
SELF-DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER COMPETENCIES

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Abstract : *Competence is an integrated set of individual characteristics, encompassing knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective performance in various teaching contexts. Components of competency include a combination of knowledge, skills, moral values, and beliefs. Teacher competency serves as a key driver for improving teaching quality and student outcomes, implying that high-quality teaching requires a strong level of knowledge and skills. Teacher self-development is a crucial aspect in improving the quality of learning and the professionalism of educators in a dynamic education era. Teachers are required not only to possess pedagogical and professional competencies but also reflective and social skills that support their role as learning agents. This study aims to examine teacher self-development strategies, including self-awareness, collaboration, and networking, as efforts to improve teacher competency and performance. The method used is a literature review or a qualitative approach with an analysis of teacher professional development practices. The results of the study indicate that self-awareness helps teachers identify strengths, weaknesses, and ongoing self-development needs. Collaboration between teachers encourages the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and learning innovations. Meanwhile, networking expands teachers' access to learning resources, professional communities, and career development opportunities. These three strategies complement each other and contribute significantly to developing reflective, adaptive, and professional teachers. Therefore, teacher self-development needs to be designed in an integrated manner by emphasizing aspects of self-awareness, cooperation, and professional networking.*

Keywords: Self-development, Teacher competence, Early childhood teacher

Introduction

Teacher professionalism is no longer a demand for teachers but rather an obligation, including for teachers in early childhood education units (PAUD). This necessitates that teachers adopt specific attitudes to carry out their work responsibly, perform their core duties and functions, and develop their skills without interfering with their primary tasks. Professionalism is a quality criterion for professional teachers (Haratua et al., 2025). Professional teachers are expected to have a deep understanding

of the material, especially regarding early childhood development, including physical-motor, language, social-emotional, and moral aspects (Nofrika & Suryana, 2022). Teacher professionalism is the ability of teachers to carry out their duties as educators, encompassing aspects of pedagogical mastery, knowledge, methodology, management, and other aspects that can be realized through their performance in the educational environment (Istikomah & Syukroni, 2025). A professional educator plays a central role in shaping students' high insights, thus producing quality and valuable individuals (Harianto, 2022).

Teachers in the classroom learning process are considered to play an important role, especially in helping students develop a positive attitude toward learning, stimulate curiosity, encourage independence and intellectual logic, and create conditions for success in learning (Indraswary et al., 2024). Therefore, teachers are required to have a high level of professionalism to effectively carry out their duties of educating, teaching, guiding, and evaluating students (Anggun et al., 2024). This is the background for this research: to foster independence in young children, teachers are needed who have warm personalities and provide comfort for the child. This teacher's personality is related to the personality competencies that teachers must possess (Utomo & Hidayah, 2025). Understanding Competency "Competency" literally comes from the word "competence," which means ability, authority, and skill. From an etymological perspective, competence refers to the aspect of excellence and the expertise demonstrated by an employee or leader, which encompasses good knowledge, behavior, and skills. The characteristics of competence are integral to one's personal character and influence a person's behavior when performing work tasks (Sari et al., 2024).

Competency, according to Spencer, is an underlying characteristic of an individual related to the effectiveness of their performance in their work or an individual's fundamental characteristics that have a causal relationship with the reference criteria, being effective, performing optimally, or being superior in the workplace or in specific situations (Sumiati, 2025). Therefore, professional competence encompasses a broad and in-depth mastery of teaching materials, pedagogical abilities, and the development of essential personality and social skills for teachers (Fiani et al., 2025). In this study, we review self-development strategies to enhance the personality competencies of early childhood teachers. Teachers' Personality Competency Indicators: Teachers who directly interact with students need to possess strong competencies and personality. The role of a teacher is twofold; besides being an instructor, they are also an educator (Masrurroh et al., 2025). To develop their dual roles or tasks, it is recommended that teachers possess the following personality requirements:

