

# STRENGTHENING PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE OF TEACHERS OF ULUMUL QUR'AN PIDIE JAYA JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

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## Abstract

*This study aims to analyze the strengthening of teachers' pedagogical competence at SMP Ulumul Qur'an Pidie Jaya, focusing on the forms of strengthening, its implications for learning, and the supporting and inhibiting factors. The research employs a qualitative approach with a case study method through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings reveal that pedagogical competence is strengthened through regular class supervision, internal and online training, and participation in learning communities. These enhance teachers' understanding of student characteristics, mastery of learning theories, and the ability to design and implement effective learning tailored to students' needs. As a result, learning becomes more engaging and efficient, contributing to both academic and non-academic achievements, as reflected in improved student performance. The main supporting factors include the principal's support through supervision and training, as well as active teacher involvement in learning communities. However, challenges arise from limited time, facilities, technological resources, and difficulties in adapting teaching methods to the diverse characteristics of students.*

**Keywords :** Pedagogical competence, SMP Ulumul Qur'an Pidie Jaya teachers, implications

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## 1. Introduction

The current reality is that the level of education in Indonesia is still low. The fact is known from a survey by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2018 published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), stating that Indonesian education is ranked 72 out of 77 OECD members. Facing this reality is very sad, but that is the fact of the actual state of our education. The condition of education and the quality of education are very lacking compared to other countries in the world, this is a very strong blow. It can be seen that Indonesia often makes changes to the curriculum as an effort to improve the quality of its education, where previously the 2006 KTSP curriculum became the 2013 curriculum, then in 2022 the independent curriculum (Kurniawati, 2022).

In order to realize the goals of national education, an educator is considered capable of becoming an educator if he has the ability, which according to the National Education System Law has explained that educators (teachers) in order to be able to carry out their duties well and professionally, are required to have four competencies, namely pedagogical competence, professional competence, personality competence, and social competence.

The basic problem that is currently occurring is that there are not a few teachers who can be role models for their students, and there are even symptoms of a decline in the dignity and status of teachers. This is because the spirit of dedication of teachers is decreasing, low, and does not guarantee the implementation of professional services in a focused manner and healthy recognition from various parties. This happens because some teachers display an image that is less professional (Djamas et.al., 2015). Lately, there have also been cases of student delinquency in various forms. The community considers that this is due to the inability of educators (teachers) in schools to transform ethical values and have not been able to form student character. The community also criticizes the participation of teachers in forming student morals, which is considered still weak and has not been able to transform the substantial values of Islamic teachings (Yasin, 2011).

The importance of research in developing teacher competency lies in the effort to design effective and structured training and professional development. In-depth research can help in designing programs that include a comprehensive understanding of the curriculum, effective learning methods, and relevant evaluation techniques. With proper research, specific teacher needs can be identified, so that training can be tailored to maximize their competency.

In addition, research is also important to understand the best way to integrate educational technology in learning, especially in the context of Islamic religious education. Teachers need skills acquired through evidence-based training to apply modern technology appropriately in learning. Through research, innovative teaching strategies can be developed, allowing teachers to combine technology and educational methods effectively to achieve more optimal learning goals.

Teacher competence includes various aspects, such as knowledge of the subjects taught, skills in delivering material effectively, ability to manage the class and motivate students, and the ability to evaluate and improve teaching methods (Zamroni, 2001).

The education received by a teacher must be designed in such a way as to prepare them with these competencies. In addition, teachers must also be committed to continuously improving and developing their skills in line with developments in education and technology. Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers emphasizes the importance of competence in carrying out professional duties as a teacher or lecturer. Competence in this context includes pedagogical competence, personality competence, social competence and professional competence obtained through professional education. Teacher competence according to this law includes four main aspects:

1. Pedagogical Competence: which is related to the teacher's ability to design, implement, and evaluate the learning process effectively. This includes an understanding of learning theory, the use of appropriate teaching methods, and the ability to assess and adjust learning approaches according to student needs.

2. **Personality Competence:** Is the teacher's ability to be a good example for students, both in attitude, values, and professional ethics. This includes aspects such as integrity, empathy, cooperation, and commitment to personal and professional development.
3. **Social Competence:** This includes the teacher's ability to interact effectively with students, parents, colleagues, and the wider community. This includes the ability to build good relationships, communicate effectively, and adapt to the needs and diversity of individuals and groups.
4. **Professional Competence:** Is the understanding and application of professional ethical principles, work standards, and the ability to continue learning and developing oneself. This includes an understanding of educational policies and regulations, and involvement in continuing professional development activities.

