

The Impact of Teacher Certification on Improving the Quality and Professionalism of Educators in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the impact of teacher certification on improving the quality and professionalism of educators in Indonesia. The study employed a qualitative approach with a library research method, collecting data from books, scientific journals, research articles, and official government documents related to teacher professionalism and educator certification. The data analysis technique employed content analysis, with the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that teacher certification serves as a form of formal recognition of educator professionalism and contributes to improving teachers' pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competencies. Furthermore, certification also impacts teacher welfare through the provision of professional allowances, thereby increasing motivation and confidence in implementing learning. However, the study also found that not all teachers experience continuous professional improvement after obtaining certification. Therefore, a support system such as monitoring, evaluation, ongoing training, and continuous professional development is needed to optimally achieve the goal of improving educational quality.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Early reading skills are one of the most important basic skills that elementary school students must master, especially in first grade [1]. Reading is not only a language skill but also a basic competency that supports students in understanding learning materials in all subjects [2]. Students who are unable to read well at the early level often have difficulty participating in classroom learning activities. As a result, students may face obstacles in academic achievement and literacy development in later stages of education. Therefore, improving early reading skills is an important issue in elementary education because it affects students' overall learning success.

Early reading learning generally begins by introducing students to letters, syllables, words and simple sentences. At this stage, students are expected to be able to recognize letter symbols, pronounce sounds correctly, and combine letters into meaningful words and sentences. According to Pramaysheila, reading is the ability to recognize and understand written symbols and convert them into meaningful spoken or silent language [3]. Thus, early reading teaching should not only focus on memorizing letters but also on helping students understand the contextual meaning of language. Effective early reading instruction can encourage students to become active, confident, and motivated readers.

The learning characteristics of first-grade elementary school students also need to be considered when designing early reading instruction. At ages 6-7, students are still in the concrete operational stage, meaning they more easily understand concepts through concrete objects, visual media, and direct experiences. Students tend to be more attracted to colorful images, games, and interactive learning activities. Therefore, learning methods that involve visual media are considered more suitable for early reading instruction. Supartini and Ambara explain that image-based learning media can increase children's interest in reading and memory because students are more attracted to concrete and visually appealing material. [4].

One learning method that can be applied in early reading instruction is the global method. The global method introduces students to completing sentences accompanied by pictures before breaking the sentences down into words,

syllables, and letters. According to Arnita et al., the global method helps students understand reading material as meaningful language units rather than isolated letters. This method encourages students to recognize sentence patterns contextually and gradually understand smaller language components. Therefore, the global method is considered suitable for early reading instruction because it combines visual learning and contextual reading activities.

In the application of the global method, the teacher displays a picture along with a complete sentence related to the picture. Students first read the sentence as a whole and then learn to separate the sentence into words, syllables, and letters. Once students understand the individual components, the letters are rearranged into syllables, words, and complete sentences. According to Oktavianti and Septiani, this process helps students recognize language structures systematically and improves reading fluency [7]. Through this learning process, students become more active and interested because they learn to read through meaningful and visually supported activities.

Several previous studies have shown that the global method has a positive effect on early reading instruction. Rahma found that first-grade students often have difficulty recognizing letters, spelling syllables, and reading words fluently [8]. Their study emphasized the importance of implementing engaging learning methods to address early reading difficulties. Furthermore, Suprayati reported that implementing the global method improved students' reading abilities because students became more motivated and active during the learning process [9]. Similarly, Dewi et al. explained that the global method effectively improved students' early reading skills through sentence-based and picture-based learning activities [10].

Although previous research has shown positive results regarding the global method, several limitations remain. First, research examining the implementation of the global method in rural elementary schools is still limited. Most previous studies were conducted in urban schools or focused solely on general reading improvement without specifically examining early reading difficulties among first-grade students. Second, previous research has largely focused on student learning outcomes and paid little attention to improving classroom learning processes, such as teacher performance and student participation during learning. Third, there is limited classroom action research investigating how the global method can solve practical reading problems directly experienced by elementary school students.

In addition to the limitations of this study, practical challenges in early reading instruction are still common in schools. Many first-grade students struggle with letter recognition, correct word pronunciation, syllable combination, and fluent reading of simple sentences. These challenges often lead to students lacking confidence and motivation to participate in classroom learning activities. If early reading difficulties are not addressed promptly, students may continue to experience learning difficulties in higher grades. Therefore, teachers need to implement effective and engaging learning methods that can support students' literacy development from an early age.

