The Influence of Principal's Role, and School Culture on Elementary School Teachers' Competence

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Abstract

This study focuses on the problem of low teacher competence in elementary schools in Petarukan District, Pemalang Regency, where only 46% of 80 schools demonstrate good learning quality. The research aims to analyze the influence of the principal's role and school culture on teacher competence. Using a quantitative correlational ex post facto design, data were collected from 242 elementary school teachers through Likert-scale questionnaires assessing the principal's role (managerial, entrepreneurial, and supervisory dimensions), school culture, and teacher competence (pedagogical, personality, social, and professional aspects). Descriptive statistics show the principal's role is rated fairly well (mean=129.46; ideal midpoint=87), with entrepreneurial development as the strongest dimension and supervision the weakest. Teacher competence also falls within a fairly good category (mean=151.85; ideal midpoint=105), with personality as the strongest and professional competence as the weakest dimension. Pearson's correlation coefficient (r=0.588; p<0.05) indicates a strong relationship between the principal's role and teacher competence. Simple linear regression reveals that a 1% improvement in the principal's role increases teacher competence by 0.598%, explaining 34.6% of variance. Theoretically, these findings reinforce the importance of effective school leadership and positive school culture in fostering teacher competence. Practically, the results recommend strengthening principals' supervisory functions and entrepreneurial program development, as well as capacity building for principals, to optimize educational quality improvement.

Keywords: Principal's Role; School Culture; Teacher Competence

Introduction

Education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and process so that learners can optimally develop their potential. This is regulated in the Republic of Indonesia Law Number 20 Year 2003 concerning the National Education System, which affirms that national education is rooted in religious values, Indonesian national culture, and responsive to the demands of changing times. In this context, teachers hold a central role as professional educators. Law Number 14 Year 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers mandates that teachers must have at least a bachelor's degree or Diploma IV and master pedagogic, personality, social, and professional competencies as agents of learning (Febriana, 2021).

Teacher competence greatly determines the quality of education and learning outcomes in schools. Competence is a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes manifested in intelligent and responsible actions during the learning process (Febriana, 2021). Thus, good teacher competence will create effective and quality learning. Conversely, if teacher competence is low, the quality of learning will decline (Syuhada & Mayasari, 2024). This phenomenon draws particular attention in Petarukan Subdistrict, Pemalang Regency, where according to the Pemalang Regency Education Report 2024, of 80 elementary schools in the area, only 46% have good learning quality, while 44% have moderate quality and 10% are still lacking. This indicates the need for efforts to improve teacher competence in order to enhance learning quality.

The problem of low teacher competence in Petarukan Subdistrict, according to interviews with the local Coordinator, Mr. Kiswandi, includes teachers' lack of understanding of the curriculum, minimal preparation of adaptive learning tools, and lack of innovation in the learning process. Teachers tend to use administrative and monotonous teaching tools without adjustments that support learning success (Kiswandi, 2024). This condition demands an examination of factors influencing teacher competence, especially the role of the principal and school culture. The principal is a strategic component in education management that plays an important role in improving education quality. According to Mulyasa (2018), principals are responsible for planning, utilizing resources, managing change, and creating a conducive and innovative school culture and climate. A professional principal is key to creating professional teachers through the implementation of managerial tasks, entrepreneurial development, and supervision of teachers and educational staff. Effective academic supervision by principals can significantly improve teacher competence (Suchyadi, 2022).

School culture, as a set of shared values and norms, also significantly influences teacher behavior and performance. A positive and consistent school culture can encourage the creation of a conducive work climate and sustainably improve teacher competence (Suchyadi, 2022). Harmonious cooperation among principals, teachers, and school committees reflects a culture that supports education quality (Mulyasa, 2018).