Referring to national education standards, teacher personality competencies include several aspects, namely: a. Acting in accordance with religious, legal, social, and national Indonesian cultural norms. b. Presenting oneself as an honest, noble, and exemplary individual to students and society. c. Presenting oneself as a stable, mature, wise, and authoritative individual. d. Demonstrating a strong work ethic, high responsibility, pride in being a teacher, and self-confidence. e) Upholding the code of ethics for the teaching profession. The essence of a teacher's personality competencies all stems from the teacher's personal inner self. A teacher's personality competencies ultimately determine the pedagogical, professional, and social competencies they possess when conducting lessons. The teacher's personality will have a greater impact on children's interest and enthusiasm for participating in learning activities. A teacher's polite personality, sensitive to students, honest, sincere, and a good role model, has a significant influence on success in learning, regardless of the subject matter. However,

some teachers need to have strategies to improve teacher competence, the goal being for teachers to know what areas of their competence need improvement.

Self-development activities must prioritize teachers' needs for achieving standards and improving professional competence, particularly those related to the implementation of learning services. These needs include the competence to investigate and understand the context where teachers teach, mastery of subject matter and curriculum, mastery of teaching methods, competence in evaluating students and learning, mastery of information and communication technology (ICT), or other relevant competencies.

The definition of self-development is the activity carried out by teachers to enhance their professional development to possess professional competencies that align with the law, namely to be able to carry out their core duties and obligations in the teaching/mentoring process, including additional tasks relevant to the school's function. The steps in self-development are as follows:

1. Analyze training and development needs. At this stage, the school conducts an analysis and develops a plan to enhance teacher competence and performance.
2. Determining training objectives. This goal serves as an indicator to measure the success of a training program.
3. Training Program. Generally, training or development can be divided into two types: on-the-job training and off-the-job training. On-the-job training is a training or development program conducted while performing duties within the organization. Off-the-job learning is a training and development program conducted outside of organizational duties.
4. Evaluation and Modification of Training. Effective training requires evaluation as feedback for previous training.

If necessary, schools can modify the results of the training evaluation. Thus, training programs for teachers are very beneficial to improving their own performance and management (Sutikno, 2018). Based on these steps, schools as educational organizations can make efforts to improve teacher competence through self-development activities using steps such as those mentioned above.

Research Methods

This publication employs a literature review methodology (Nirwana et al., 2025). A literature study is characterized as a thorough examination of existing scientific literature to construct a solid theoretical framework and outline the historical and contemporary progression of research relevant to the research subject (SUPARMAN & MUHAMMAD, 2024). This research does not entail direct field data gathering; instead, it concentrates on the analysis of secondary data derived from pertinent literature sources, including scholarly publications, books, and documents ((Waruwu et al., 2025).

The literature review approach is employed to collect data and material pertinent to the research issue, encompassing theoretical concepts, empirical findings, and appropriate analytical models (AZIZURAHMAN et al., 2025). All utilized data is secondary, derived from the findings of previously published research evaluations (Dwisusanti & Mukhroji, 2025). The acquired sources were further examined through content analysis and thematic analysis. Content analysis was employed to systematically identify, categorize, and evaluate the meanings within the text, whilst thematic analysis was utilized to discern the principal themes, relational patterns among concepts, and develop trends in the literature (Laa et al., 2025). By synthesizing two analytical

methods, the collected data is not only described but also organized into a coherent theoretical framework.

This method allows researchers to provide a full overview of the topic and to synthesize the information effectively (Widiasanti et al., 2023). The literature study functions as both a foundational background and the principal methodology for developing a profound and concentrated comprehension of the researched issue. The key steps in executing this literature study encompass the selection of the research topic, the search for pertinent literature sources, and the evaluation of those sources according to predefined criteria (Verona et al., 2023). Thereafter, the chosen literature will undergo qualitative analysis to discern emergent patterns, themes, and pertinent conclusions (Syahrul et al., 2025).

Results And Discussion

The discussion results indicate that the teacher's strategy in developing personality competence in teachers is to improve their ability to manage themselves, interact with others, and enhance their professionalism as educators (Herawati et al., 2023). As future educators, the first self-development strategy for oneself is self-awareness. Self-awareness in the context of teacher competency strategies is an essential ability for a teacher to deeply recognize and understand their emotions, thoughts, behaviors, strengths, weaknesses, values, and motivations, as well as to be aware of their impact on the teaching process and interactions with students and colleagues. Self-awareness allows a person to make better decisions, improve performance, and build healthier relationships (Pretorius & Plaatjies, 2023).

