

Learning Community Management in Improving Teacher Competence at SDN Bojongkoneng and SDN Bojongkadu, Cianjur Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the critical need to improve teacher competence at SDN Bojongkoneng and SDN Bojongkadu through effective learning community management. The research aims to describe the implementation of learning community management, analyze the resulting improvements in teacher competence, and identify the underlying factors influencing the effectiveness of this management. Utilizing a qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis. The theoretical framework integrates social learning theory and teacher professional development theory, grounded in the Indonesian Teacher and Lecturer Law and policies on continuous professional development. The findings indicate that the applied learning community management systematically encompasses the planning, implementation, and evaluation of community activities. The rigorous execution of this management framework has demonstrably improved teacher competence across pedagogical, professional, social, and personal dimensions. Key factors influencing effectiveness include the visionary leadership of the principal, active and sustained teacher participation, and the strategic allocation of resources. The study concludes that highly effective learning community management is a catalyst for the continuous and holistic improvement of teacher competence in elementary education.

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Introduction

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology in the digital era has significantly impacted various aspects of life, including education. Elementary schools, functioning as the foundational level of formal education, are required to adapt swiftly to meet the increasingly complex and diverse learning needs of contemporary students. This condition demands an elevation in the quality of instruction, orienting it not only toward the mastery of subject matter but also toward teachers' abilities to effectively utilize technology and pedagogical innovations (Sutrio et al., 2020). However, the reality on the ground indicates that

limited resources—encompassing both physical infrastructure and intrinsic teacher competencies—remain the primary obstacles to achieving high-quality learning in elementary schools (Sari et al., 2022; Subroto, 2020).

Extensive research emphasizes that improving teacher competence is the paramount factor in boosting the overall quality of education (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hattie, 2009). Teachers who exhibit high proficiency in professional, pedagogical, personal, and social domains exert a profound influence on student learning outcomes (Silalahi et al., 2021). The Indonesian government, through regulations such as Government Regulation No. 74 of 2008, has legally established these four basic competencies as mandatory for all educators. Nevertheless, despite the existence of these policies, various educational evaluations indicate that teacher competencies in Indonesia—particularly at the elementary school level—remain suboptimal, especially regarding the implementation of innovative, technology-based learning (Suendarti & Lestari, 2020).

Various approaches and programs have been initiated to enhance teacher competencies, ranging from formal top-down training and workshops to direct in-school mentoring (Guskey, 2002). However, educational literature frequently highlights that conventional, episodic training often fails to produce significant or lasting changes in teaching behavior (Desimone, 2009). As an alternative, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) or teacher learning communities situated within schools have emerged as an increasingly vital strategy. They are widely recognized for their capacity to facilitate organic collaboration, critical reflection, and continuous peer-driven learning among teachers (Vescio et al., 2008).

A learning community is fundamentally a group of educators who voluntarily congregate to exchange knowledge, pedagogical experiences, and best practices to systematically improve their teaching competencies and student outcomes (Maimunah et al., 2021; Suendarti & Lestari, 2020). Through effective learning community management, teachers can address contemporary learning challenges utilizing a more collaborative and innovative framework. Research by Sari et al. (2022) demonstrates that effectively managed learning communities can significantly increase motivation, pedagogical skills, and the mastery of instructional technology among elementary school teachers.

Furthermore, the integration of technology-based learning media has been proven to enrich the variety and quality of classroom instruction. Targeted training that integrates digital tools has successfully improved teachers' abilities to design interactive and engaging learning content (Silalahi et al., 2021). Despite this, many elementary school teachers continue to face substantial barriers to mastering and utilizing learning technology optimally, which directly impacts the effectiveness of their classroom instruction (Siahaan et al., 2022).

While the literature on learning communities and educational technology is extensive, several gaps remain that warrant academic attention. First, most studies are highly quantitative, limiting their evaluations to output metrics without examining the nuanced, operational implementation of learning community management within Indonesian elementary schools. This results in a superficial understanding of internal dynamics, practical challenges, and effective managerial strategies. Second, research integrating community management with the specific enhancement of instructional technology mastery remains scarce, despite the demands of 21st-century digital literacy. Third, program evaluations frequently rely on quantitative indicators—such as test scores or attendance rates—while neglecting holistic qualitative assessments of teachers' shifting attitudes and pedagogical paradigms. Finally, prior studies predominantly focus on secondary or higher education, failing to accommodate the specific pedagogical characteristics of elementary educators.