Teacher competence is one of the crucial aspects in improving education quality. Based on Law Number 14 Year 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, teacher competence is defined as a set of knowledge, skills, and behaviors that must be possessed, internalized, and mastered by teachers in carrying out their professional duties. This competence standard is national and must be met by every teacher. Mulyasa (2018) states that teacher competence is a blend of personal, scientific, technological, social, and spiritual abilities that form the professional standard competence of teachers, including mastery of subject matter, understanding of learners, educating learning, and personal and professional development. A similar opinion was expressed by Yulianto (2024), who affirmed that teacher competence is an important component encompassing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and principles for effective teaching. Puspitasari (2024) views competence as an integration of knowledge manifested through intelligent and responsible actions. Febriana (2021) argues that teacher competence is personal and complex, a unity of potential that includes mastery of materials, understanding learners, and professional development. According to Suyanto in Sulastri et al. (2020), teacher competence describes what teachers must do in their work, including activities, behaviors, or outcomes in the learning process oriented to the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects of learners. Broadly, teacher competence includes four main aspects: pedagogical, personality, social, and professional (Febriana, 2021; Perdirjen GTK, 2023). Indicators of pedagogical competence include learning management and technology utilization, professional competence related to subject mastery, social competence related to effective communication, and personality competence reflecting a stable and exemplary personality for learners.

Principals have a strategic role in improving education quality and teacher competence. Mulyasa (2016) identifies three main roles of principals: manager, supervisor, and innovator. As a manager, the principal is responsible for program planning, personnel management, and optimizing school resources to achieve goals. The supervisory role includes overseeing the implementation of duties by teachers and educational staff, while as an innovator, the principal must be able to introduce innovations for school progress. Permendikbudristek Number 25 Year 2024 states that the principal's workload includes managerial duties, entrepreneurial development, and

supervision of teachers and educational staff. In line with this, Rochajati (2023) states that principals are expected to make strategic plans, manage human resources, and conduct continuous supervision. Rochaendi (2024) adds that principals need to drive changes in educational institution profiles toward excellence through entrepreneurial development involving creative ideas and resource optimization. Nurchaeni (2023) emphasizes the importance of the principal's role as a driving force in improving teacher competence with strong managerial skills. Hermino (2016) and Susanto (2016) underline the principal's role in supporting teacher competence development to improve performance and learning quality. Asrori (2022) views the principal as a supervisor who provides direction and encouragement to all school components to achieve common goals. The dimensions of the principal's role include managerial, entrepreneurial, and supervisory aspects, with specific indicators such as empowerment of educational staff, innovation, as well as implementation and evaluation of supervision programs (Mulyasa, 2016).

School culture is a collection of values, norms, traditions, and beliefs that form the basis of behavior and practices within the school environment. Supardi (2014) states that school culture includes values and habits that shape the school's characteristics. Daryanto (2015) adds that school culture is a norm and tradition built over time and influences individual and institutional performance. Robbins (2024) affirms school culture as a set of values underlying behavior and traditions of school members. Zamroni (2011) defines school culture as patterns of values and traditions believed in and used as guidance by school members. Tilaar (2000) and Hoy and Miskel (2014) add that school culture is manifested in norms, values, rituals, and beliefs that shape school climate and effectiveness. Ansar and Masaong (2011) and Deal and Kennedy (in Daryanto, 2015) highlight school culture as a value system that binds the togetherness of school members. According to Robbins and Judge (2024), school culture dimensions include ethical orientations such as instrumental, caring, independence, law and code, and rules. Indicators of school culture include values such as loyalty, appreciation, initiative, collaborative work, balance of innovation and tradition, and maintaining the school's good name (Saphier and King in Susanto, 2016; Hoy and Miskel, 2014).

This study aims to examine the influence of the principal's role and school culture on the competence of elementary school teachers in Petarukan Subdistrict, Pemalang Regency. The study is expected to provide a systematic and relevant empirical overview for developing strategies to improve teacher competence in order to enhance learning quality in the region. This study is novel because it integrates two important variables simultaneously, namely the role of the principal and school culture, in a comprehensive analytical model of teacher competence at the elementary school level. Most previous studies tend to focus on one factor only or discuss them separately without examining the interaction and simultaneous effects of both. Furthermore, this study was conducted in Petarukan Subdistrict, Pemalang Regency, where empirical studies related to factors influencing teacher competence in the area are still limited. Using a systematic quantitative approach and up-to-date empirical analysis, this study is expected to provide practical and theoretical contributions in the development of education management and more targeted and contextual teacher quality improvement policies1.

Method

The research method used in this study is the ex post facto approach, which aims to investigate events that have already occurred and then systematically trace the causal factors without administering treatment to the research variables. This study is quantitative correlational in nature, focusing on the numerical examination of phenomena

by collecting and analyzing primary and secondary data to reveal relationships among variables. The research was conducted in elementary schools spread across Petarukan District, Pemalang Regency, with a total of 80 schools as the population. The research period was planned from August 2024 to April 2025. This study's design tests the influence of independent variables, namely the role of the principal and school culture, on the dependent variable, teacher competence. The research model was developed based on the paradigm of relationships among variables with hypotheses regarding the effect of each independent variable and their simultaneous effect on teacher competence.