The view on self-awareness in the implementation of the school's academic system will ultimately determine behavior, creating an organizational environment that fosters teachers' self-awareness and their willingness to develop themselves, leading to professional teachers with optimal performance in achieving their competencies (Rahmamulyati et al., 2025). toward self-awareness. Staff capabilities in schools with leadership that does not control subordinates will foster teacher independence and creativity, ultimately leading to teacher self-awareness in their duties as learning agents and promoting self-development. This intrinsic motivation, cultivated through self-awareness, enables teachers to proactively seek opportunities for skill enhancement and knowledge acquisition, thereby continuously refining their pedagogical approaches (Habibah, 2022). This continuous refinement is crucial for adapting to evolving educational paradigms and student needs, thereby solidifying their role as effective and impactful educators (A et al., 2025).

The key finding from this research is that self-awareness significantly influences teacher competence (Sipman et al., 2021). The study elucidates the significance of emotions in human life as they shape behavior, yet excessive anxiety can impede work performance. This opinion shows that there are two sides to emotions: controlled emotions will be a motivator for improving the quality of behavior, while uncontrolled emotions, especially if they cause excessive anxiety, will be an obstacle to achieving performance. Therefore, if a teacher has high self-awareness, they are more likely to improve and enhance their competence, and vice versa (Savina et al., 2025). Stated that consciousness is the ego. The ego plays an important role in determining the perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and memories that enter consciousness. From the teacher's perspective, this explanation relates to self-development, indicating that teachers with superior emotional intelligence, specifically a high level of self-awareness regarding

their profession, tend to have a better ego and willingness to develop their personal competencies. But if they lack self-awareness, they will tend to neglect themselves and their competence. The results above show how important it is for teachers to be aware of themselves to improve their skills (Guo et al., 2022).

This foundational understanding empowers teachers to critically evaluate their own pedagogical practices and identify areas for growth, fostering a proactive approach to professional development (Ghasemi & Khany, 2019). This aligns with research demonstrating a significant correlation between teachers' emotional intelligence and self-efficacy, both of which are rooted in self-awareness, influencing their ability to understand and regulate emotions for improved classroom management and confidence (Al-Otaibi & Alshaikhai, 2023). Furthermore, the ability to self-reflect and manage emotions, hallmarks of high self-awareness, directly contributes to a teacher's capacity for creating a supportive and effective learning environment (Molina-Moreno et al., 2024). This aspect emphasizes the multifaceted benefits of self-awareness, extending beyond individual growth to positively impact student outcomes and overall school dynamics (Human, Technologies, and Quality of Education, 2023). Teachers who are adept at managing their emotions and possessing a strong sense of self-awareness are better equipped to foster a positive classroom atmosphere, thereby directly influencing student engagement and academic performance (Pujiati et al., 2025).

The second strategy is teacher self-development through interaction or collaboration. Collaboration is the interaction within a group regarding all activities necessary to complete a shared task. From an educational environment perspective, collaboration means a cooperative action by school members for goals related to their work. These actions can include sharing values through teacher learning, enabling them to influence teaching practices and student achievement. Collaboration serves as a means for teachers to remind each other of their roles and improve teaching materials, teaching practices, and interactions with students. Collaborative activities are carried out by involving others in setting common goals, sharing responsibilities, and working together to achieve more than what could be accomplished independently (Kaendler et al., 2014). The main benefits of teacher collaboration are increasing teachers' opportunities for professional growth through interaction with others and improving teachers' knowledge and skills (Ronfeldt et al., 2015). The advantages of collaboration are that teachers feel they receive moral support and the opportunity to learn from each other, which helps them feel better about themselves and their tasks. However, there are also disadvantages to collaboration, such as increased workload, loss of independence and autonomy, interpersonal conflict, and unhealthy competition among teams (Bedwell et al., 2012). The main forms of teacher collaboration for professional development are identified as communities of practice, lesson study groups, professional learning communities, and teacher team design. Collaborative activities can also be face-to-face, use digital mediation, or be a combination of both. These activities can be conducted within the same school or institution, across institutions, or across a broader network of teachers at the local, regional, national, or international level. Collaboration is categorized into several types, ranging from independent teachers to those who are more often dependent, namely:

1. Sharing or scanning ideas, with occasional exchange of experiences among colleagues.
2. Assistance and feedback, representing the interaction between teachers and the availability of assistance or reciprocal support.