By having adequate competencies, a teacher can be more effective in helping students achieve their potential optimally and face challenges in the world of education better.

In addition to academic aspects, it is also important for teachers to be provided with training in pedagogy, child psychology, and classroom management. This will help them better understand and respond to individual student needs, as well as create a conducive learning environment in the classroom. In addition, collaboration between teachers and the school and local community also needs to be improved. Through this collaboration, teachers can share experiences and knowledge, and expand networks that support their professional development. The government can also provide further support by providing the necessary resources and facilities, such as reading materials, learning software, and access to quality training. In addition, the monitoring and evaluation system also needs to be strengthened to ensure that teacher competency improvement programs in schools run effectively and efficiently (Yasin, 2011).

At SMP Ulumul Quran, research becomes increasingly important considering that the school has only officially operated under that name in 2019 after going through several transition phases. As a relatively new school, SMP Ulumul Quran has quite prominent potential, as evidenced by the achievements of its students in various competitions. In addition, this school has been designated by the government as one of the "Moving Schools" in Pidie Jaya Regency, which requires an increase in the quality of teaching and collaboration between teachers, schools, and local communities. With research, it is hoped that effective strategies can be found to support this collaboration and identify needs and potential that can be developed. Research can also help schools maximize government support and ensure that teacher competency improvement programs run according to their goals, especially in utilizing the resources and facilities provided.

With these integrated and sustainable efforts, it is expected that the quality of education in schools can continue to improve, and teachers can become effective agents of change in forming a young generation with noble character and broad knowledge in Islam. Therefore, researchers consider it important to research the pedagogical competence of teachers who teach at SMP Ulumul Qur'an Pidie Jaya. The emphasis on "strengthening pedagogical competence" shows the importance of improving skills in planning, implementing, and evaluating the process of learning Islam effectively.

SMP Ulumul Qur'an Pidie Jaya is the focus of this research because it carries a special mission as an educational institution that emphasizes Islamic religious education as its main foundation. This means that this school not only aims to provide good academic education, but is also committed to forming strong student characters in accordance with Islamic values. In its implementation, learning at SMP Ulumul Qur'an is expected to reflect Islamic values that are relevant to the context of local community life in Pidie Jaya, such as discipline, honesty, and concern for others. Research on this school can provide an overview of the learning methods used, how effective this school is in instilling these values, and the challenges faced in integrating religious education with the academic curriculum. In addition, this research can also help schools to continue to adjust their educational strategies to be more effective in forming a knowledgeable and well-mannered generation.

The implications of strengthening the pedagogical competence of teachers intended in learning are the creation of a conducive learning environment, increasing active participation of students in the learning process, and increasing academic achievement and spiritual morals of students. In addition, it is also expected that there will be an increase in the quality of teachers as agents of character formation for the younger generation. Thus, this study shows the importance of strengthening the pedagogical competence of teachers in the specific context of SMP Ulumul Qur'an Pidie Jaya and its expected impact on learning at the school.

## 2. Method

This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach (Moleong, 2002). To explore in depth the process of strengthening teacher pedagogical competence at SMP Ulumul Qur'an Pidie Jaya. This study was conducted at a school that has the status of "Sekolah Penggerak" and is located in Pidie Jaya Regency, Aceh. This school has achieved various achievements and is a model in Islamic-based education that integrates religious values and local wisdom.

Data collection techniques include direct observation of the learning process, interviews with principals, teachers, and other important informants, and documentation related to the curriculum, syllabus, and school profile. Data analysis was carried out through three main stages: data reduction (simplifying and filtering relevant data), data presentation (displaying information systematically in the form of text or graphics), and drawing conclusions (identifying patterns, relationships, and meanings from the data that has been analyzed) (Umrati & Wijaya, 2022). This process ensures valid and reliable research findings, thus providing in-depth insights into efforts to develop pedagogical competence in the school.