The variables in this study consist of the principal's role measured through managerial, entrepreneurial development, and supervision dimensions; school culture, which comprises values, norms, and traditions shaping the behavior of school members; and teacher competence, which includes pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competencies. The population consists of all elementary school teachers in Petarukan District, totaling 612 teachers from 80 schools. A sample of 242 teachers was taken using Yamane's formula with a 5% margin of error, and the sampling was carried out proportionally using stratified random sampling to ensure representativeness based on the proportion of teachers in each school (Sugiyono, 2024). The research instrument was a questionnaire developed based on the research variables' blueprint. The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale to measure teachers' perceptions of the principal's role, school culture, and teacher competence. Data collection was conducted through the distribution of written questionnaires to respondents containing statements to be answered based on personal opinions. Instrument validity testing was performed using the Pearson product-moment correlation via SPSS 25, with the validity criterion being that the item's calculated r-value is greater than or equal to the table r-value of 0.339 at a 5% significance level. The validity test results indicated that most statement items were valid, while several invalid items were subsequently excluded from the analysis. Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding values above 0.60 for all variables, indicating that the instruments are reliable and trustworthy for data collection. Data analysis was conducted using simple linear regression and multiple linear regression with the assistance of SPSS 25. The analysis stages included descriptive analysis to describe data distribution; assumption tests including normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov), linearity, multicollinearity using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), and heteroscedasticity (Glejser test). Subsequently, hypothesis testing was performed with simple linear regression to determine the influence of each independent variable on teacher competence, as well as multiple linear regression to assess the simultaneous influence of independent variables on the dependent variable. Hypothesis testing decisions were based on comparing the calculated F-value and the F-table value with a significance level of 0.05. Correlations among variables were analyzed using the Pearson product-moment coefficient, and the strength of relationships between variables was interpreted based on the correlation coefficients. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to determine the contribution of independent variables in explaining the variance of the dependent variable.

Result dan Discussion

The results of this study show that the principal's role, school culture, and teacher competence in elementary schools in Petarukan District are generally categorized as fairly good. The principal's role, measured using 29 items with an average score of 129.46 (SD = 10.43) and an ideal midpoint of 87, was rated very good by 9.5% of respondents, good by 24.8%, and fairly good by 38.8%. The strongest dimension was entrepreneurial development (loading 0.837), particularly in mapping school needs and implementing development programs with active participation from school members, while the weakest

was the supervisory dimension (loading 0.735). Most teachers agreed that the principal was capable of designing and communicating the school's vision and mission (56%) and managing digitalization to improve quality (58%). However, the relatively low score in supervision suggests that principals are less optimal in planning and implementing supervision for teacher competence development. This is consistent with Mangkunegara (2017), who argues that effective principals foster a productive and proactive school environment, and with Glickman et al. (2014), who emphasize the importance of systematic supervision in supporting teacher professional growth. The weakness in the supervisory dimension may be due to limited time, lack of training, or insufficient follow-up after classroom observations, confirming Glickman et al.'s (2014) assertion that effective supervision requires ongoing feedback and collaborative reflection, not just formal observation.

School culture, also measured with 29 items, had an average score of 126.64 (SD = 8.24) and an ideal midpoint of 87. The frequency distribution showed 8.7% of respondents rated it very good, 23.1% good, and 36.4% fairly good. The instrumental dimension, which emphasizes appreciation, initiative, and collaborative work, was the strongest (loading 0.764), while the rule implementation dimension, which includes balancing innovation and tradition, was the weakest (loading 0.328). Teachers strongly agreed on commitment (51%) and appreciation (50%), and agreed on respect for others (60%) and balancing innovation and tradition (61%). These findings support Fatchurochman, Nurkolis, and Ngasbun Egar (2023), who found that a positive school culture fosters a supportive and collaborative environment, encouraging teachers to develop their competence. This is in line with Robbins (2024), who explains that a collaborative and appreciative culture is a key element in organizational learning theory, enabling continuous professional development. However, the weak rule implementation dimension suggests that inconsistencies in upholding school rules or traditions may limit the school's ability to adapt and maintain high standards (Hoy & Miskel, 2014).

