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Characteristics of Professional Teachers in Enhancing the Quality of Learning in Primary Education

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ABSTRACT

Teaching is a profession that requires specialized expertise and authority in education, instruction, and training, and therefore cannot be performed by individuals without the necessary professional qualifications. According to Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, professional educators are required to possess four core competencies: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies. This article aims to examine the nature of teacher professionalism, analyze the strategic role of teachers in the instructional process, and explore the importance of discipline, responsibility, and moral integrity in upholding the professional code of ethics, particularly within the context of primary education. This study employs a theoretical review method by drawing upon relevant scholarly literature and previous research findings. The review concludes that the four teacher competencies are interdependent and cannot be separated. A balanced integration of instructional competencies (pedagogical and professional) with personal qualities (personal and social competencies) constitutes the fundamental basis for fostering high-quality learning processes and enhancing the overall quality of national education in Indonesia.

KEYWORD

Teacher Professionalism, Teacher Competencies, Discipline, Responsibility, Integrity

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a strategic role in shaping a high-quality future generation. Within the formal education system, teachers occupy a central position as the primary agents responsible for implementing the teaching and learning process. Teachers are no longer viewed merely as transmitters of knowledge but also serve as educators, mentors, facilitators, motivators, and role models for their students.[1] Given these extensive responsibilities, teaching is recognized as a professional occupation. From an etymological perspective, a profession requires specialized expertise acquired through formal education and professional training and is governed by established qualifications, responsibilities, and a professional code of ethics. Consequently, the teaching profession cannot be performed by individuals who lack an educational background and the requisite professional preparation.

In Indonesia, the government's commitment to strengthening teacher professionalism was reinforced through the enactment of Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers. This legislation stipulates that professional teachers must possess four core competencies: pedagogical competence, personal competence, professional competence, and social competence. These four competency domains are expected to be developed in a balanced manner by every educator. Teachers are required to demonstrate proficiency in classroom management and an understanding of students' characteristics (pedagogical competence), possess comprehensive mastery of subject matter (professional competence), exhibit wisdom and integrity in their personal conduct (personal competence), and interact effectively with students, colleagues, parents, and the wider community (social competence).[2]

However, in the contemporary educational landscape, characterized by rapid social transformation and technological advancement, the challenges faced by the teaching profession have become increasingly complex. Teacher professionalism is no longer assessed solely on the basis of instructional competence but also in terms of moral character and professional work ethic. Personal qualities such as adherence to school regulations, responsibility for fostering students' moral development, and integrity reflected in the consistency between words and actions constitute fundamental pillars of educational success.[3] Teachers' exemplary conduct serves as one of the most influential factors in cultivating discipline and responsibility among students, particularly in primary education.

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[1] Burhan dan Sauga, "Peranan Guru Terhadap Mutu Pendidikan," *Visipena Journal* 8, no. 1 (Juni 2017), https://doi.org/10.46244/visipena.v8i1.377.

[2] Hamzah B. Uno, *Profesi Kependidikan: Problema, Solusi, dan Reformasi Pendidikan di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 2016).

[3] Sulastri Sulastri, Happy Fitria, dan Alfroki Martha, "Kompetensi Profesional Guru dalam Meningkatkan Mutu Pendidikan," *Journal of Education Research* 1, no. 3 (Desember 2020), https://doi.org/10.37985/jer.v1i3.30.

Given this context, a comprehensive understanding of the integration of the four teacher competencies, together with the reinforcement of discipline, responsibility, and integrity, has become increasingly important. This study is expected to provide a comprehensive perspective on the characteristics of the ideal professional teacher who is capable of addressing contemporary educational challenges while contributing to the continuous improvement of educational quality in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a library research design. Library research is a research method that involves collecting, reviewing, and analyzing a wide range of written sources relevant to the research topic. The data sources included books, scholarly journals, scientific articles, undergraduate theses, master's theses, doctoral dissertations, and other documents related to the research problem.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teacher Professionalism in the Context of Primary Education

A profession may be defined as an occupation or position that requires specialized expertise acquired through specific education and professional training and is governed by particular qualifications, responsibilities, and a professional code of ethics. The teaching profession refers to the specialized expertise and authority in the fields of education, instruction, and training that individuals pursue as their profession to earn a livelihood.[4] Teaching is a profession, meaning that it is an occupation requiring specialized expertise that cannot be undertaken by individuals without an educational background or appropriate professional qualifications. Teachers are professional educators whose primary responsibilities include educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students in formal early childhood education, primary education, and secondary education.