Recognizing these gaps, this study describes and analyzes learning community management practices as an applied strategy for improving teacher competence in elementary schools contextually and comprehensively. By employing a case study method, this research provides a realistic and in-depth depiction of community implementation, identifying both supporting and inhibiting factors, as well as the tangible impacts experienced by educators. The findings aim to provide actionable recommendations for policymakers, school principals,

and practitioners regarding the optimization of learning communities for sustainable educational quality improvement.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using an intrinsic case study design to gain an in-depth and contextual understanding of how teacher learning communities are managed to enhance elementary school teachers' competencies. The case study approach was selected because it enables the researcher to explore detailed administrative practices, social dynamics, and operational challenges as they naturally occur within the institutional setting (Yin, 2014).

Data were collected through multiple qualitative techniques, specifically in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including the school principal, the teacher learning community coordinator, and several active elementary school teachers. These interviews aimed to capture their lived experiences, perceptions, and operational roles within the community. Observations were carried out directly during learning community sessions to witness interpersonal interactions, managerial processes, and applied pedagogical methods. Additionally, document analysis was performed on institutional artifacts such as strategic activity plans, implementation reports, and training modules to verify data obtained from human subjects.

Data analysis strictly adhered to the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), involving four continuous stages: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. This concurrent analytical process facilitated a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. To ensure rigorous data validity, both source triangulation and methodological triangulation were applied. Source triangulation involved cross-referencing information from the principal, coordinators, and teachers, while methodological triangulation synthesized findings from interviews, observations, and archival records, ensuring high research credibility and dependability (Khairiah et al., 2020; Misnawati et al., 2022).

Results and Discussion

Results

1. Planning Learning Communities as an Effort to Improve Teacher Competence

In the initial stages of planning the learning community at the studied public elementary schools, the principal took a strategic, highly deliberate step by forming a steering committee comprising selected senior teachers, curriculum coordinators, and community leaders. The formation of this committee embodies the participatory principle in educational management, ensuring that program designs are not merely top-down directives but align intimately with real-world classroom needs and the specific demographic realities of the students (Mulyati et al., 2024). To strengthen the academic rigor of this foundational phase, the committee also established a collaborative partnership with educational experts from IPEBA, who provided methodological guidance in structuring the community's operational framework. This team served as the primary engine for collaboratively formulating the vision, mission, and strategic objectives of the learning community. The collaborative formulation of these guiding principles plays a critical role in establishing a clear, unified direction, mitigating early skepticism, and building a sense of shared ownership among the teaching staff. This aligns with Silalahi et al. (2021), who state that a shared vision provides the foundational bedrock required to ensure programs focus cohesively on developing pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competencies simultaneously.

Needs analysis served as the operational and empirical foundation for the entire planning process. Rather than relying on generic assumptions about teacher deficiencies, the committee utilized a triangulated approach to data gathering. They meticulously reviewed student learning outcome data from the previous two academic semesters, identifying specific subjects and cognitive skills—particularly in higher-order mathematical reasoning and digital literacy—where students consistently underperformed. Simultaneously, the committee

analyzed recent teacher performance appraisals and conducted preliminary classroom observations. Through this evidence-based approach, localized competency disparities were mapped with precision. For instance, the data revealed that while teachers possessed strong personal and social competencies, there was a critical gap in their pedagogical ability to integrate interactive technology into daily lessons. This directed the intervention toward urgent, highly specific issues rather than broad, theoretical training (Sari et al., 2022).

Consequently, the planning team established specific, measurable goals tailored to the findings of the needs analysis. They developed a systematic, long-term program design that included detailed operational schedules, varied training methodologies, and structured evaluation mechanisms. One of the most significant challenges during this planning phase was addressing the logistical constraints of the teachers' heavy existing workloads. To navigate this, the scheduling was intricately matched to the teachers' availability, integrating the learning community sessions into the official school calendar rather than treating them as extracurricular burdens. Sessions were scheduled during designated professional development windows on Friday afternoons, ensuring that core teaching hours remained uninterrupted.