## 3. Results and Discussion

SMP Ulumul Quran Pidie Jaya, located in Meureudu District, Pidie Jaya Regency, Aceh, is an Islamic-based junior high school established in 2019. Starting from an acquisition by Madrasah Ulumul Quran to save the previous flagship school, this junior high school now focuses on general education integrated with the Al-Quran memorization program. As a "Moving School," SMP Ulumul Quran has been accredited A and has become a model of education based on Qur'anic values, science, and life skills with the Merdeka Curriculum approach. This school is equipped with adequate facilities and infrastructure, including classrooms, a library, a prayer room, and other supporting facilities, all of which are in good condition.

The school's vision is to form a generation with noble character, independence, and global insight. Various routine programs such as congregational prayer, reading the Qur'an, and short-term Islamic boarding schools support the strengthening of students' characters. Teachers and educators play an important role in implementing active, creative, and innovative learning. A flexible learning system allows for the integration of religious education and life skills. The school also accommodates students in dormitories to facilitate the implementation of superior programs such as tahfidz, producing young huffazh who are ready to face modern challenges with a strong moral and spiritual foundation.

Research findings on strengthening teacher pedagogical competence at Ulumul Qur'an Middle School, Pidie Jaya:

### Forms of Strengthening Pedagogical Competence Improvement

This study found that strengthening the pedagogical competence of teachers at SMP Ulumul Qur'an Pidie Jaya was carried out comprehensively through various approaches. First, formal training was held through internal meetings and learning communities (kombel), which became a discussion forum between teachers to share experiences and knowledge about learning methods. This kombel was carried out routinely every month, usually after class hours were over or during breaks, so as not to interfere with the study schedule. Online training is

also recommended to broaden teachers' horizons with new materials, many of which are available for free.

Second, classroom supervision is implemented periodically once or twice per semester. The principal and vice principal of curriculum review the learning modules and methods applied by teachers in the classroom. This supervision is accompanied by direct feedback to teachers to improve the quality of teaching. Supervision notes include evaluation of teacher performance, innovations made, and suggestions for improvements needed. Successfully implemented learning innovations, such as interactive methods, receive special appreciation from the principal.

Third, digital technology is used by teachers to support teaching. Almost all teachers have social media accounts and some have personal websites. This technology is used to find the latest information and share learning materials, so that teaching methods become more creative and relevant to students' needs.

Fourth, evaluation of students and teaching methods is carried out routinely at the beginning of each school year. Teachers adjust the learning approach to various learning styles of students, such as auditory, visual, or kinesthetic. From the evaluation results, around 70% of learning development has been achieved, and teachers continue to strive to improve these results to approach 90%. This evaluation also becomes the basis for self-reflection for teachers to improve teaching strategies.

Fifth, intensive communication with guardians is carried out to monitor the development of student character, especially for new students who are still in the adaptation stage. Teachers ask about changes that occur in students, such as increased maturity, morals, and social attitudes. This communication strengthens the relationship between school and family, which supports the formation of student character in a sustainable manner.

This study confirms that strengthening pedagogical competence at SMP Ulumul Qur'an Pidie Jaya is carried out through collaboration between teachers, principals, and guardians of students, by utilizing integrated training, supervision, technology, and evaluation. These steps contribute to improving the quality of education that focuses on the balance between academic achievement and character building of students.

Table 1 Forms of Strengthening Teachers' Pedagogical Competence

No	Form of Reinforcement	Explanation
1	Class Supervision	The principal conducts regular class supervision once a semester to assess and provide feedback on the effectiveness of the teacher's teaching methods.
2	Internal Training	The school holds special training to improve pedagogical competence, including effective teaching techniques, which is implemented in a structured and continuous manner.
3	Learning Community	Teachers join learning communities formed by the school, where they share experiences and knowledge about flexible teaching methods.

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4	Online Training	The principal encourages teachers to take free online training as a means of developing their competencies independently according to their individual needs.
5	Annual Self Evaluation	Teachers conduct self-evaluations and analysis of students' learning styles at the beginning of each year, adjusting learning methods based on monitored student development.
6	Communication with Student Guardians	Teachers communicate with students' guardians to assess changes in students' character, knowledge, and maturity development periodically.
7	Development of Supervisory Administration System	The principal uses a special book to document supervision, record progress and suggestions for improvement, which supports improving teacher competency.
8	Appreciation for Teacher Innovation	Schools give appreciation to teachers who demonstrate innovation in teaching methods, which are considered to help improve the effectiveness of classroom learning.
9	Personal Approach to Teaching	The principal emphasized the importance of a personal approach by teachers to understand students' individual needs and increase the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.