The research problem in this study was identified through observations conducted on November 19–22, 2024, in Class I of SDN 192/II Sungai Buluh. Based on observations and interviews with the class teacher, it was found that students' early reading skills were still low. Of the 17 students, only 8 were able to read fluently, while the other students still had difficulty recognizing letters, spelling words, and reading sentences fluently. Students also experienced problems related to pronunciation, intonation, and reading clarity. During classroom learning activities, some students appeared passive and lacked enthusiasm during reading lessons. This condition indicates that early reading instruction in the classroom has not achieved optimal results.

Based on the above problems, an appropriate learning method is needed to improve students' early reading skills. The global method is considered appropriate because it provides a contextual and visually supported learning experience that can help students recognize sentences, words, syllables, and letters more easily. Through illustrated learning activities, students are expected to become more interested, active, and confident in learning to read. Therefore, the application of the global method is expected to help solve practical reading problems experienced by first-grade students at SDN 192/II Sungai Buluh.

Based on the background and research problems described above, the purpose of this study is to describe the improvement of early reading skills through the application of the global method in first-grade students of SDN 192/II Sungai Buluh. This study also aims to improve the learning process, including teacher performance and student participation, during early reading instruction. It is hoped that the findings of this study can contribute to the development of effective early reading instruction methods in elementary schools.

2. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a library research type [11]. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on theoretical studies and analysis of various literature related to efforts to improve the quality and professionalism of teachers in Indonesia, particularly through teacher certification programs. Library research is a research method carried out by collecting, reviewing, analyzing, and interpreting various written sources relevant to the research topic. [12]. These sources include scientific books, national and international journals, research articles, laws and regulations, official government documents, and previous research results that are related to the research focus.

2.1 Research Approach

This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand and describe in depth various phenomena related to efforts to improve the quality and professionalism of teachers in Indonesia. Qualitative research does not focus on measuring numbers or testing statistical hypotheses, but rather emphasizes the meaning of data, the interpretation of theories, and the understanding of the social realities that occur in the world of education [13]. With this approach, researchers can dig up broader information regarding teacher certification policies, improving educator competency, and the challenges faced in their implementation.

A descriptive approach was used because this study attempts to systematically describe the facts, concepts, and study results found in various literature sources [14]. Descriptive research allows researchers to explain the relationship between teacher certification and the improvement of teachers' pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competencies in detail and objectively. In addition, this approach helps researchers present a comprehensive picture of the state of teacher professionalism in Indonesia based on the results of previous research and official government documents.

Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study also seeks to interpret various educational theories and policies related to improving teacher quality. The researcher not only describes the data but also analyzes the meaning contained in each source of information used. Therefore, this approach is considered most appropriate for generating a deep and comprehensive understanding of efforts to improve teacher quality and professionalism in Indonesia.

2.2 Types of research

The type of research used in this study is library research [11]. Library research is a research method carried out by collecting data and information from various written sources that are relevant to the research theme [12]. These sources can be in the form of books, scientific journals, research articles, government documents, laws and regulations, or other scientific works that support the research discussion. In this study, the main focus is on teacher certification policies and their influence on improving the professionalism of educators in Indonesia.

Library research was chosen because this study did not involve direct data collection in the field through observation or interviews. All data was obtained through a literature review process related to the research topic. This method allows researchers to obtain various theories, concepts, and previous research findings that can serve as a basis for analyzing the phenomena being studied. By utilizing various library sources, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the development of education policies and various strategies for improving teacher quality.

Furthermore, library research offers advantages in terms of time efficiency and breadth of data coverage. Researchers can compare expert opinions and research findings from different regions and time periods. This provides an opportunity for more objective, comprehensive, and scientific analyses. Therefore, library research is considered appropriate for examining issues of teacher professionalism and certification policies in the Indonesian education system.

2.3 Data source

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data is the main source used as the basis for research analysis [13]. Primary data was obtained from scientific books that discuss teacher professionalism, teacher certification, and educational quality. In addition, primary data also comes from Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, which is the legal basis for implementing teacher certification in Indonesia. Scientific journals that specifically discuss the impact of certification on teacher competence and performance are also used as the main research sources.

Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from various supporting sources relevant to the research theme [15]. Secondary data includes scientific articles, educational seminar results, undergraduate theses, dissertations, research reports, and official government documents related to improving the quality of education and teacher professionalism. Secondary data serves to strengthen the analysis and provide additional information that supports the research discussion. With secondary data, researchers can compare various research results and find similarities and differences in expert views.

