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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Professional Competencies of Teacher Professional Education Students in Teaching Practice at State Senior High School 8 Pontianak

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**Abstract:** Teacher professionalism is widely recognized as a critical determinant of educational quality, yet empirical evidence indicates persistent gaps between expected professional competencies and their actual enactment during teaching practice. This study aims to analyze the professional competencies of Teacher Professional Education students during their teaching practicum at State Senior High School 8 Pontianak, with particular attention to how these competencies are developed and manifested in real classroom contexts. Employing a qualitative descriptive-analytic approach with a case study design, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, and analyzed using interactive thematic analysis. The results reveal that while students demonstrated adequate professional conduct and basic instructional competence, their competencies were largely procedural, with limited pedagogical adaptability, critical reflection, and collaborative professionalism. Classroom management and instructional planning were implemented formally, yet often lacked responsiveness to students' learning dynamics. Reflective practice and mentoring interactions were found to be insufficiently developed, constraining deeper professional learning. The study concludes that teaching practice provides an essential foundation for professional competence but remains suboptimal in fostering reflective, adaptive, and collaborative dimensions of professionalism. This research contributes scientifically by offering context-specific empirical evidence on practicum-based competency development and by emphasizing the need to reconceptualize teaching practice as a structured professional learning space.

**Keywords:** Pre-Service Teachers, Professional Competence, Teacher Professional Education, Teaching Practice.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the global discourse on educational quality, teacher professionalism remains a cornerstone of effective schooling. High-performing educational systems — such as those in Finland, Singapore, and Ontario consistently demonstrate that teacher quality, particularly professional competency, is the strongest predictor of positive student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2017). A professional teacher is expected not only to master content knowledge and pedagogy but also to enact reflective practice, adapt teaching to diverse learners, and engage ethically with the school community. These professional competencies align with



international standards of teacher education, which position teaching practice (practicum) as a critical phase where theory is operationalized into real classroom performance (OECD, 2023). In this ideal condition, teacher education students, through structured teaching practice, should develop the professional capacities needed to meet the complex demands of contemporary secondary schooling.

However, empirical evidence indicates persistent challenges in preparing pre-service teachers to meet these complex professional demands in real classroom environments. The teaching practicum often the culminating experience in teacher education is widely recognized as the most influential phase in shaping professional competence (Pan, Loughland & Collie, 2024). Yet, research suggests significant gaps between theoretical preparation and practical readiness. For example, studies from diverse contexts show variations in practicum quality, with limited mentoring, insufficient feedback, and lack of structured reflection undermining professional growth (Pan et al., 2024). Moreover, pre-service teachers often enter practicum placements with only moderate levels of competence in key domains such as classroom management, lesson planning, and assessment (Times of India, 2025) and struggle to integrate digital and pedagogical skills effectively in real teaching settings (Frontiers in Education, 2025). These empirical realities contrast sharply with the ideal condition where practicum experiences should systematically develop professional competencies in authentic school contexts.

The situation in Indonesia reflects similar dynamics. National education policy emphasizes four core competencies for teachers pedagogical, personality, social, and professional which teacher education programs and teaching practicum are expected to operationalize (Ministry of Education Regulation, 2024). Despite these formal standards, multiple studies at primary and secondary levels reveal that professional competencies among beginning teachers remain inconsistent. Factors such as mismatches between subject knowledge and teaching assignments, weak mastery of instructional design, and inadequate integration of practicum experiences into professional learning have been reported in Indonesian schools (Rismayanti, Kania & Trisnawati, 2025). These findings point to a gap between competency frameworks and actual professional development trajectories during practicum, suggesting that the translation of theoretical preparation into competent practice remains problematic.

