



Developing Pedagogy Competence of Early Childhood Educators through Learning Communities

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Abstract

Enhancing pedagogical competence represents both a challenge and a requisite for early childhood educators. This study aims to give an overview about the role of learning community to strengthen early childhood educators' pedagogy competence. With qualitative approach, 25 education personnel whom included in educator learning community of PAUD Gorontalo are interviewed and surveyed. The result shows an indication of development of pedagogical competence of educators through learning community program, as a program held by Merdeka Kurikulum. This program is hopefully could strengthen educators pedagogical competence further and works as a real solution for issues regarding PAUD in all PAUD institutions.

Keywords: Learning Community, Teacher, Pedagogy

1. INTRODUCTION

Studies revealed that early childhood education is crucial for a child's cognitive, social, and emotional development, laying the foundation for future success in school and beyond. This educational journey equips children to confront future challenges while enhancing their knowledge and skills across various scientific domains, as underscored [1] [2]. However, the realization of these goals hinges upon the presence of proficient teachers capable of guiding their students towards a promising future. Indeed, the teaching methodologies employed today greatly shape the trajectory of tomorrow's adults, as emphasized by [3]

The evolving landscape necessitates that teachers continuously stay abreast of and integrate the most current information, advancements in science, and technological innovations into their teaching practices to deliver pertinent and up-to-date learning content to their students. [4] and [5] underscored the imperative for education in the 21st and 22nd centuries to continually evolve in tandem with the rapid pace of societal progress, since as educators, they are entrusted with the pivotal role of being a wellspring of knowledge, particularly in contemporary learning environments.

Learning communities serve as a catalyst for transformative change, elevating teacher competence, particularly in pedagogy. Insights drawn from diverse literature highlight a prevalent tendency among educators to adhere to outdated instructional

paradigms rooted in their own schooling experiences. Many still rely heavily on singular learning resources. In today's educational landscape, teachers are increasingly called upon to assume the role of learning facilitators, fostering environments conducive to student engagement and exploration [6]. Moreover, disparities in teacher competence across schools, compounded by inconsistent distribution, underscore the necessity for a systematic approach to bolstering teacher proficiency. A strategic recruitment policy is imperative to enhance overall educational quality, with teachers occupying a central role as pivotal agents within the classroom learning milieu.

Numerous initiatives have been deployed to fortify teacher competence, including the provision of learning support infrastructure and collaborative platforms for professional development. These platforms encompass public forums, educational strategizing informed by data gleaned from educational performance evaluations, and other avenues. Educational units are tasked with fostering a culture of continuous learning and knowledge exchange, facilitated through structured learning communities. Leveraging platforms such as the Merdeka Mengajar Platform, alongside other educational resources, educators are empowered to engage in mutual learning and knowledge dissemination. These learning communities, comprising educators and educational stakeholders from both intra- and inter-school contexts, serve as dynamic forums for ongoing discussion, learning, and knowledge sharing, all aimed at enhancing the overall quality of education delivery.

Learning communities are categorized into three distinct types: intra-school, inter-school, and PMM-based communities [7]. Intra-school learning communities serve as platforms within individual schools where teachers and educational staff convene regularly to enhance the quality of instruction. Inter-school learning communities comprise teachers from multiple schools, spanning both intra-cluster and intra-work area connections, exemplified by groups like KKG and MGMP. Meanwhile, PMM-based learning communities operate virtually, leveraging PMM functionality to facilitate collaboration unhindered by geographical constraints or time limitations. The formation of these communities is geared towards maximizing knowledge exchange, both within and between schools, as well as through virtual channels such as PMM, thereby fostering the dissemination of best practices in teaching methodologies.

The establishment of learning communities is envisaged as a vehicle for educational enhancement and collaborative efforts, particularly for teachers, aimed at refining their professional competencies [8]. Active participation and engagement in learning community activities afford teachers opportunities for collective problem-solving, a crucial endeavor considering that many challenges encountered within educational units revolve around instructional practices. While the overarching goal is to improve teaching quality, discussions within these communities often gravitate towards administrative concerns such as workload management, accreditation, and financial incentives [9][10]

This scenario prompts inquiry into the extent to how learning communities contribute to the development of educators' pedagogical competencies. Despite their

involvement, teachers, especially in educator learning community (KGB), may still adhere to traditional instructional models that may be less pertinent to contemporary educational needs, such as lecture-based approaches and reliance on standard materials like student worksheets (LKS). The emergence of innovative pedagogy heralds a paradigm shift, offering space for the cultivation of teachers, students, and schools characterized by adaptability and innovation in selecting diverse instructional models and methodologies. Nonetheless, many teachers, particularly in KGB PAUD, may exhibit a reluctance to deviate from conventional norms and embrace unconventional approaches, albeit within the confines of educational regulations.

Indeed, innovative educators must strive for originality in their instructional methods, rather than relying solely on conventional teaching approaches, methods, or strategies gleaned from theoretical studies [11]. The essence of teacher creativity lies in their capacity to adapt and tailor methods and strategies to suit diverse learning objectives, materials, and assessment criteria, thereby aligning instructional practices with students' learning preferences and needs [12].

Moreover, in literacy development, there exists a notable gap among KGB teachers in harnessing digital media for various learning endeavors, including word literacy, visual literacy, critical literacy, and media literacy, as components of multiliteracy. Consequently, addressing these challenges becomes imperative, as they serve as focal points for fostering effective and innovative solutions aimed at enhancing teachers' creative pedagogical prowess.

2. METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, with the primary objective of comprehending various phenomena experienced by research subjects, including behaviors, perceptions, motivations, and actions. The findings are subsequently summarized descriptively [13]. Specifically, the focus of inquiry revolves around learning-related challenges frequently encountered by Early Childhood Education (PAUD) teachers affiliated with the Gorontalo PAUD Learning Teacher Community (KGB), which serves as a collaborative platform for educators in Gorontalo. A total of 25 respondents participated in this study.

Data collection methods encompassed a two-month period of observation during learning community sessions, supplemented by interviews and documentation. Following data collection, qualitative data management techniques were employed, guided by the data analysis process outlined by [14]. This involved systematically sifting through and organizing the collected data into distinct categories, elucidating the data through unit descriptions, synthesizing findings, identifying recurring patterns, selecting pertinent information for further examination, and ultimately drawing conclusions to facilitate comprehension and interpretation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of learning communities adhered to four fundamental elements of pedagogical competence, as elaborated in [15] is as follows :

Table 1. Application of Learning Communities

Pedagogical Competence	Pedagogical Implementation [15]	Learning Community Activities	Implementation of Learning Community Results
Teacher understanding of students	Teachers are able to understand students in depth by utilizing personality principles and are able to recognize students' learning profiles from the start	Conduct discussions between teachers to synergize students' learning understanding Sharing good practices in student management	Teacher Working Group for the subject taught. Discussion in evaluating assignments
Design and implementation of learning	Teachers are able to design learning such as: educational foundations, applying learning and learning theories, determining learning strategies based on student characteristics, determining the competencies to be achieved, and teaching materials, as well as preparing learning plans based on the chosen strategies.	Learn through the PMM platform and similar in preparing teaching modules until their implementation Share and discuss related to classroom learning	Working Group of Teachers for Subjects taught Discussion in the taught learning process
Learning evaluation	Teachers are able to design and carry out essential learning evaluations such as: designing and carrying out process evaluations of continuous learning outcomes	Learning and sharing are related to evaluating learning outcomes Sharing good practices related to student assessment	Working Group of Teachers for Subjects taught Discussion in the assessment of the subjects taught
Development of students in actualizing their	Teachers are able to develop students to actualize their various	Mapping students' potential and learning profiles	Working Group of Teachers for

potential	potentials such as: facilitating students to develop academic and non-academic potential	based on discussions between teachers	Subjects taught Discussion in task evaluation
		Providing reinforcement in reasoning about students' potential	

In learning community, competency development in PAUD teacher is a basic capital. Learning community provides a room for discussion and sharing session among PAUD educators.

A learning community is a forum that we, educators and education personnel, to learn together and collaborate on a scheduled and ongoing basis. The way to run learning community in our school is by holding a meeting between the teacher and the principal at a specified time to discuss problems related to the learning process carried out in the school. Activities that have been carried out in our group include preparing teaching tools, creating learning media, how to carry out assessments and how to make reports on student development achievements. (Principal of TK Srikandi)

We often hold the learning community at this school for at least 1 month and have 4 meetings. In running the learning community at the school, the principal gathers the teachers at our education institution to discuss the agenda of activities and plans that will be determined together. (Teacher of TK Mawar)

During learning community, PAUD educators discuss about how to identify the problem, to analyze the problem, until to provide potential solution that currently in their own educational institution, and largely in their educational environment. They also plotted methodical strategy with achievement targets and indicators. This process, as explained in [16] related to each educator's competence started or enhanced through products, processes, and services that consist of ideas, programs, services, methods, creative endeavors, and practical applications . The educators apply and decide the process and the output in learning [17]. To develop pedagogical competence, educators are taught to utilize the media either in face to face meeting or distance learning using virtual conferences. This signifies educators' creativity to enhance interactive learning.

Pedagogical competence remains instrumental in fostering successful learning outcomes within educational settings [18]. The readiness of each educational unit is pivotal in facilitating the effective implementation of learning communities. By fostering a culture of collective responsibility for educational transformation, learning communities align with the paradigm that educational institutions and educators serve as agents of change in the learning process. Furthermore, learning communities serves as a versatile medium, offering informative, educational, regulatory, and entertaining content, thereby providing educators with access to diverse learning resources such as

engaging and instructive videos, YouTube channels, animated presentations from various applications, and films. Within this dynamic space, learning communities continuously foster the development of adaptable, innovative, and educational pedagogical approaches, manifested through teacher and student-led projects or performances.

It is anticipated that a favorable perception of the advantages offered by this learning community will emerge, facilitating more effective learning experiences among peers, particularly those within the same school over an extended duration. As a result, the majority of teachers affirm that school-based learning communities effectively enhance their capacity and competence in teaching. This effectiveness stems from the facilitation of seamless information and learning resource sharing among teachers, as well as the streamlined resolution of student learning challenges within these communities.

4. CONCLUSION

Learning community is a place for education personnel to share their opinion, as well as to talk about actual problem and potential solution for what occurs in one's institution. With the recent of Merdeka Kurikulum, as an updated education curriculum, learning community serves as a way to understand how to manage learning and teaching in PAUD to be more practical and meaningful for students. Therefore, learning community could serve as pedagogical competence development for educators. Through hands-on experience, educators, as integral members of these communities, could refine their pedagogical skills by leveraging diverse learning resources. Empirical empowerment attained through training within learning communities fosters the capacity and creativity of teachers, both individually and collectively, in honing their pedagogical expertise. Engaging in direct practice or experiential learning using a spectrum of resources serves as a creative, innovative, and practical approach to learning. Moreover, participation in learning communities empowers teachers to transform their instructional approaches.

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