Data sources were selected selectively, considering their relevance, validity, and credibility. Researchers prioritized scientific sources published by reputable academic institutions and directly related to the research focus. This step ensured that the data obtained was scientifically sound and supported the quality of the research results.

2.4 Data collection technique

The data collection techniques in this research were conducted through documentation studies and literature studies. Documentation techniques are a method of collecting data by examining various written documents related to the research theme [16]. These documents include books, scientific journals, research articles, government regulations, and other academic sources. This technique was used because the research focuses on analyzing concepts and theories that have been developed by experts in the field of education.

In the data collection process, the researcher first identified various sources relevant to the research topic. Afterward, the researcher selected the sources deemed most relevant to the discussion on teacher professionalism and certification. Next, the researcher read and understood the sources' contents in depth to identify important information that could be used in the research. All information obtained was then recorded and classified according to the discussion theme.

Furthermore, data collection techniques were also carried out systematically to ensure the data obtained was more organized and easier to analyze. Researchers made specific notes regarding the results of the study from each library source used. This step assisted researchers in developing a discussion framework and streamlined the data analysis process. With structured data collection techniques, the research was expected to produce in-depth discussions that aligned with the research objectives.

2.5 Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis technique used in this study is content analysis. Content analysis is an analytical method used to understand, interpret, and draw conclusions from various documents or written sources [17]. In this study, content analysis was conducted on various literature discussing teacher professionalism, teacher certification, and improving the quality of education in Indonesia. This technique was chosen because it can help researchers understand the meaning and messages contained in each data source.

The stages of data analysis include:

a. Data Reduction

The first stage in data analysis is data reduction. At this stage, researchers select various pieces of information obtained from library sources and focus on those relevant to the research objectives. Information deemed less relevant or not directly related to the research focus is not used in the analysis process. Data reduction is carried out to make the research discussion more focused and systematic.

b. Data Presentation

The reduced data is then arranged in the form of descriptive descriptions so that it is easy to understand.

c. Conclusion Drawing

The researchers then interpreted the presented data to identify the relationship between teacher certification and increased educator professionalism. From this interpretation, the researchers drew conclusions based on facts and theories found in various literature sources.

2.6 Data Validity Test

In this study, data validity testing was conducted using source triangulation techniques [18]. Source triangulation is a data examination technique that compares various sources of information to obtain more valid and objective data. This technique is important so that research results do not rely solely on a single source but are supported by various relevant and reliable references.

The triangulation process involves comparing information obtained from books, scientific journals, previous research, and official government documents. Researchers analyze whether data from one source is consistent with other sources. If discrepancies are found, researchers review these sources to find the most accurate data that aligns with the research focus.

Through triangulation techniques, research quality is more assured because the data used has undergone a thorough examination and comparison process. In addition to increasing data validity, triangulation also helps researchers reduce the possibility of subjectivity in the analysis process. Thus, research results are expected to have a high level of reliability and be scientifically accountable.

2.7 Research Procedures

The research procedure is carried out in several stages, namely:

1. Determine the theme and formulation of the research problem.
2. Collect relevant literature.
3. Identifying and classifying data.
4. Analyze the contents of the literature using *content analysis techniques*.
5. Arrange the discussion results systematically.
6. Draw conclusions based on the results of data analysis.

With a structured research procedure, this research is expected to be able to provide valid, systematic, and useful results for the development of the world of education.

3. RESULT

3.1 Teacher Certification as a Formal Instrument for Improving Educator Professionalism

The results of an analysis of various literature sources indicate that teacher certification is consistently positioned as a form of formal recognition of educator professionalism in Indonesia. In various documents and articles reviewed, certification is understood as an indicator that teachers have met certain standards set in the national education system. Most of the literature positions certification as a process related to measuring the professional suitability of teachers. The findings indicate that certification is associated with fulfilling a number of competency indicators that educators must have before receiving official professional recognition [19].

The analyzed studies also show that certification is seen as a differentiator between the status of teachers who have met professional qualifications and teachers who have not gone through this process. In a number of sources, the existence of a professional certificate is used as a formal symbol of the legitimacy of teacher competence. Furthermore, the results of the review indicate that certification is often associated with improving teacher work standards. The literature describes the existence of more structured administrative and academic demands after teachers have

undergone the certification process. In general, the findings indicate that all sources analyzed place certification as an important part of the teacher quality development system.