Furthermore, the planning phase involved comprehensive socialization efforts aimed at fostering psychological safety and enthusiasm. The principal held open forums to communicate the findings of the needs analysis transparently, framing the learning community not as a punitive measure for underperformance, but as a supportive, collective endeavor to elevate the institution's standard of teaching. By emphasizing that the community would utilize diverse, engaging methods like case studies, collaborative lesson planning, and hands-on practice rather than passive lectures, the planning phase successfully mitigated initial resistance. Teachers who initially expressed workload concerns were reassured by the structured, predictable nature of the program. Ultimately, this meticulous, participatory, and data-driven planning phase laid a robust and resilient foundation for sustainable professional development, transforming the theoretical concept of a learning community into a highly contextualized, actionable roadmap for SDN Bojongkoneng and SDN Bojongkadu (Mulyati et al., 2024).

2. Implementation of the Learning Community

The implementation phase commenced with the school principal acting as a dynamic change agent, actively fostering an inclusive, collaborative culture that dissolved traditional hierarchical barriers among the staff. To support the initial rollout, the principal facilitated capacity-building training for the staff, explicitly encouraging the adoption of collaborative and contextual pedagogical approaches. The execution of the program was purposefully delegated to an implementation team consisting of the principal, a designated community coordinator, and competent senior teachers. This structure ensured a clear division of managerial tasks and decentralized the leadership, allowing peer leaders to drive the initiative from within the teaching ranks (Sari et al., 2022).

Key components of the implementation included ensuring that all training materials and discourse were strictly relevant to the practical challenges faced by the educators in their specific classrooms. The content spanned all four core teacher competencies required by national standards: pedagogical, professional, personal, and social (Mulyati et al., 2024). Pedagogically, the methods shifted radically away from passive, theoretical lectures toward highly interactive workshops, peer-to-peer experience sharing, and collaborative problem-solving. This shift was designed to accommodate the diverse adult learning styles of the teachers. For example, during a session focused on digital literacy, teachers did not simply listen to a presentation about educational software; instead, they were grouped heterogeneously—pairing tech-savvy junior teachers with experienced senior teachers—to co-create interactive digital quizzes for their upcoming lessons. This hands-on, collaborative approach transformed abstract concepts into immediately applicable teaching tools (Silalahi et al., 2021).

Crucially, the implementation featured a robust system of sustained teacher mentoring, which bridged the gap between professional development sessions and actual classroom practice. Teachers were not just trained in isolation; they were guided directly in their classrooms as they attempted to apply new techniques. This mentoring utilized a "lesson study" approach, where a small group of teachers would collaboratively design a lesson, one teacher would deliver it while the others observed, and then the group would reconvene to analyze the student responses and refine the instructional strategy. This coaching functioned as a vital, non-evaluative support system, helping educators adapt theoretical knowledge to their specific school contexts and the unique learning profiles of their students without the fear of formal reprimand (Sari et al., 2022).

Simultaneous monitoring by the implementation team enabled rapid feedback loops, keeping the program highly responsive to the dynamic daily realities of the school environment. If a particular collaborative strategy proved too time-consuming or confusing during a trial week, the implementation team immediately adjusted the focus of the next community meeting to troubleshoot the issue. The learning community also targeted personal and social competencies by establishing protocols for constructive peer feedback and empathetic communication. Teachers learned how to critique each other's pedagogical choices respectfully, focusing on student outcomes rather than personal teaching styles. Over the course of the implementation, the isolation that typically characterizes the teaching profession was systematically dismantled. Classrooms essentially became open laboratories for shared inquiry, and the school culture evolved into one where continuous professional growth was driven by collective efficacy, shared responsibility, and mutual support among the educators.

3. Learning Community Evaluation

Evaluation within the learning communities at SDN Bojongkoneng and SDN Bojongkadu was executed not as a terminal audit, but as a continuous, structured, and formative process driven by the principal and the steering committee. Recognizing that the true measure of professional development lies in behavioral change and student impact, data were systematically gathered through a triangulated approach: direct classroom observations, reflective in-depth interviews, and structured self-assessment questionnaires. This multi-faceted methodology ensured a comprehensive view of the community's impact, capturing both quantitative metrics and the nuanced qualitative shifts in school culture (Saputra, 2017). Periodic evaluation meetings were established as safe spaces where administrators and community members collaboratively analyzed challenges, celebrated pedagogical victories, and brainstormed solutions, thereby reinforcing a culture of formative, organizational learning rather than punitive oversight (Silalahi et al., 2021).

