, professional practices, and school efforts in improving educational quality.

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Utara in June 2026. The principal served as the main informant because of his responsibility in supervising teachers and evaluating teacher performance within the school. The researchers were directly involved in the field as the primary research instruments. Their presence during data collection enabled them to observe school conditions, conduct interviews, and document relevant information concerning teacher competence and professionalism.

Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the school principal using an interview guide consisting of questions related to instructional planning, mastery of subject matter, professional development, teacher discipline, communication skills, and challenges encountered in improving teacher professionalism. Observations were carried out to examine the school environment, teacher activities, and educational practices. Documentation techniques were used to collect photographs, field notes, school documents, and supporting evidence relevant to the study.

The research instruments consisted of interview guidelines, observation sheets, notebooks, smartphones for recording and documentation, and writing materials. The use of smartphones enabled accurate recording of interview data and documentation of research activities.

Data analysis followed the qualitative analysis procedures proposed by Miles and Huberman, including data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The collected information was organized, categorized, and interpreted to identify patterns related to teacher competence and professionalism.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the researchers applied source triangulation and method triangulation by comparing information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. In addition, member checking was conducted by confirming several findings with the informant to improve the credibility and accuracy of the data. These procedures enhanced the validity and reliability of the research findings.

Results

Teacher Pedagogical Competence

The findings revealed that teachers at SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Utara demonstrated satisfactory pedagogical competence. Based on the interview with the school principal, most teachers regularly prepare instructional devices, including teaching modules, student worksheets, learning media, and lesson plans before the beginning of each semester. These instructional documents are developed according to the applicable curriculum and adjusted to students' learning needs.

Teachers were also reported to implement classroom instruction according to the prepared instructional plans. Learning activities generally begin with introductory activities, followed by the delivery of learning materials and evaluation activities. Teachers attempt to create conducive classroom environments that encourage students to participate actively in learning activities.

The observation findings further indicated that teachers have sufficient abilities to organize learning activities and manage classroom situations. Students are given opportunities to ask questions, express opinions, and participate in

classroom discussions. Such instructional practices indicate that teachers possess adequate pedagogical competence in understanding students' characteristics and managing learning processes.

These findings support Haenilah et al. (2023), who reported that pedagogical competence contributes significantly to improving instructional quality and teacher professionalism. Similarly, Antera (2021) emphasized that teachers who possess strong pedagogical competence are better able to facilitate meaningful learning experiences and improve students' academic achievement.

Pedagogical competence is considered one of the most important competencies because it directly influences classroom effectiveness. Teachers who understand students' learning characteristics and instructional needs are able to select appropriate teaching methods and create supportive learning environments. Therefore, the pedagogical competence demonstrated by teachers at SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Utara contributes positively to the quality of learning.

Professional Competence of Teachers

Professional competence refers to teachers' ability to master subject content and continuously improve their professional knowledge and teaching skills. The findings showed that teachers generally possess adequate mastery of the subjects they teach. According to the school principal, teachers are able to explain learning materials clearly and adjust their teaching according to students' understanding levels.

Teachers also participate in various professional development activities, including seminars, workshops, training programs, and educational activities organized by the Education Office. Internal training activities conducted by the school twice each year also provide opportunities for teachers to improve their professional competence.

Furthermore, teachers have begun utilizing Learning Management Systems (LMS) and digital learning resources to support instructional activities. The integration of technology into classroom instruction enables teachers to access educational resources and improve teaching effectiveness.

These findings are consistent with Syukri et al. (2023), who found that continuous professional development significantly improves teacher professionalism and educational quality. Keshmiri et al. (2023) also emphasized that professionalism includes commitment to lifelong learning, adaptation to educational changes, and continuous improvement of teaching practices.

The findings indicate that professional competence among teachers at SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Utara has developed positively through institutional support and individual commitment. However, continuous professional development remains necessary to enable teachers to respond to curriculum changes, technological advancement, and students' diverse learning needs.

Personal Competence and Professional Responsibility

Personal competence represents teachers' ability to demonstrate integrity, discipline, responsibility, and exemplary behavior. The findings revealed that teachers generally demonstrate good discipline and commitment to their professional duties. Most teachers attend school according to the established schedule and complete administrative responsibilities in a timely manner.

