



AN ANALYSIS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TEACHERS' COMPETENCIES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This article reviews research on Indonesian Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers' pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competency. This study examines four factors of ECE teacher competence as perceived by 45 teachers. This qualitative study uses semi-structured interviews to collect data. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The study found that ECE teachers stimulated early childhood development appropriately. The study also revealed several findings, including teachers' limited awareness of early childhood development theories, a lack of understanding of their ethical responsibilities, and various barriers to ECE teacher competence. This qualitative study highlights Indonesian ECE teachers' expertise and pedagogy. These findings can help create more effective and sustainable ECE teacher training programs. This study also encourages reflection on teachers' role in early childhood development and identifies areas that need more attention in Indonesia's early childhood education system.

Keywords: *Indonesian Early Childhood Education (ECE); Qualitative Study; Teacher Competence; Thematic Analysis*

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

This research puts forward four aspects of ECE teacher competency that every teacher should have. The results of this qualitative research show the concrete forms carried out by ECE teachers in each dimension of the four aspects of teacher competence.

There are also findings regarding competencies that need to be improved by teachers, such as knowledge of early childhood development theory and early childhood learning theory which is still minimal, handling of students with special needs is not optimal, and teachers' understanding of the teacher's code of ethics is not yet comprehensive.

The results of this research show that teachers' knowledge of early childhood development theory is still lacking, teachers do not yet know the basic essence of early childhood education. Teachers' knowledge of the curriculum fortunately has been facilitated by the existence of learning modules, however, there are obstacles such as limited teaching materials and curriculum changes from the government which make teachers need to re-learn the new curriculum (Jannah & Rasyid, 2023). The good things are Teachers have carried out appropriate practices for activities to stimulate aspects of early childhood development.

The research provides insights for improving and developing early childhood education in Indonesia. Pedagogical abilities are appropriate, but theoretical knowledge needs improvement. Strengthening the support system, including school principals, the education department, and the Ministry of Education, can enhance ECE teacher competency.

GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT

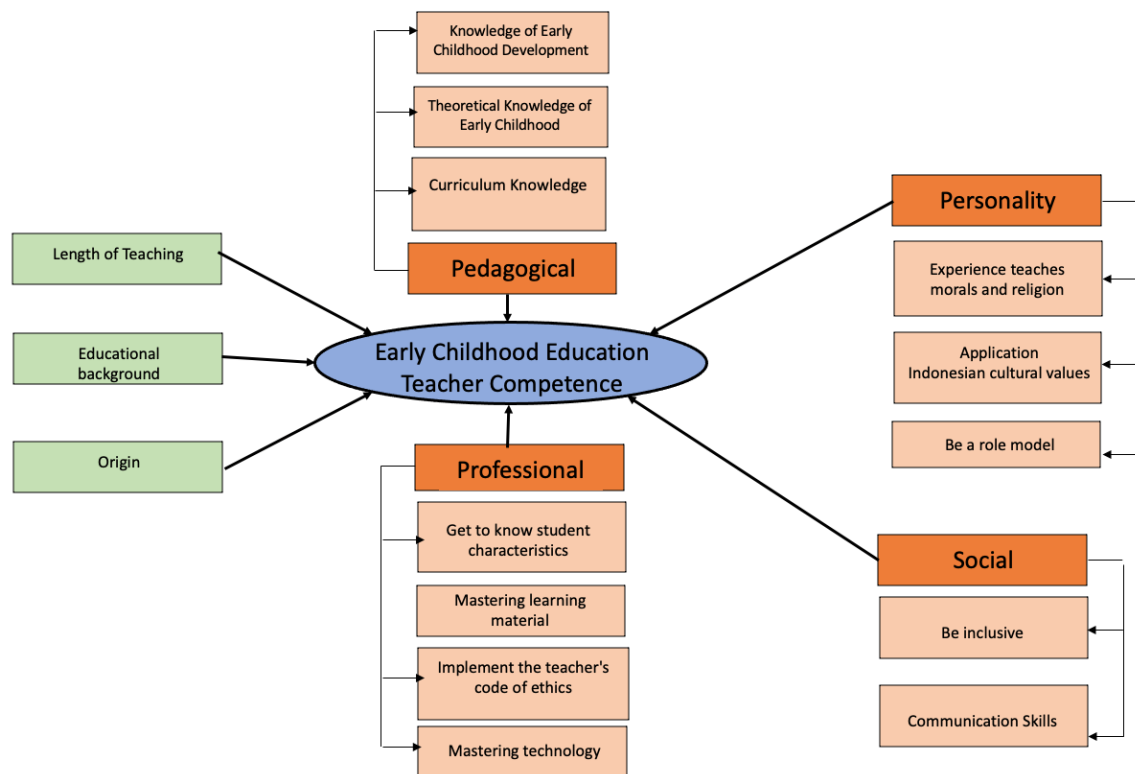


Fig. 1. Teacher Competency Framework

Research Objectives

The rationale behind this objective is that prior research has indicated that early childhood teachers in Indonesia possess inadequate knowledge, conduct activities that do not correspond to the developmental stage of the students, and produce suboptimal learning outcomes; furthermore, teacher competence remains inadequate (Rakhmania et al., 2023).

Initial research was conducted through interviews with six ECE instructors, all with a limited understanding of child development theory. This is impacted by qualifications that fail to meet the established criteria. There are early childhood education teachers who are high school graduates or hold bachelor's degrees in other disciplines.

So, the research questions of this study is:

1. How knowledgeable is the teacher in different aspects of early childhood development?
2. To what extent do early childhood education instructors possess expertise in the discipline?

Methodology

This research included structured interviews with 45 ECE teachers from formal and informal institutions, state and private, who taught 3-6-year-olds. ECE institutions from 16

Indonesian provinces' cities participated. Interviews occurred August–September 2023. Informed consent was obtained before the interviews. The Indonesian Scientific Psychology Consortium Ethics Committee number 088/2023 Ethics/KPIN approved this research's interview rules and structure. This study uses qualitative thematic analysis. Thematic analysis helps interpret qualitative data and find research objectives-based patterns. The thematic analysis involves qualitative data collection from interviews, group interviews, or text references, coding, topic identification, categorization, in-depth analysis, report writing, and verification.

Results

The results of interviews with 45 participants showed dimensions that influence the formation of teacher competence. An overview of the results of this research is shown in Fig.1.

In each competency, some dimensions are studied. For example, in pedagogical competence, there are dimensions of knowledge of early childhood development, knowledge of child development theory, and knowledge of the curriculum (Mumpuniarti et al., 2020). All dimensions are influenced by teaching experience, educational background, and regional origin. Interview activities conducted with 45 participants produced findings from each dimension, as shown in the next figures.

Findings

Findings on teacher competence revealed various aspects of pedagogic. Dancing and crumpling paper were quite popular for motor skill stimulation, alongside local wisdom activities like using rattan hoops and meronce (crafting bead necklaces) (Oktafiani & Rakimahwati, 2023). Everyday objects like bottle caps and soda were utilized for cognitive activities. Despite of lacking knowledge of early childhood development theory (Nakajima et al., 2021; Rakhmania et al., 2023), many teachers relied on modules despite challenges in materials availability and curriculum changes.

Regarding personality, participants exhibited alignment with moral and religious values, integrated Indonesian culture, and served as role models through consistent behavior. Social competence highlighted inclusiveness and effective communication, with some adopted special approaches to special needs students. Communication involves engagement with superiors, peers, and parents. Especially for parents through phone and social media. Conflict resolution involves collaborative discussion for solutions.

Professional competencies encompassed understanding student characters through observation and student records, mastering learning material by grasping concepts and objectives, and effort to enhance their skills through learning, attending seminars, and training. While some fully grasped teacher code ethics, others had a partial understanding. Participants demonstrated proficiency in using technology, primarily the Internet for accessing teaching materials and communication purposes.

Acknowledgement

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