3.2 Post-Certification Pedagogical and Professional Competence Enhancement

Literature findings indicate that the most dominant impact of teacher certification lies in improving pedagogical and professional competence [22]. The majority of studies analyzed reported changes in the way teachers design, implement, and evaluate learning [23]. In the pedagogical aspect, certified teachers were reported to show increased ability in preparing Learning Implementation Plans (RPP), formulating learning objectives, selecting appropriate learning methods, and developing more systematic learning evaluation instruments.

Several sources also indicate that teachers who have undergone certification tend to be more aware of the importance of student-centered learning [24]. This is reflected in the increasing variety of learning strategies, the use of teaching media, and efforts to adapt materials to student characteristics. In terms of professional aspects, the results of the study indicate an increase in mastery of teaching materials and academic readiness of teachers [25]. Certified teachers are reported to be more confident in delivering material, better prepared to face classroom dynamics, and have better abilities in linking learning materials to real-life contexts.

The literature also indicates that certification contributes to improved professional discipline. Teachers are more motivated to fulfill administrative obligations, maintain teaching performance, and comply with applicable academic regulations. However, competency improvements do not appear uniformly across all aspects. From various sources reviewed, social and personality competencies tend to experience improvements that are more difficult to measure than pedagogical and professional competencies.

3.3 Improved Welfare as a Direct Impact of Certification

In addition to pedagogical changes, the study results indicate improvements in the professional aspects of teachers. The literature describes that certified teachers demonstrate better teaching readiness [26]. Several sources state that teachers are better prepared to deliver learning materials after obtaining certification [27]. This readiness is demonstrated through more structured mastery of the material and more systematic delivery.

The analyzed studies also show that teachers tend to have higher levels of self-confidence in carrying out their teaching duties [28]. This appears repeatedly in several articles discussing the impact of certification. In other professional aspects, teachers are described as being more active in adapting material to the applicable curriculum. The literature shows an increasing attention to the appropriateness of learning objectives, materials, and assessments.

In general, the results of the study show that certification is related to changes in aspects of teachers' academic and professional readiness in carrying out the learning process.

3.4 Variation in Teacher Responses to Post-Certification Allowance Acquisition

Although certification has shown positive impacts, the study also found variations in teacher responses after receiving certification and professional allowances. Some teachers demonstrated more progressive professional behavior, such as actively participating in training, developing learning innovations, and updating academic competencies. Teachers in this category view certification as the beginning of ongoing professional development [21].

Conversely, several sources identify the phenomenon of post-certification stagnation. After obtaining a certificate and professional allowance, some teachers experience a decrease in motivation to improve their competencies [29]. This phenomenon is evident in reduced participation in training activities, low learning innovation initiatives, and a tendency to view certification as an end in itself. These findings indicate that external incentives in the form of allowances do not fully guarantee the sustainability of professional quality improvements.

3.5 The Importance of a Sustainable Post-Certification Support System

The study results indicate that the success of certification is highly dependent on the existence of a continuous support system. The literature consistently emphasizes the importance of post-certification monitoring and evaluation [30]. Without ongoing oversight, certification risks becoming an administrative process that loses its substantive function. In addition to monitoring, ongoing professional training also emerges as an important factor. Various sources state that teachers need regular access to workshops, seminars, learning communities, and academic coaching so that the competencies they have achieved can continue to develop. Thus, the study results indicate that certification is more effective when integrated with a system of ongoing professional development.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Certification Serves as a Formal Mechanism for Teacher Professionalization

Research findings indicate that certification is consistently positioned as a formal mechanism for teacher professionalization. These results demonstrate that certification policies have established formal standards that differentiate the teaching profession from non-professional work. This finding aligns with the professionalism framework that emphasizes the importance of formal legitimacy, competency standardization, and professional accountability [31]. In the context of Indonesian education, certification strengthens the identity of teachers as a profession with specific competency requirements. These research findings support the view that professionalism is not solely built through work experience, but also through formal evaluation and recognition systems.

Furthermore, certification appears to function as a regulatory instrument that directs teaching professional practice toward a more measurable and documented approach. This instrument encourages teachers to systematically

meet established national standards. With certification, teachers no longer work based solely on habit, but rather on a clear competency framework. This study confirms that certification is a crucial element in the national education quality reform agenda. Thus, the certification policy has successfully created a formal foundation for the development of the teaching profession in Indonesia.

4.2 Improving Pedagogical Competence Demonstrates the Substantive Function of Certification

Findings regarding changes in pedagogical practices indicate that certification has a substantive impact on the learning process. Improvements in the development of learning tools, the use of methods, and evaluation indicate that certification does not stop at the administrative aspect. These results support previous research that found that certification can improve teachers' technical readiness in implementing learning [32]. These findings also indicate that competency-based policy interventions can produce changes in professional behavior at the level of classroom practice. Thus, certification has been shown to make a real contribution to improving the quality of teaching and learning interactions in the classroom.