Teacher professionalism is indispensable for advancing the quality of education in Indonesia. It reflects a professional work ethic that prioritizes excellence in educational outcomes through the application of appropriate and effective professional practices. Such professionalism is essential for strengthening the national education system and ensuring that teachers perform their roles effectively.

Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers stipulates that professional teachers are required to possess four core competencies: professional competence, pedagogical competence, social competence, and personal competence. These competencies constitute

[4] Aulia Najmi, "Konsep Profesionalisme Guru dalam Pendidikan," *Seri Publikasi Pembelajaran* 1, no. 2 (2021), https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/85bj4.

the fundamental components that every professional teacher must develop and demonstrate in carrying out their educational responsibilities.[5]

Etymologically, the term *profession* is derived from the English word *profession*, which originates from the Latin word *professus*, meaning "to be skilled or competent in a particular occupation." A profession may be defined as an occupation or position that requires specialized expertise acquired through specific education and professional training and is governed by particular qualifications, responsibilities, and a professional code of ethics.[6] Professional occupations differ from other types of work because they require specialized knowledge, competencies, and skills that are essential for carrying out professional responsibilities effectively.

According to Article 1 of Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, a teacher is a professional educator whose primary responsibilities include educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students in formal early childhood education, primary education, and secondary education. A lecturer is defined as a professional educator and scholar whose principal responsibilities are to transform, develop, and disseminate knowledge, science, technology, and the arts through education, research, and community service.

The following are the core competencies that every professional teacher is expected to possess:[7]

1. Pedagogical Competence

   Pedagogical competence refers to teachers' ability to manage students' learning processes, including understanding students' characteristics, designing and implementing instruction, evaluating learning outcomes, and facilitating students' development to actualize their full potential. According to Sudarwan Danim, pedagogical competence comprises five sub-competencies: (a) understanding students comprehensively; (b) designing instruction, including understanding the educational foundations that underpin the learning process; (c) implementing instruction; (d) designing and conducting learning assessment and evaluation; and (e) facilitating students' development to enable them to realize their various potentials.

2. Personal Competence

   Personal competence refers to the possession of a stable, mature, wise, and authoritative personality that enables teachers to serve as role models for students while demonstrating exemplary moral character. According to Sudarwan Danim, personal competence consists of five sub-competencies: possessing a stable and consistent personality, demonstrating maturity, exercising wisdom, displaying authority, and exhibiting noble moral character.

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[5] Kunandar, *Guru Profesional: Implementasi Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP) dan Sukses dalam Sertifikasi Guru*, Edisi Revisi, Cetakan 8 (Jakarta: Rajawali Pers, 2014).

[6] Siti Nur Haliza dan Suryatik, "Etika Profesi Keguruan Tanggung Jawab Dan Tantangan Moral Guru," *Qalam lil Mubtadiin* 2, no. 2 (September 2024), https://doi.org/10.58822/qlm.v2i2.214.

[7] E. Mulyasa, *Standar Kompetensi dan Sertifikasi Guru*, Cetakan 7 (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2013).

3. Professional Competence

Professional competence refers to teachers' comprehensive and in-depth mastery of subject matter, enabling them to guide students in achieving the competency standards established by the National Education Standards. According to Sudarwan Danim, professional competence encompasses two major sub-competency domains. The first is mastery of disciplinary knowledge related to the subject area, with essential indicators including: understanding the curriculum content taught in schools; comprehending the theoretical structures, concepts, and scientific methods underlying the subject matter; understanding conceptual relationships among related disciplines; and applying disciplinary concepts in everyday life. The second is mastery of the structure and methodology of the discipline, with the essential indicator being the ability to apply research methods and critical inquiry to deepen subject-specific knowledge.