The evaluation framework meticulously utilized four key performance indicators. Teacher participation levels were tracked not merely by attendance sheets, but by assessing the depth of active engagement during sessions. The data revealed a steady increase in voluntary participation, reflecting growing intrinsic motivation and professional commitment as teachers realized the practical value of the collaborative sessions (Saputra, 2017). Teachers who initially remained passive began actively leading peer-sharing segments, demonstrating a significant shift in personal competency and professional confidence.

Material comprehension and application were assessed by observing the direct transfer of training to actual classroom practice. Evaluation rubrics used during peer observations specifically looked for evidence of the strategies discussed in the community meetings. For instance, following a month-long focus on differentiated instruction, evaluators noted a marked decrease in standardized, whole-class lecturing and a substantial increase in flexible grouping and tailored assignments in the observed classrooms. This provided concrete evidence that the collaborative learning was penetrating the instructional core.

Competency enhancement across the pedagogical, professional, personal, and social domains was continually measured (Sari et al., 2022). Pedagogical improvements were evident in more sophisticated lesson designs; professional enhancements were seen in teachers' deeper mastery of the curriculum; personal growth was reflected in increased emotional

resilience and openness to feedback; and social competencies improved as evidenced by the high quality of inter-collegial collaboration and improved parent-teacher communication. The community had successfully fostered a holistic development of the educators' professional identities.

The ultimate impact on instructional quality and student learning outcomes served as the definitive measure of success (Zhafirah et al., 2022). The evaluation cross-referenced the implementation of new teaching strategies with formative student assessment data. The findings were compelling: classrooms where teachers most actively applied the collaboratively designed, interactive methods saw measurable increases in student engagement, attendance, and mastery of complex competencies. Students demonstrated higher levels of critical thinking and participation when taught by educators who were themselves engaged in continuous, collaborative learning.

Crucially, the data extracted from these multifaceted evaluations were not simply archived; they were directly fed back into the planning cycle. When evaluation data indicated that teachers were still struggling with a specific pedagogical tool, the upcoming month's community agenda was immediately recalibrated to address that exact deficit. This seamless integration of evaluation and planning ensured that the learning community did not become a stagnant administrative requirement, but functioned as a living, highly adaptive mechanism capable of driving continuous, sustainable institutional improvement at the elementary level..

Discussion

The findings of this study offer a profound and comprehensive understanding of how learning community management, when systematically executed, serves as a powerful catalyst for enhancing teacher competence at the elementary school level. The practices observed at SDN Bojongkoneng and SDN Bojongkadu validate the premise that sustainable professional development cannot be achieved through isolated, top-down training seminars. Instead, it requires a continuous, deeply contextualized, and socially embedded organizational framework. By analyzing the interplay between the planning, implementation, and evaluation phases, this study illuminates the mechanics of how collaborative cultures translate into tangible pedagogical improvements.

Firstly, the planning phase highlighted the critical importance of participatory management and evidence-based needs analysis. Traditional professional development models are frequently criticized for being disconnected from the daily realities of the classroom, often leading to a lack of teacher buy-in (Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 2002). However, by forming a localized steering committee and relying on empirical data—such as student performance metrics and teacher appraisals—the schools in this study ensured that their learning communities were inherently relevant. This finding strongly aligns with the theoretical assertions of Mulyati et al. (2024), who argue that involving educators in the architectural design of their own professional development fosters a profound sense of ownership. When teachers perceive that the learning objectives directly address their specific instructional bottlenecks, initial resistance dissolves, replaced by intrinsic motivation.

Secondly, the implementation dynamics underscore the indispensable role of the school principal not merely as an administrator, but as a primary instructional leader and facilitator. The transition from theory to practice within these learning communities was heavily reliant on the principal's ability to cultivate an environment of psychological safety, where teachers felt comfortable sharing vulnerabilities, discussing failures, and engaging in peer critique. This reflects the core tenets of Social Learning Theory, which posits that adult learning is fundamentally a social process requiring observation, modeling, and collaborative problem-solving. Vescio et al. (2008) noted that successful Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) shift the focus from teaching to learning; the implementation at these schools mirrored this shift through interactive workshops, case studies, and, most importantly, direct in-class mentoring. As Sari et al. (2022) highlighted, the presence of a continuous support system—where senior teachers mentor their peers—ensures that newly acquired skills are not

abandoned at the first sign of classroom difficulty, but are refined and integrated into the teacher's permanent pedagogical repertoire.