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### **Implications of Strengthening Pedagogical Competence on Learning**

The findings of this study indicate that strengthening the pedagogical competence of teachers at SMP Ulumul Qur'an Pidie Jaya has several important implications for learning.

#### **1. Improving Student Understanding**

Strengthening pedagogical competence through training, learning communities (kombel), and regular supervision improves teachers' ability to understand student characteristics and develop more adaptive learning strategies. Teachers provide opportunities for students to think critically through provocative questions, group discussions, and active involvement in the learning process. As a result, students find it easier to understand the material being taught because teachers are able to relate learning to real-life contexts that are relevant to students.

#### **2. Improving Student Achievement Outside the Classroom**

Flexible training and structured supervision encourage teachers to implement innovative teaching methods that support the development of student achievement. Teachers actively participate in online and offline training, so they can integrate learning with extracurricular activities that enrich students' learning experiences. Routine supervision also provides feedback to teachers to continuously improve teaching methods and classroom

management, which has an impact on improving student academic achievement and skills in various regional competitions.

### 3. Improving Students' Social and Creative Skills

The Merdeka Curriculum implemented in this school encourages the implementation of differentiation-based learning, which allows teachers to be more flexible in adjusting teaching methods to students' needs. Teachers utilize learning communities as a forum for sharing experiences and improving teaching techniques, which encourages students to develop social and creative skills optimally. Students are encouraged to actively participate in the learning process, including in group activities that foster cooperation and critical thinking skills.

### 4. Utilization of Technology in Learning

Teachers at SMP Ulumul Qur'an Pidie Jaya have become accustomed to using digital technology, such as social media, online learning platforms (Quizizz, YouTube), and portable projectors, to support teaching. Free wifi access at the school makes it easy for teachers and students to access digital learning materials. Innovation in the use of technology is also appreciated by the school and the community, demonstrating the school's commitment to utilizing technology as part of a more modern and effective learning strategy.

### 5. Improving Communication with Parents

Teachers actively communicate with parents to monitor students' academic and character development. The results of this communication help teachers adjust their learning approaches to the individual needs of students, especially those who are just entering junior high school. This positive interaction strengthens the relationship between school, students, and families, creating a conducive learning environment and supporting the formation of student character.

These findings suggest that strengthening pedagogical competence in schools not only improves the effectiveness of classroom learning but also has a positive impact on students' achievement, social skills, and creativity.

The following are the implications of strengthening the pedagogical competence of teachers at SMP Ulumul Qur'an Pidie Jaya for learning:

Table 2 Implications of Pedagogical Reinforcement in Learning

No.	Implication Aspects	Description	Information
1.	Improving Student Understanding	Strengthening teachers' pedagogical competence has a direct impact on the quality of students' understanding of learning materials. Skilled teachers can deliver materials more clearly, increase students' KKM scores, and enable students to more easily understand the concepts taught.	Increase in students' KKM scores
2.	Improving Student Achievement Outside the Classroom	Teachers who have high pedagogical competence are able to motivate students to be more active in academic and non-academic competitions, both at the district level and higher.	Winner of district level competitions such as OSN Pentas PAI etc.

3.	Use of Technology in Learning	With the improvement of pedagogical competence, teachers are increasingly skilled in utilizing technology, such as learning applications (Quizziz, YouTube) and other learning tools. This makes learning more interesting and effective, and optimizes teaching in the classroom.	Use of platforms such as Quizziz, YouTube, and other applications in learning.
4.	School Recognized as a Driving School	The well-implemented Merdeka Curriculum contributes to the school's reputation as a "moving school."	Pidie Jaya Regency's driving school
5.	Improving Students' Social and Creative Skills	Learning developed with an innovative and participatory approach makes students more confident in social interactions.	Students are more confident and creative in various activities, including presentations and class discussions.

### Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Strengthening Pedagogical Competence

Various factors support and hinder the strengthening of teachers' pedagogical competence at SMP Ulumul Qur'an Pidie Jaya. These factors were revealed from the results of interviews with the principal, vice principal, and teachers who were directly involved in the learning process at the school.