3. Sharing methods and materials: This collaboration highlights the sharing of materials and methods, including the presentation of content and methods related to the curriculum and teaching among colleagues.
4. Cooperation, representing the interaction between teachers with a high degree of interdependence. Teachers feel a shared responsibility for the teaching task.

The final strategy, self-development through the Teacher Learning Network (TLN), is implemented as a way to improve the competence of early childhood teachers. TLN is designed to address the challenges in producing professional early childhood teachers according to educator standards. Educators grow and develop their competencies through various professional networks, learning anytime, anywhere, from various sources, and building collaborations to maximize work professionalism. TLN can also connect teachers so they can support each other, give advice, and collaborate. This includes helping teachers become accustomed to efficiently giving and receiving the latest information and changes in the field of education (Sanisah et al., 2021). TLN activities are conducted using two approaches: virtual classes and offline (face-to-face) sessions, through various educational and training activities, workshops, and seminars with different focuses. The implementation of the activity is divided into four important stages following the activity management principles of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling.

Here are the stages of the Teacher Learning Network activity:

1. Planning Stage. The activities carried out during the planning phase include forming a work team, conducting initial observations, and creating a draft of the activities. The formation of the work team took into account the team's commitment and capacity to carry out the mentoring activities until their completion. The meeting to form the working team successfully agreed on: a. the personnel involved in the activities; b. the team structure; and c. strengthening the team with a decree from the head of the education department. The existence of the working team is crucial to the successful implementation of the activities.
2. Organizing Stage. This stage also consists of three activities: holding discussions to create job descriptions for each position within the team, dividing tasks, and creating a schedule of activities.
3. Implementation Stage. At this stage, the core activities include five key workshops: developing learning materials, creating learning media, basic training on the e-training application, writing and creating a school blog, and conducting regular meetings. The success indicators for the activity implementation are a. the activity is carried out well and smoothly according to the existing KAK (activity reference framework); b. the number of participants attending the activity meets the provided quota; c. resource individuals and activity facilitators accompany participants until the activity is completed; and d. Participants master the material, as evidenced by the results of each participant's performance demonstration.
4. Monitoring and Evaluation Stage. This stage involves controlling the approach, implementers, and methods used. The approach developed for directly and indirectly controlling activities is implemented by the internal team and external parties through observation activities, supported by interviews and documentation. Activities are carried out on a schedule, both directly and indirectly, with the objectives of a.

monitoring the progress of each activity; b. assessing the overall achievements of the mentoring; c. ensuring that activities are implemented well; d. identifying potential problems that may need to be addressed; and e. eliminating certain factors that are indicated to hinder achievement.

Direct monitoring was conducted by observing every activity held to monitor the activities and interactions of facilitators and resource individuals with the participants. During these activities, facilitators and resource persons also interacted with participants regarding several aspects of the activity's implementation.

Conclusion

The conclusion drawn from this self-development strategy is that the first step is to implement the self-awareness strategy for a teacher to deeply recognize and understand their emotions, thoughts, behaviors, strengths, weaknesses, values, and motivations, as well as to be aware of their impact on the teaching process and interactions with students and colleagues. Then the second strategy is collaboration. Collaborative activities are carried out by involving others in determining common goals, sharing responsibilities, and working together to achieve more than can be achieved independently. The benefits of teacher collaboration are increasing teachers' opportunities for professional growth through interaction with others and improving teachers' knowledge and skills. And the last strategy is the Teacher Learning Network, or TLN. TLN can connect teachers with other teachers so they can support each other, provide advice and feedback, and take advantage of opportunities to collaborate. TLN activities are conducted using two approaches: virtual classes and offline (face-to-face) sessions, through various educational and training activities, workshops, and seminars with different focuses. The implementation of the activity is divided into four important stages following the activity management principles of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling.

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