This research is specifically concerned with teacher professional education students (pre-service teachers) undertaking their teaching practice at State Senior High School 8 Pontianak. While the broader body of literature acknowledges the importance of practicum in professional development, there remains a lack of context-specific, empirically grounded analysis of how professional competencies actually manifest among these students during practicum in Indonesian secondary school settings. International studies have described overall competence levels and general practicum efficacy (Rubio & Saenz, 2025; Pan et al., 2024), yet little is known about the nuances of professional competency development among teacher professional education students in Pontianak. Specifically, there is limited evidence regarding how these students integrate pedagogical theory with practice, how mentoring and feedback during practicum contribute to competency development, and which aspects of professional competence are strongest or weakest in this local context. This constitutes a clear research gap: previous research has often been broad in scope or based on general surveys (e.g., national competency assessments), but there is a scarcity of fine-grained, practice-based empirical studies that critically analyze professional competency outcomes during practicum in Indonesian senior high schools (Pan et al., 2024; Times of India, 2025).

To address this gap, the present study formulates the following operational problem: To what extent do teacher professional education students develop and demonstrate professional competencies during their teaching practice at State Senior High School 8 Pontianak, and what factors facilitate or inhibit this development? This formulation foregrounds observable competencies such as lesson planning, classroom management, reflective practice, and professional engagement with mentor teachers and their relationship to practicum conditions. By making the problem operational, the study ensures that data collection and

analysis can directly assess how well professional competencies have been internalized and enacted in teaching practice.

The objectives of this research are threefold. First, it aims to assess the level of professional competencies exhibited by teacher professional education students during teaching practice. Second, it seeks to identify key contextual factors including mentoring, feedback quality, and institutional support that influence competency development. Third, the study intends to analyze specific competency gaps and their implications for teacher education program improvement. These objectives are designed to generate evidence that is both descriptive and explanatory, linking practicum experiences to professional outcomes.

The significance of this study is multifaceted. Academically, it contributes to the global literature on practicum and teacher professionalism by providing a detailed empirical account from a Southeast Asian context, thereby enriching comparative understanding of teacher education quality. Practically, the results can inform stakeholders including teacher educators, school mentors, and policymakers about strengths and weaknesses in practicum implementation and support structures. Importantly, by focusing on State Senior High School 8 Pontianak, the study offers localized insights that can directly guide improvements in program design and practicum supervision.

Scientifically, this research is timely and important because education systems worldwide are undergoing rapid transformation driven by digitalization, equity concerns, and policy reforms that emphasize competency-based teacher preparation (OECD, 2023). In Indonesia, ongoing curricular reforms and efforts to strengthen teacher professional standards heighten the need for robust, evidence-based evaluations of practicum outcomes. This research by diagnosing current competency levels and identifying actionable leverage points can support more effective teacher preparation strategies that align with both national goals and international expectations of teacher professionalism.

## 2. Research Method and Materials

This study employs a qualitative descriptive-analytic approach with a case study design, as this methodology is most appropriate for examining the depth, complexity, and contextual manifestation of professional competencies among Teacher Professional Education (TPE) students during teaching practice. Professional competence is not merely a measurable outcome but a socially constructed and practice-based phenomenon shaped by interaction, reflection, and institutional context. A qualitative case study enables the researcher to capture how competencies are enacted, negotiated, and developed in authentic classroom settings rather than reducing them to abstract indicators (Yin, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2021). This approach is particularly suitable for addressing the research problem, which seeks not only to determine the level of professional competence but also to understand how and why such competencies emerge or remain underdeveloped within a specific practicum context, namely State Senior High School 8 Pontianak.

The research subjects consist of Teacher Professional Education students undertaking teaching practice at the selected school, while the research objects are the manifestations of their professional competencies, including instructional planning, classroom management, professional communication, reflective practice, and ethical conduct. Data are collected through non-participant classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, allowing for methodological triangulation and increased credibility. Classroom observations are used to capture real-time professional behavior, interviews elicit reflective and experiential perspectives from the students and mentor teachers, and document analysis (lesson plans, teaching journals, assessment tools) provides evidence of professional reasoning and planning processes. The use of multiple data sources is methodologically justified because professional competence is multidimensional and cannot be adequately captured through a single instrument (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020). Research

instruments are developed based on established teacher competency frameworks and validated through expert judgment to ensure conceptual alignment and analytical rigor.