The school principal reported that teachers show responsibility in preparing instructional documents, conducting learning activities, and evaluating students' learning outcomes. Teachers also demonstrate ethical behavior and maintain professional relationships with students and colleagues.

Several external factors occasionally affect teacher punctuality, particularly weather conditions and long travel distances between teachers' residences and the school. Nevertheless, these conditions do not significantly reduce teachers' commitment to their responsibilities.

Personal competence is essential because teachers serve as role models for students. Ethical behavior, discipline, responsibility, and commitment influence students' attitudes and learning motivation. Teachers with strong personal competence contribute positively to school culture and educational quality.

Previous studies have indicated that teachers' personal characteristics significantly influence professional performance and classroom effectiveness. Therefore, the positive personal competence demonstrated by teachers in this study supports the development of teacher professionalism.

Social Competence and Educational Communication

The findings indicate that teachers at SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Utara possess adequate social competence, which is reflected in their ability to establish effective communication and positive relationships with students, fellow teachers, parents, and members of the school community. Social competence is an important aspect of teacher professionalism because educational activities involve various interactions that support the learning process and students' development.

Based on interviews with the school principal, teachers maintain harmonious relationships with students both inside and outside the classroom. During instructional activities, teachers create an atmosphere that encourages students to participate actively in learning. Students are given opportunities to ask questions, express opinions, and discuss learning materials without fear or hesitation. Such interactions contribute to building students' self-confidence and motivation to learn.

Classroom observations revealed that teachers communicate with students using understandable language and demonstrate patience in responding to students' questions and difficulties. Teachers attempt to provide guidance, motivation, and emotional support to students experiencing academic or personal problems. These interactions help establish mutual trust between teachers and students, thereby creating a positive learning environment.

Effective teacher-student communication contributes significantly to students' academic and social development. Students who feel respected and supported by their teachers tend to participate more actively in classroom activities and demonstrate higher learning motivation. Positive interactions also reduce students' anxiety and increase their confidence in expressing ideas and opinions.

The findings further revealed that collaboration among teachers is well established within the school. Teachers frequently share teaching experiences, discuss instructional problems, exchange learning materials, and support each other in implementing educational programs. Collaborative activities are conducted during teacher meetings, professional discussions, and school development programs.

Teacher collaboration contributes to improving instructional quality because it enables teachers to learn from one another and solve educational problems collectively. Collegial relationships also create supportive professional environments that encourage continuous learning and professional growth.

Communication with parents constitutes another important aspect of social competence. Teachers maintain regular communication with parents regarding students' academic achievement, behavior, attendance, and learning difficulties. Parents are involved in supporting students' educational activities and are encouraged to cooperate with teachers in addressing students' problems.

Parental involvement contributes positively to students' educational success because students receive consistent guidance both at school and at home. Effective communication between teachers and parents enables early identification of learning difficulties and behavioral problems, thereby facilitating appropriate interventions.

The findings of this study are consistent with Keshmiri et al. (2023), who identified communication skills, interpersonal relationships, and collaboration as important dimensions of teacher professionalism. Teachers who possess strong social competence are more capable of establishing productive educational partnerships and creating positive learning environments.

Similarly, previous studies have shown that positive communication between teachers, students, parents, and colleagues significantly contributes to school effectiveness and educational quality. Effective social interactions support not only instructional processes but also students' emotional, social, and academic development.

Therefore, the social competence demonstrated by teachers at SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Utara contributes substantially to the creation of a supportive educational environment. Good communication and collaboration among educational stakeholders strengthen the implementation of school programs and promote the achievement of educational objectives.

School Efforts to Improve Teacher Professionalism

The findings revealed that SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Utara has implemented several strategic programs to improve teacher competence and professionalism. School leadership recognizes that teacher professionalism is an essential factor in improving educational quality and achieving school goals.

One of the primary efforts implemented by the school is the organization of internal professional development programs. Internal training activities are conducted regularly to improve teachers' pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies. These activities provide opportunities for teachers to discuss educational issues, share instructional experiences, and improve teaching practices.

The school also encourages teachers to participate in seminars, workshops, and professional development programs organized by educational institutions, universities, and government agencies. Participation in such activities allows teachers to gain new knowledge, develop teaching skills, and remain updated regarding educational policies and curriculum changes.