A particularly significant finding within the implementation phase was the community's role in bridging the technological gap among elementary educators. As noted in the study's introduction, many teachers struggle with the demands of 21st-century digital literacy (Siahaan et al., 2022). The collaborative environment of the learning community proved highly effective in mitigating technology anxiety. Instead of struggling in isolation with new educational software or digital media, teachers engaged in collaborative troubleshooting and peer-assisted learning. This collective efficacy allowed them to adopt and integrate technology more fluidly, corroborating the findings of Silalahi et al. (2021) and Suendarti and Lestari (2020), who emphasize that shared technological exploration within a supportive community yields far better adoption rates than formal, isolated IT training.

Furthermore, the continuous and formative nature of the evaluation phase proved to be the linchpin of the community's sustainability. Rather than treating evaluation as a punitive, end-of-year administrative hurdle, the management framework utilized it as a dynamic feedback loop. By triangulating data through observations, interviews, and performance metrics, the principal and the implementation team maintained a real-time understanding of the community's efficacy (Saputra, 2017). This practice resonates deeply with Hattie's (2009) concept of "Visible Learning," which emphasizes that the most significant improvements in education occur when teachers receive continuous, formative feedback on their impact. By measuring success not just by attendance, but by actual pedagogical shifts and subsequent student outcomes (Zhafirah et al., 2022), the evaluation process ensured that the learning community remained an engine for genuine academic enhancement.

From a broader policy perspective, the success of the learning community management at SDN Bojongkoneng and SDN Bojongkadu provides an actionable blueprint for fulfilling the mandates of the Indonesian Teacher and Lecturer Law (Government Regulation No. 74 of 2008). The law requires continuous enhancement of pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competencies. The holistic nature of the learning community inherently addresses all four dimensions simultaneously. Teachers improved their pedagogy and professional knowledge through collaborative lesson planning; they developed social competencies through peer interaction and mentoring; and their personal competencies grew as they became more reflective and adaptable practitioners (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Despite its evident success, the study acknowledges certain contextual limitations that provide avenues for future research. While the management practices proved effective, they were implemented within a specific socioeconomic and geographic context in Cianjur Regency. The reliance on strong principal leadership suggests that in schools where administrative support is lacking, learning communities may struggle to gain traction. Additionally, the heavy time constraints and workloads facing elementary teachers remain a persistent challenge that requires systemic, policy-level adjustments to provide educators with dedicated, protected time for collaborative learning. Therefore, future research should explore longitudinal outcomes, employing mixed-methods approaches across a broader demographic of schools to statistically quantify the long-term impact of PLCs on standardized student achievement. Ultimately, this study asserts that effective learning community management is not merely an administrative exercise, but a vital transformational strategy capable of elevating the entire educational ecosystem from within.

Conclusion

The comprehensive planning, implementation, and evaluation of the learning communities at SDN Bojongkoneng and SDN Bojongkadu demonstrate that the active, structured involvement of the school principal and teachers is paramount in systematically elevating teachers' pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competencies. A planning phase grounded in empirical needs analysis, coupled with an implementation strategy that utilizes varied training methodologies and continuous peer mentoring, successfully cultivates a sustainable, collaborative learning culture. Backed by the unwavering support of school

leadership and guided by rigorous, formative evaluations, these learning communities act as highly effective engines for improving instructional quality. The evaluation processes serve not merely as administrative audits, but as vital tools for reflection and adaptive program development.

While this research yields significant insights, it is bounded by its qualitative focus on specific public elementary schools, meaning the findings should be generalized with caution to schools possessing vastly different operational characteristics. Furthermore, the evaluation acknowledges that practical constraints, such as time limitations and resource scarcity, slightly impacted the operational fluidity of the communities. As this study did not quantitatively measure long-term student achievement, future research employing mixed methodologies across broader geographic scopes is strongly recommended to further substantiate the overarching effectiveness and statistical impact of Professional Learning Communities in primary education.

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