According to Wina Sanjaya, teachers perform several important roles in the instructional process, including the following:

1. Teacher as a Source of Learning

As a source of learning, teachers are expected to possess comprehensive mastery of the subject matter. The quality of a teacher's professional performance is often reflected in the depth of their subject knowledge and their ability to communicate it effectively to students.

2. Teacher as a Facilitator

As facilitators, teachers provide support and learning services that enable students to participate effectively in the learning process. Prior to instruction, teachers carefully consider how instructional materials can be presented in ways that facilitate students' understanding and engagement.

3. Teacher as a Learning Manager

As learning managers, teachers are responsible for creating a classroom climate that enables students to learn comfortably and effectively. Through effective classroom management, teachers maintain a conducive learning environment that supports the participation and academic development of all students.

4. Teacher as a Demonstrator

As demonstrators, teachers illustrate concepts, skills, and procedures in ways that help students better understand and internalize the instructional content being presented.

5. Teacher as a Mentor

As mentors, teachers guide students in recognizing and developing their individual potential as preparation for their future lives. They also support students in achieving their developmental tasks, thereby enabling them to grow into well-rounded individuals who meet the expectations of their families and society.

6. Teacher as a Motivator

To achieve optimal learning outcomes, teachers are expected to demonstrate creativity in fostering students' learning motivation. This may be accomplished by clearly communicating learning objectives, stimulating students' interest, creating an enjoyable learning atmosphere, providing appropriate praise for students' achievements, conducting meaningful assessments, offering constructive feedback on students' work, and promoting both healthy competition and collaborative learning.

7. Teacher as an Evaluator

As evaluators, teachers are responsible for collecting and analyzing data and information regarding the effectiveness of the instructional process and students' learning outcomes in order to support continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

Teachers' Discipline, Responsibility, and Integrity

1. Discipline

Discipline refers to an individual's commitment to complying with established rules, managing time effectively, and fulfilling assigned responsibilities. In the educational context, teachers' discipline is one of the key factors in creating an effective and high-quality learning process. Teachers who demonstrate strong discipline provide positive role models for their students through punctuality, thorough instructional preparation, and adherence to school regulations. Such disciplined behavior also contributes to the development of students' character by fostering habits of orderliness and responsibility.[8]

Teachers who possess a high level of discipline are more likely to demonstrate professionalism in carrying out their duties. This professionalism is reflected in their ability to prepare instructional materials, attend classes punctually, and conduct learning assessments consistently. Moreover, teachers' discipline can enhance students' motivation to learn, as students tend to emulate the behaviors demonstrated by their teachers. Previous studies have shown that the cultivation of disciplinary character in schools is strongly influenced by teachers' exemplary conduct in their daily professional practice.[9]

Teachers' discipline is also closely associated with the professional ethics of the teaching profession. Teachers are expected to maintain appropriate attitudes, professional conduct, and a strong commitment to fulfilling their educational responsibilities. Consistent discipline contributes to the creation of a comfortable and conducive learning environment, thereby supporting the effective

[8] Fina Sabila, "Upaya guru dalam membangun karekter disiplin dan tanggung jawab siswa di MTs Al-Maarif 01 Singosari Malang," *Maliki Interdisciplinary Journal* 2, no. 9 (Juli 2024), https://urj.uin-malang.ac.id/index.php/mij/article/view/7148.

[9] Dara Mustika, Mufarizuddin, dan Rizki Ananda, "Implementasi Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter Disiplin dan Tanggung Jawab di Sekolah Dasar (Penelitian Kualitatif Kelas IV SDN 192 Pekanbaru)" (Skripsi, Universitas Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai, 2023).

achievement of educational objectives. Furthermore, the implementation of disciplinary management systems, such as digital attendance systems, has been shown to enhance teachers' discipline in performing their professional duties.[10]

2. Teachers' Responsibility

Teachers bear significant responsibility for educating, guiding, and mentoring students to support their intellectual, moral, and social development. Their responsibilities extend beyond delivering instructional content to encompass the cultivation of students' character and life values. Consequently, teachers are expected to serve as exemplary role models both within the school environment and in the wider community.