Teacher competence, measured using 45 items, had an average score of 151.85 (SD = 10.61) with an ideal midpoint of 105. The distribution showed 14.9% of teachers rated very good, 22.7% good, and 36.8% fairly good. The strongest dimension was personality (loading 0.768), reflecting moral, emotional, and spiritual maturity, as well as behavior in accordance with the teacher's code of ethics. The weakest was professional competence (loading 0.579), related to content knowledge, understanding student characteristics, and curriculum mastery. Teachers strongly agreed on creating a safe learning environment (67%), self-development through reflection (69%), and collaboration to improve learning (62%). According to Febriana (2021) and Mulyasa (2018), balanced competence across all dimensions is essential for optimal learning outcomes, and the findings here indicate a need for further support in subject mastery and curriculum understanding. Statistical analysis confirms a strong and significant relationship between the principal's role and teacher competence (Pearson $r = 0.588$, $p < 0.05$), with a regression equation $\hat{Y} = 74.403 + 0.598X$ and $R^2 = 0.346$, indicating that 34.6% of the variance in teacher competence is explained by the principal's role. Similarly, school culture shows a strong and significant relationship with teacher competence (Pearson $r = 0.659$, $p < 0.05$), with a regression equation $\hat{Y} = 44.310 + 0.849X$ and $R^2 = 0.434$, meaning that 43.4% of the variance in teacher competence is explained by school culture. Multiple regression analysis reveals that both the principal's role and school culture simultaneously explain 51% of the variance in teacher competence ($R = 0.714$, $R^2 = 0.510$, $F = 89.127$, $p < 0.05$), with the equation $\hat{Y} = 19.477 + 0.244X_1 + 0.387X_2$. This means that a 1% increase in the principal's role and school culture will increase teacher competence by 0.244% and 0.387%, respectively.

These findings reinforce the theoretical perspective that both structural (leadership) and cultural (school norms) factors are essential for teacher competence. The synergy between a proactive principal and a positive school culture explains over half the variance in teacher competence, as also found by Fatchurochman et al. (2023) and Mangkunegara (2017). This emphasizes the importance of strengthening the principal's supervisory function and cultivating a collaborative, appreciative culture while reinforcing consistent rule implementation. In practice, schools should prioritize principal training in supervision and further develop a positive school culture to support continuous teacher development. Theoretically, this study supports organizational learning and leadership theories, demonstrating that improvements in both the principal's role and school culture are crucial for enhancing teacher competence and, ultimately, educational quality.

Conclusion

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that the role of the principal and school culture have a positive and significant influence on the competence of elementary school teachers in Petarukan District, Pemalang Regency. These findings align with previous theories and research emphasizing the importance of school leadership in improving human resource quality within primary education. The principal's role has been proven to contribute significantly to the enhancement of teacher competence. Principals who effectively perform supervisory, leadership, and coaching functions can support teachers in developing their professional abilities, in accordance with educational management perspectives that highlight the importance of transformational leadership in improving education quality. A conducive school culture serves as a key supporting factor in the development of teacher competence. A culture that encourages collaboration, open communication, and professional values can create a working environment that supports teacher learning and development. Moreover, simultaneously, the principal's role and school culture significantly jointly influence teacher competence. This confirms that improving teacher competence does not rely on a single factor but is the result of a synergy of various managerial and social aspects within the school environment. Based on the research findings and conclusions, the researcher proposes several recommendations as follows: (1) Principals need to consistently and professionally enhance their supervisory role in overseeing and fostering teacher performance. The use of appropriate supervisory approaches and techniques is crucial to stimulate teacher competence improvement. Principals are also advised to implement leadership that supports the sustainable professional development of teachers. (2) Teachers are expected to enhance their professionalism and commitment to teaching duties. Teachers are also encouraged to actively seek new knowledge and skills relevant to curriculum development and education policies, so that competence can be continuously updated and improved. (3) Schools and policymakers should create and maintain a positive and collaborative school culture. Facilitating open communication among teachers, staff, students, and parents should be improved through regular meetings and discussion forums. Additionally, fair and transparent recognition for outstanding teachers can increase work motivation. (4) The education office and related agencies are advised to design training and professional development programs tailored to teacher needs. An integrated approach between the principal's role and school culture should be developed to provide an optimal impact on improving teacher competence.

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