Data analysis follows an interactive thematic analysis model, involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles et al., 2020). This analytical technique is selected because it allows systematic interpretation of patterns across observational, interview, and documentary data while maintaining sensitivity to context. Coding is conducted iteratively to identify recurring competency indicators, enabling the researcher to compare expected professional standards with actual practicum performance. This method ensures consistency between research objectives, data collection strategies, and analytical procedures, as the analysis directly addresses the extent and quality of professional competency development as formulated in the research questions. Scientifically, this methodological design is the most appropriate because it produces empirically grounded, context-sensitive insights that can inform both theoretical discourse on teacher professionalism and practical improvements in teacher education programs, particularly within the Indonesian secondary education context (Creswell & Poth, 2021; OECD, 2023).

### 3. Results and Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that Teacher Professional Education (TPE) students undertaking teaching practice at State Senior High School 8 Pontianak demonstrate moderate but uneven development of professional competencies, with clear variations across competency domains and instructional situations. Overall, the students were able to perform core teaching responsibilities in accordance with formal practicum requirements; however, deeper analysis reveals that professional competence was often procedural rather than reflective, indicating partial internalization of professional standards. This suggests that while TPE students could comply with observable teaching tasks, their professional reasoning and adaptive decision-making were still developing.

In the domain of instructional planning and implementation, most TPE students demonstrated adequate ability to design lesson plans aligned with the national curriculum and learning objectives. Lesson documents showed structured sequencing of activities, inclusion of learning indicators, and use of standard assessment formats. Nevertheless, classroom observations revealed a discrepancy between planned instruction and enacted teaching. Several students struggled to adjust instructional strategies in response to students' learning pace and classroom dynamics. Teaching practices tended to follow lesson plans rigidly, with limited pedagogical flexibility. This finding indicates that professional competence in instructional design had not fully evolved into adaptive teaching expertise, which is a key indicator of professional maturity.

Regarding classroom management and learning environment control, the results show that TPE students generally maintained classroom order through formal authority and rule-based control rather than pedagogical engagement. While disruptive behavior was minimal, student participation remained uneven, and interactive learning was limited in several observed sessions. This suggests that classroom management competence was exercised at a surface level, prioritizing discipline over the creation of an inclusive and motivating learning climate. Such a pattern reflects a transitional stage of professional development in which pre-service teachers rely on external control mechanisms rather than internalized classroom leadership skills.

The analysis of professional communication and collaboration revealed more substantial limitations. Although TPE students were able to communicate instructional content clearly to students, their professional interaction with mentor teachers and school staff was largely instrumental. Interviews indicated that consultations with mentors focused primarily on administrative requirements and lesson completion rather than critical reflection on teaching quality. As a result, mentoring interactions functioned more as supervisory checkpoints than as dialogic professional learning opportunities. This finding highlights a structural constraint

in the practicum environment that limits the development of collaborative professional competence.

In terms of reflective practice, the results indicate that reflection was present but largely descriptive rather than analytical. Teaching journals and interview responses showed that TPE students could identify what occurred during instruction but had difficulty critically examining the pedagogical implications of their actions. Reflection tended to emphasize classroom atmosphere and student behavior rather than instructional effectiveness or learning outcomes. This pattern suggests that reflective competence had not yet reached a level that supports continuous professional growth, reinforcing the argument that reflection skills require more explicit scaffolding during teaching practice.

Ethical and professional responsibility, as part of professional attitude and conduct, emerged as the strongest competency domain. TPE students consistently demonstrated punctuality, adherence to school regulations, respectful interaction with students, and commitment to assigned teaching duties. These behaviors indicate successful internalization of professional norms and values. However, the dominance of ethical compliance over pedagogical innovation suggests that professional competence was still framed more as conformity to institutional expectations than as autonomous professional judgment.