In carrying out their professional duties, teachers are required to demonstrate professional, pedagogical, social, and personal competencies. These responsibilities are reflected in their commitment to high-quality instruction, their ability to understand students' needs, and their willingness to provide continuous guidance and support. Teachers are also expected to establish a safe, comfortable, and supportive learning environment that facilitates students' optimal development.[11]

According to the study conducted by Romadanita, Surmilasari, and Kuswidyanarko, teachers play a crucial role in fostering students' discipline and responsibility because they are the primary figures who interact directly with students on a daily basis. Furthermore, responsible teachers continuously strive to improve their professional competence through professional training, advanced education, and other forms of professional development.

Teachers' responsibility is also reflected in their adherence to the professional code of ethics. They are expected to uphold the dignity of the teaching profession, respect students' rights, and carry out their duties fairly and objectively. By demonstrating a strong sense of responsibility, teachers can make meaningful contributions to students' development and to the continuous improvement of educational quality.

3. Teachers' Integrity

Teachers' integrity refers to the consistency between their words, actions, and moral values in carrying out their professional responsibilities. Teachers who demonstrate integrity are characterized by honesty, fairness, consistency, and accountability in the practice of their profession.

[10] Gilang Setiawan, Kustiawan Kustiawan, dan Ryan Anggria Pratama, "Efektivitas Penerapan Presensi Finger Print Dalam Meningkatkan Disiplin Pegawai Negeri Sipil Guru SDN Di Kecamatan Sagulung Kota Batam Tahun 2022," *Aufklarung: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial Dan Humaniora* 3, no. 2 (Juni 2023), https://pijarpemikiran.com/index.php/Aufklarung/article/view/458.

[11] Saifullah Saifullah, I. Nyoman Nugraha Ardana Putra, dan Heriani Heriani, "Pengaruh Kompetensi Pedagogik, Kompetensi Profesional, Kompetensi Sosial dan Kompetensi Kepribadian Guru terhadap Kinerja Guru SMAN se-Kota Bima," *Inovasi* 10, no. 1 (Juni 2023), https://doi.org/10.32493/Inovasi.v10i1.p58-70.30397.

Integrity is an essential quality for teachers because they serve as role models in shaping students' character and moral development.

Teachers with high integrity perform their professional duties with dedication while adhering to ethical standards and avoiding conduct that violates the professional code of ethics. Honesty in student assessment, fairness in treating all students, and consistency in enforcing school regulations are fundamental aspects of teachers' integrity. Furthermore, integrity reflects teachers' commitment to maintaining public trust in the teaching profession.

Research on the importance of teachers' integrity indicates that integrity constitutes a fundamental foundation for the successful fulfillment of teachers' professional roles and responsibilities within schools. [12] Teachers with integrity focus not only on the transmission of knowledge but also on fostering students' character through the exemplary conduct they demonstrate in their daily professional practice.

In today's rapidly evolving educational environment, maintaining teachers' integrity has become increasingly challenging due to technological advancements and ongoing social change. Therefore, teachers must uphold both professionalism and moral responsibility to remain trusted figures for students and the wider community. Strong integrity enables teachers to respond effectively to contemporary educational challenges while contributing to the development of school environments characterized by strong values and educational excellence.

Pedagogical, Personal, Social, and Professional Competencies

Teachers play a strategic role in shaping future generations. Beyond serving as transmitters of knowledge, they function as educators, mentors, motivators, and role models for their students. Consequently, teachers are required to possess adequate competencies to perform their professional responsibilities effectively. Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers stipulates that teachers must possess four core competencies: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies. These competencies should be developed in a balanced and integrated manner to enable teachers to respond effectively to the challenges of contemporary education.