Professional development activities contribute significantly to teachers' instructional abilities because they introduce innovative teaching methods, assessment techniques, and educational technologies. Teachers who participate in training programs often demonstrate increased confidence and improved classroom practices.

Another important strategy implemented by the school is the utilization of digital technology and Learning Management Systems (LMS). Teachers are encouraged to integrate technology into classroom instruction, prepare

digital learning materials, and utilize online educational resources. The use of digital technology enables teachers to access various instructional materials and improve learning effectiveness.

The integration of technology has become increasingly important in contemporary education because teachers are expected to develop digital competencies and adapt to technological advancement. The ability to utilize digital learning resources supports instructional innovation and promotes independent learning among teachers.

Academic supervision conducted by the school principal also plays a significant role in teacher professional development. Supervision activities include classroom observations, instructional evaluations, discussions, and feedback sessions. Through academic supervision, teachers receive constructive suggestions regarding instructional improvement and professional growth.

The school principal serves not only as an administrator but also as an instructional leader who guides teachers in improving their professional performance. Effective leadership creates supportive environments that encourage continuous professional development.

The findings indicate that institutional support is one of the most important factors influencing teacher professionalism. Teachers who receive adequate support from school leaders tend to participate more actively in professional development activities and demonstrate stronger commitment to their professional responsibilities.

These findings support Syukri et al. (2023), who reported that academic supervision and institutional support positively influence teacher professionalism and educational quality. Likewise, Keshmiri et al. (2023) emphasized that professional development opportunities, organizational support, and collaborative environments are essential components of teacher professionalism.

Despite financial and infrastructural limitations, the school attempts to maximize available resources by organizing internal training programs, encouraging teacher collaboration, and promoting the use of technology. Such efforts demonstrate the school's commitment to improving teacher competence and maintaining educational quality.

Overall, the findings suggest that continuous professional development, effective leadership, academic supervision, technological integration, and institutional support are essential factors in promoting teacher professionalism. These efforts contribute positively to improving instructional quality and strengthening the overall educational environment at SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Utara.

Challenges in Improving Teacher Competence and Professionalism

Despite the positive findings regarding teacher competence and professionalism, several challenges continue to affect the efforts to improve teachers' professional capacities at SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Utara. These challenges originate from institutional, financial, geographical, technological, and personal factors that influence teachers' participation in professional development activities.

One of the major obstacles identified in this study is the limitation of educational facilities and infrastructure. The availability of teaching media, technological equipment, internet access, and instructional resources remains insufficient to fully support innovative teaching practices. Limited access to educational technology may reduce teachers' opportunities to integrate digital learning resources into classroom instruction. Consequently, some teachers still rely on conventional teaching methods, which may limit instructional innovation and student engagement.

The rapid development of educational technology requires teachers to continuously adapt to new teaching approaches and digital tools. However, inadequate technological infrastructure can hinder teachers from developing digital competencies and implementing technology-based learning. Similar findings were reported by previous studies, which indicate that limited facilities and technological resources remain major barriers to teacher professional development, particularly in rural and regional schools.

Financial constraints also constitute an important challenge. The limited school budget restricts teachers' opportunities to participate in external training programs, workshops, conferences, and educational seminars. Professional development activities often require transportation costs, registration fees, and accommodation expenses that cannot always be covered by the school budget. As a result, some teachers have limited access to professional learning opportunities outside the school environment.

Furthermore, personal factors influence teachers' participation in professional development activities. Family responsibilities, health conditions, workload, and individual motivation sometimes affect teachers' willingness and ability to participate in training programs. Some teachers experience difficulties balancing professional responsibilities with personal obligations, particularly when professional development activities require travel or participation outside regular working hours.

Geographical conditions also present significant challenges. SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Utara is located in an area where transportation and accessibility may occasionally become problematic, particularly during unfavorable weather conditions. Long travel distances and transportation difficulties may affect teacher punctuality, attendance, and

participation in professional activities conducted outside the school. Such geographical barriers are commonly experienced by schools located in rural and remote areas.

In addition, the increasing administrative workload imposed on teachers may reduce the time available for professional development activities. Teachers are responsible not only for classroom instruction but also for preparing instructional documents, conducting assessments, completing administrative tasks, and participating in various school activities. The accumulation of these responsibilities may limit teachers' opportunities for independent learning and professional improvement.