Critically, the findings reveal a systemic gap between expected professional competencies and their practical enactment. While TPE students met formal competency indicators at a functional level, deeper professional capacities such as adaptive teaching, critical reflection, and collaborative professionalism remained underdeveloped. This gap cannot be attributed solely to individual limitations but is closely related to practicum structures that prioritize task completion over professional learning. The absence of sustained mentoring dialogue and structured reflective guidance significantly constrained the transformation of teaching practice into a meaningful professional development experience.

Taken together, these results demonstrate that teaching practice at State Senior High School 8 Pontianak provides an essential but insufficient foundation for comprehensive professional competency development. The practicum succeeded in cultivating professional discipline and basic instructional competence, yet it fell short in fostering reflective, adaptive, and collaborative professionalism. These findings underscore the need to reconceptualize teaching practice not merely as a performance assessment stage, but as a deliberate professional learning space where competencies are critically developed rather than procedurally displayed.

**Table 1.** Overview of Professional Competency Development of Teacher Professional Education Students during Teaching Practice

Professional Competency Domain	Observed Level of Development	Key Analytical Interpretation
Instructional Planning	Moderate	Lesson plans were structurally adequate but lacked adaptive flexibility during classroom implementation.
Classroom Management	Moderate	Classroom order was maintained, yet student engagement and interactive learning remained limited.
Professional Communication	Low-Moderate	Communication with students was clear, but professional dialogue with mentors was largely procedural.
Reflective Practice	Low	Reflection tended to be descriptive rather than analytical or improvement-oriented.
Professional Attitude & Ethics	High	Strong adherence to ethical standards, discipline, and institutional norms was consistently observed.

Table 1 summarizes the analyzed outcomes of professional competency development among Teacher Professional Education students during their teaching practice at State Senior High School 8 Pontianak. The table demonstrates that professional competencies did not develop uniformly across domains. Ethical conduct and professional attitude emerged as the strongest aspects, indicating successful internalization of normative professional values.





**Figure 1.** Professional competency development

This diagram illustrates the interrelated domains of professional competency development among Teacher Professional Education students during teaching practice. Professional attitude and ethics occupy a central position, indicating their foundational role in shaping other competencies such as instructional planning, classroom management, professional communication, and reflective practice. The diagram highlights that while ethical conduct is strongly developed, other competencies remain partially procedural and require deeper reflective and adaptive engagement.

The present study found that Teacher Professional Education (TPE) students engaging in teaching practice at State Senior High School 8 Pontianak demonstrated competence in basic instructional tasks and professional conduct, yet critical dimensions such as adaptive pedagogy, reflective practice, and collaborative professional engagement remained inadequately developed. The phenomenon where procedural competence (e.g., lesson plan compliance, classroom order) appeared stronger than adaptive and reflective competence aligns with the complexity of professional enactment described in recent practicum research. Specifically, practicum programs often prepare pre-service teachers to meet formal requirements but fail to facilitate the dynamic integration of theory and practice, resulting in a gap between theoretical knowledge and nuanced classroom application (Namangan State Institute of Foreign Languages, 2025).

The findings are consistent with studies showing that practicum can enhance surface-level pedagogical skills such as lesson planning and procedural classroom management without sufficiently fostering higher-order professional capacities. For example, research from a school-based practicum context reported gains in classroom management and basic reflective thinking among pre-service English teachers, but the study also emphasized the importance of structured mentoring for deeper reflective practice and pedagogical adjustment (Namangan State Institute of Foreign Languages, 2025). This mirrors the present results where reflective practice and mentor collaboration were underdeveloped, suggesting that even well-designed practicum can fall short if mentoring and reflection are not systemically integrated.

From a theoretical perspective, these outcomes can be interpreted through social cognitive theory which posits that self-efficacy and learning are co-constructed through active engagement, feedback, and reflection within authentic contexts (Cheng et al., 2024). The limited development of reflective and adaptive competencies in this study suggests that practicum conditions lacked sufficient self-efficacy supports such as iterative feedback loops, scaffolded reflection, and systematic mentor engagement, which are necessary for pre-service teachers to move beyond routine teaching tasks to more sophisticated professional judgments.