1. Pedagogical Competence

Pedagogical competence refers to a teacher's ability to understand students, design instructional activities, implement the teaching and learning process, evaluate learning outcomes, and facilitate the optimal development of students' potential. This competence constitutes a fundamental requirement for teachers because it is directly associated with classroom instruction. Teachers who possess strong pedagogical competence are able to create learning environments that

[12] Febriyanti Siramba, "Urgensi Integritas Guru Pak Dalam Menjalankan Tugas Dan Tanggung Jawab Di Sekolah," *MAWAR SARON: Jurnal Pendidikan Kristen dan Gereja* 8, no. 1 (Maret 2025), https://doi.org/10.62240/msj.v8i1.91.

are structured, active, creative, effective, and engaging.[13] Pedagogical competence extends beyond the ability to deliver instructional content; it also encompasses a comprehensive understanding of students' characteristics. Each student possesses unique backgrounds, abilities, interests, learning styles, and levels of emotional development. Therefore, teachers must be able to identify the individual needs of each student to ensure that instruction is responsive and effective. For example, students with a visual learning style are more likely to understand instructional content through images, videos, or other visually oriented learning media.

In addition to understanding students, teachers must be capable of designing effective instructional plans. Instructional planning includes the preparation of syllabi, lesson plans, learning objectives, teaching materials, instructional methods, learning media, and assessment strategies. Careful planning enables teachers to conduct instruction in a systematic and well-organized manner, thereby facilitating the achievement of the intended learning objectives.

During the instructional process, teachers are expected to employ a variety of teaching methods appropriate to the classroom context. Rather than relying exclusively on lectures, teachers should integrate discussion, question-and-answer sessions, demonstrations, collaborative group work, project-based learning, and the use of digital technologies. The use of diverse instructional methods enhances students' interest in learning and reduces monotony throughout the learning process.

Pedagogical competence also includes teachers' ability to assess students' learning outcomes. Assessment is intended to determine the extent of students' understanding of the material that has been taught. Learning outcomes may be evaluated through written examinations, oral assessments, individual assignments, group projects, behavioral observations, and portfolio assessment. The results of these assessments serve as valuable feedback for teachers in refining subsequent instructional strategies to improve learning effectiveness.

Furthermore, teachers with strong pedagogical competence are expected to facilitate students' development in both academic and non-academic domains. Teachers should provide motivation, guidance, and opportunities that enable students to develop their talents and interests. Such opportunities may include academic competitions, extracurricular activities, scientific discussions, artistic programs, sports, and other creative endeavors.

In the contemporary educational landscape, pedagogical competence also requires teachers to integrate technology effectively into the learning process. The use of digital instructional media, including interactive presentations, educational videos, online learning applications, and virtual

[13] Anggun Diva Fitrah dkk., "Pengembangan Sikap Profesional Guru Dalam Meningkatkan Kompetensi Pedagogik, Profesional, Kepribadian, Dan Sosial," *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan* 11, no. 1.B (Januari 2025), https://jurnal.peneliti.net/index.php/JIWP/article/view/11349.

learning platforms, has become an essential component of improving educational quality. Teachers who are able to adapt to technological developments are better positioned to engage students and enhance instructional effectiveness.

Therefore, pedagogical competence represents a fundamental attribute of professional teachers, as it serves as the foundation for successful educational practice. Teachers who demonstrate strong pedagogical competence are more capable of delivering high-quality instruction, improving students' academic achievement, and fostering learners who are both intellectually capable and morally grounded.

Indicators of Pedagogical Competence:

a. Understanding students' physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and cultural characteristics.
b. Developing systematic instructional plans.
c. Employing appropriate teaching methods, instructional strategies, and learning media.
d. Implementing learning activities that are active, innovative, creative, effective, and engaging.
e. Conducting objective and continuous assessment of students' learning outcomes.
f. Integrating information technology into the teaching and learning process.
g. Facilitating the development of students' potential according to their talents and interests.