Furthermore, this study answers the research question: certification contributes to improving teacher quality, primarily through strengthening pedagogical practices. This improvement is evident in teachers' ability to design more systematic and student-centered learning. Certified teachers also demonstrate a greater awareness of the importance of ongoing learning evaluation. This indicates that certification has successfully shifted teachers' approaches from traditional teaching to more professional practices. Therefore, the substantive function of certification cannot be separated from efforts to continuously improve pedagogical competence.

4.3 Improved Welfare Does Not Automatically Guarantee Sustained Professionalism

Research findings indicate that professional allowances are the most concrete impact of certification. Improved welfare has been shown to strengthen teachers' motivation and job stability in the short term. Teachers who receive professional allowances report reduced economic pressures that previously interfered with their focus on teaching [33]. Furthermore, these allowances also increase their sense of appreciation and professional legitimacy in the eyes of the public. However, research findings also indicate that increased welfare is not always accompanied by ongoing professional development.

These findings demonstrate that extrinsic motivation has limitations in maintaining sustainable professionalism. Some teachers tend to stagnate after receiving the allowance, with decreased participation in training and learning innovations. This phenomenon suggests that financial incentives alone are insufficient to encourage continuous competency improvement. Therefore, certification needs to be complemented by ongoing development mechanisms so that its benefits extend beyond financial incentives. Post-certification policies must be designed to maintain and develop established professionalism.

4.4 Variation in Teacher Responses Demonstrates the Importance of Post-Certification Support Systems

The variation in post-certification teacher behavior suggests that the impact of certification is influenced by factors other than certification itself. The school environment, academic culture, supervision, and access to training appear to contribute to the sustainability of professional development [20]. Teachers who work in schools with strong support systems tend to show more sustained competency improvement. Conversely, teachers who do not have access to continued professional development are more prone to stagnation. These findings broaden the understanding that certification is one component in the teacher professionalism system, not the sole determining factor.

Therefore, successful certification requires integration with ongoing professional development programs. Post-certification monitoring and evaluation are crucial tools to prevent a decline in teacher performance. Regular training, learning communities, and academic supervision must be systematically provided for certified teachers. This reinforces the importance of policy design that goes beyond the granting of certificates and allowances. Thus, a robust support system will ensure that certification truly improves the quality of education on an ongoing basis.

4.5 Implications, Contributions, and Limitations of the Research

Theoretically, this study confirms that teacher professionalism is an ongoing process that requires a combination of standardization, formal recognition, and competency development. The results integrate regulatory and professional development perspectives to understand the impact of certification. The primary theoretical contribution is demonstrating that certification is effective in the early stages of professionalization but insufficient for sustainability. Practically, this study demonstrates the need for more structured post-certification monitoring and professional training. These findings provide guidance for policymakers in designing more effective post-certification programs.

At the policy level, the research findings support strengthening the Continuous Professional Development system for certified teachers. This study has limitations due to its use of desk research and, therefore, the lack of direct field data. Generalization of the findings should be done with caution, as regional contexts can vary significantly. Future research is recommended to test the effectiveness of certification through an empirical approach in specific schools or regions. Furthermore, longitudinal research is needed to understand the dynamics of teacher professionalism in the long term after certification.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research conducted through literature review, it can be concluded that teacher certification plays a crucial role in improving the quality and professionalism of educators in Indonesia. Certification not only serves as a formal recognition of teacher competence but also serves as an instrument to encourage improvements in the quality of learning in schools. Teachers who have completed certification tend to demonstrate improvements in pedagogical and professional competencies, such as the ability to design lessons, use a wider variety of methods, and conduct more systematic learning evaluations.

In addition to improving competency, certification also positively impacts teacher welfare through the professional allowances they receive. This improved welfare can foster work motivation, self-confidence, and appreciation for the teaching profession. However, studies show that improved welfare does not always guarantee continued teacher professionalism. Some teachers experience stagnation after receiving certification, necessitating ongoing coaching and supervision.

Therefore, the success of the teacher certification program must be supported by a system of continuous professional development, such as training, workshops, academic supervision, and regular evaluations. With synergy between the government, educational institutions, and teachers, it is hoped that improvements in the quality of national education can be achieved more optimally and sustainably.

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