These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that limited resources, financial constraints, geographical barriers, and workload frequently hinder teacher professional development, especially in regional educational settings. Syukri et al. (2023) emphasized that institutional support is essential for overcoming such obstacles and promoting sustainable teacher development. Likewise, Keshmiri et al. (2023) stated that professional growth requires supportive environments, adequate resources, and continuous learning opportunities.

To address these challenges, the school has implemented several strategies. The school administration provides early information regarding training schedules and encourages teachers to participate in available professional development activities. Existing facilities are optimized to support teaching and learning processes, while internal training programs are conducted regularly to minimize financial limitations. The school also promotes collaboration among teachers, allowing them to share experiences, exchange teaching strategies, and support each other in solving instructional problems.

Furthermore, academic supervision conducted by the school principal serves as an important mechanism for monitoring teacher performance and providing constructive feedback. The use of digital learning platforms and online training opportunities has also become an alternative solution to overcome geographical and financial limitations. Through these efforts, the school attempts to maintain and improve teacher competence despite existing constraints.

Overall, the findings suggest that improving teacher competence and professionalism requires not only individual commitment but also institutional support, adequate facilities, sustainable professional development programs, and effective educational leadership. Addressing these challenges is essential for ensuring continuous teacher development and improving the overall quality of education.

Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study have several implications for educational practice. First, strengthening pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competencies is essential for improving educational quality. Second, continuous professional development programs should be maintained and expanded to support teacher competence.

Third, school leadership plays an important role in facilitating teacher development through supervision, training, and institutional support. Finally, collaboration among teachers, parents, and school administrators contributes significantly to the success of educational programs.

This study also contributes to the literature by providing qualitative evidence regarding teacher competence and professionalism in regional secondary schools. Unlike many previous studies that employed quantitative approaches, this research provides deeper insights into teachers' experiences, school support, and professional development practices.

Overall, the findings indicate that teachers at SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Utara possess adequate competencies and demonstrate professional attitudes that support educational quality improvement.

Table 1. Main Findings of Teacher Competence and Professionalism at SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Utara

Aspect	Main Findings
Pedagogical Competence	Teachers prepare instructional documents and implement learning effectively.
Professional Competence	Teachers master subject content and participate in professional development.
Personal Competence	Teachers demonstrate discipline, responsibility, and commitment.
Social Competence	Teachers communicate effectively with students, colleagues, and parents.
School Support	Training programs, seminars, supervision, and LMS utilization.
Challenges	Limited facilities, budget constraints, and personal factors.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the competence and professionalism of teachers at SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Utara are generally categorized as good. The findings demonstrate that teachers possess adequate pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competencies, which support the implementation of effective teaching and learning processes.

Teachers are capable of preparing instructional plans, implementing classroom instruction, mastering subject content, maintaining discipline and responsibility, and establishing effective communication with students, colleagues, and parents.

The study also reveals that teacher professionalism is supported by various school programs, including internal training activities, participation in seminars and workshops, academic supervision, and the utilization of digital learning platforms. These professional development activities contribute positively to improving teachers' instructional abilities, professional knowledge, and educational practices. The findings indicate that continuous professional development is essential for maintaining teacher quality and adapting to educational changes.

However, several challenges remain in improving teacher competence and professionalism, including limited educational facilities, financial constraints, geographical conditions, and personal factors affecting teachers' participation in professional development activities. Despite these obstacles, the school has demonstrated commitment to overcoming these limitations through institutional support, effective management, and the optimization of available resources.

This study contributes to the existing literature by providing qualitative evidence regarding teacher competence and professionalism in a regional secondary school context. The findings emphasize the importance of school support, professional development programs, and collaborative relationships in improving educational quality. Practically, the results may serve as a reference for school administrators, teachers, and policymakers in designing strategies to strengthen teacher competence and professionalism.

Future studies are recommended to involve a larger number of participants, including teachers, students, and parents, and to employ mixed-method or quantitative approaches to obtain more comprehensive findings regarding teacher professionalism and its impact on educational quality in different educational settings.

AI Declaration

The authors declare that Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript. Specifically, ChatGPT was utilized to assist in language editing, grammar correction, academic writing improvement, sentence refinement, and manuscript organization. The AI tool was used solely to enhance the clarity, readability, and structure of the manuscript.

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