Comparatively, this study's results diverge from research demonstrating stronger professional development outcomes under conditions of systematic mentor support and reflective structuring. In a qualitative study of reflective mentoring during practicum, EFL pre-service teachers engaged in sustained reflective practices were found to construct stronger professional identities, indicating that supported reflection deepens professional growth beyond task execution (Ardi et al., 2025). The present study's weaker reflective outcomes can therefore be interpreted as a consequence of less systematic and non-directive mentoring processes, highlighting the critical role of mentor structure in facilitating professional identity formation and reflective competence.

In contrast to some quantitative research that reports significant competence gains across broad pre-service cohorts (e.g., multiliteracies competence in Indonesian pre-service teachers), the qualitative nuances in the present case underscore that overall competence increases do not necessarily equate to uniform development across domains. For instance, a large cross-disciplinary survey showed Indonesian pre-service teachers had considerable multiliteracies competence after practicum, but did not disaggregate how specific reflective or adaptive behaviors manifested in situational teaching practice (Frontiers in Education, 2025). The current findings provide depth by revealing uneven development an important scholarly nuance that large surveys may overlook.

Furthermore, this study's results resonate with findings from practicum research that emphasize the non-linear and contextually contingent nature of professional learning during teaching practice. Case studies grounded in complexity theory have argued that pre-service teacher learning is influenced by a network of socio-contextual factors, leading to varied professional development outcomes across pedagogical, reflective, and adaptive competencies (Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education, 2023). This theoretical lens helps explain why even similarly structured practicum experiences may yield different patterns of professional growth: individual confidence, classroom dynamics, mentor support, and institutional culture interact in complex ways to shape competency development.

From an implications standpoint, the present study contributes to the teacher education literature by contextualizing professional competence as a multifaceted and practice-embedded construct, rather than a set of discrete, checklist competencies. The uneven development patterns identified here particularly the shortfalls in reflective practice and mentor engagement emphasize the need for teacher education programs to reconceptualize practicum not merely as a performance arena but as a professional learning ecosystem enriched with structured feedback, reflective scaffolding, and collaborative mentoring. This aligns with contemporary calls in teacher education research for practicum designs that foreground depth of learning, critical reflection, and co-constructed professional identity, rather than procedural task completion.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study concludes that Teacher Professional Education students undertaking teaching practice at State Senior High School 8 Pontianak demonstrate professional competencies that are functionally adequate yet conceptually incomplete. While the students were able to meet formal expectations related to instructional delivery, ethical conduct, and adherence to institutional norms, their professional competence was predominantly procedural rather than adaptive and reflective. The findings reveal that deeper dimensions of professionalism such as pedagogical flexibility, critical reflection, and collaborative engagement with mentors were not fully internalized during the practicum period. By critically examining professional competence as an enacted practice rather than a static attribute, this research contributes to the scholarly discourse by evidencing how practicum structures shape the quality of competency development. Scientifically, the study advances understanding of teacher professionalism in the Indonesian secondary education context by highlighting the gap between competency standards and their lived implementation, thereby providing empirical



support for rethinking teaching practice as a structured professional learning process rather than merely a performance requirement.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that open avenues for future research. The single-site case study design limits the generalizability of the findings across different school contexts and regions. Additionally, the reliance on qualitative data, while offering depth of understanding, does not allow for statistical comparison of competency levels across cohorts. Future research should therefore adopt multi-site or mixed-method designs to examine variations in professional competency development across diverse practicum settings and institutional models. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to trace how professional competencies evolve from pre-service preparation into early-career teaching. Furthermore, subsequent research should explore the role of structured mentoring models and reflective scaffolding in enhancing practicum effectiveness, as well as investigate policy-level interventions that align teacher education curricula more closely with authentic professional learning demands.

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