2. Personal Competence

Personal competence refers to a teacher's ability to demonstrate a stable, mature, wise, prudent, and authoritative personality. Teachers are expected to serve as role models for students through their attitudes, behavior, and moral character. Teachers who possess strong personal competence earn the respect of both students and the wider community. Discipline, responsibility, honesty, and patience are exemplary qualities that students can emulate. This competency is particularly important because education involves not only the transmission of knowledge but also the cultivation of students' character and moral values.

Indicators of Personal Competence: a) Demonstrating noble moral character. b) Acting honestly and responsibly. c) Maintaining emotional stability. d) Serving as a positive role model. d) Demonstrating a strong professional work ethic.

3. Social Competence

Social competence refers to a teacher's ability to communicate and interact effectively with students, fellow teachers, educational staff, parents, and the wider community. Teachers are expected to establish harmonious relationships with all stakeholders to foster a conducive educational environment. Effective communication facilitates the resolution of students' problems and strengthens collaboration between schools and the community.

Indicators of Social Competence:

a. Demonstrating effective and respectful communication.
b. Working collaboratively with others.
c. Showing tolerance toward diversity.
d. Establishing positive relationships with students' parents.
e. Actively participating in community activities.

4. Professional Competence

Professional competence refers to a teacher's ability to demonstrate comprehensive and in-depth mastery of the subject matter being taught. Teachers are expected to understand the disciplinary structure, fundamental concepts, and ongoing developments within their respective fields of knowledge.[14] Professional teachers continuously enhance their competencies through professional training, seminars, research, and continuous professional development. Strong subject-matter mastery contributes to higher-quality instruction and facilitates students' understanding of the learning materials.

Indicators of Professional Competence:

a. Demonstrating comprehensive mastery of subject matter.
b. Keeping abreast of developments in science and knowledge.
c. Integrating educational technology into the teaching and learning process.
d. Conducting classroom action research.
e. Engaging in continuous professional development

Relationship Among Teacher Competencies

The four core teacher competencies are interdependent and cannot be developed in isolation. Pedagogical competence without professional competence may result in instruction that lacks sufficient depth and academic rigor. Conversely, professional competence without strong personal competence may diminish a teacher's ability to serve as an effective role model. Social competence supports the establishment of positive interpersonal relationships, while personal competence provides the ethical foundation for teachers' integrity. Therefore, all four competencies should be developed in a balanced and integrated manner.

Pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies constitute the four fundamental pillars that every teacher is expected to possess. Pedagogical competence relates to instructional capability, personal competence reflects teachers' character and moral qualities, social competence concerns their ability to establish effective interpersonal relationships, and professional competence

[14] Artono dan Bermara Giri Menur Sari, "Kompetensi Pedagogik, Kepribadian, Sosial dan Profesional Guru terhadap Peningkatan Prestasi Belajar Sejarah," *Tadbir Muwahhid* 4, no. 1 (2020), https://doi.org/10.30997/jtm.v4i1.2588.

pertains to mastery of subject matter. Strengthening these four competencies will contribute significantly to improving the quality of education in Indonesia. Therefore, teachers should continuously engage in professional and personal development to meet the evolving demands of contemporary education.

CONCLUSION

Teachers are professional educators whose primary responsibilities include educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students. According to Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, professional teachers are required to possess four balanced core competencies: pedagogical competence (the ability to manage the teaching and learning process), personal competence (sound moral character), social competence (the ability to interact effectively with others), and professional competence (comprehensive mastery of subject matter). These four competencies are interconnected and inseparable in ensuring the effectiveness of educational practice.

Within the classroom, teachers perform multidimensional roles. They function not only as sources of knowledge and instructors but also as facilitators who support students' learning, learning managers who create a conducive classroom environment, demonstrators who clarify instructional content, mentors who foster students' talents and potential, motivators who inspire enthusiasm for learning, and evaluators who assess students' learning outcomes objectively. The effective integration of these roles, supported by balanced pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies, is fundamental to improving the quality of teaching and learning in primary education.

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