#### 1. Supporting Factors

##### a) Internal school support

School policies are a major factor in strengthening pedagogical competence. The principal mentioned that the school provides structured internal training as well as access to free online training for teachers. This online training is considered to provide ample opportunities for teachers to improve their skills without being constrained by costs. The principal stated, "There is quite a lot of free training nowadays... it is very easy nowadays to upgrade one's abilities," indicating that this training is an important means of developing teacher skills.

##### b) Routine supervision

Supervision is carried out at least every semester to directly review the teaching process in the classroom. The principal records the results of supervision in a special book that includes progress notes and suggestions for teachers. This feedback is important to improve and enhance the quality of teacher teaching, both in terms of teaching methods, classroom management, and how to assess students.

##### c) Learning community (Kombel)

Learning communities are held regularly to facilitate the exchange of experiences and learning between teachers. The vice principal explained that these forums are very effective because they do not require a lot of costs and can be held at flexible times, such as during breaks or after school. These communities provide a space for informal discussion and training for teachers, so they can share solutions to obstacles in the learning process.

##### d) Solidarity between teachers

Good cooperation between teachers helps overcome challenges faced in carrying out daily tasks. The principal emphasized the importance of having a solid team to support each other. Teachers also feel the benefits of refreshing activities carried out periodically to reduce boredom.

##### e) Access to technology

Teachers at SMP Ulumul Qur'an Pidie Jaya have good skills in utilizing technology, including social media and digital learning platforms such as Quizizz and YouTube. Some teachers even have personal websites to support the learning process. The school also provides free wifi access, which makes it easier for teachers and students to access learning resources.

## 2. Inhibiting Factors

### a) Limited laboratory facilities

Mathematics and Natural Sciences teachers said that they faced major obstacles in teaching practicums due to the lack of laboratory equipment, such as microscopes. This condition occurred because the school was still in the adjustment stage after moving locations. Even so, teachers took the initiative to borrow equipment from other schools to ensure that students still get practical experience. This obstacle has an impact on the limitations of teachers in implementing direct experience-based learning methods.

### b) Limited time

A busy daily schedule is an obstacle for teachers to participate in training or competency development activities. The vice principal explained that to overcome this time constraint, the school held training during breaks or after school. However, a busy schedule still makes it difficult for teachers to participate in all programs optimally.

### c) Fatigue due to routine

The dense teaching routine often causes boredom among teachers. The principal said that this condition requires moral support from all members of the school. A solid team and regular refreshing activities are considered to be able to help reduce this fatigue. Cooperation and support between teachers are considered very important in maintaining work enthusiasm.

Schools try to overcome existing obstacles with various creative steps. For example, limited laboratory facilities are overcome by borrowing equipment from other schools. In terms of time constraints, training is held flexibly through learning communities. The principal's support in providing regular supervision and guidance is also a solution to identify and resolve problems faced by teachers. The findings of this study indicate that despite obstacles, internal school support, collaboration between teachers, and the use of technology play a major role in strengthening pedagogical competence at SMP Ulumul Qur'an Pidie Jaya. The combination of supporting factors and management of these obstacles allows teachers to continue to develop and improve the quality of learning.

Class supervision conducted by the principal is an important step in strengthening the pedagogical competence of teachers, especially in understanding the characteristics and needs of students. This supervision helps teachers in planning effective learning, by setting goals according to students' needs and identifying their potential and difficulties. Feedback from supervision enriches teachers' insights, so that more personalized teaching strategies can be applied. In its implementation, teachers are expected to create a pleasant learning environment and utilize resources optimally (Munir, 2008). The implementation of periodic supervision also allows teachers to evaluate and improve learning methods to achieve the expected results.

In addition, internal and online training plays an important role in teacher professional development. This training strengthens the mastery of learning theories, such as constructivism and problem-based learning, which emphasize the active involvement of students in the learning process. Teachers are invited to update their knowledge of innovative methods, improve their ability to design learning that is more inclusive, contextual, and in accordance with student needs. Online training also expands teacher access to more varied educational resources, supporting the implementation of learning based on principles that are relevant to students' life experiences (Musfah, 2017).

The learning community formed in the Ulumul Quran Middle School environment provides an opportunity for teachers to share knowledge and experience in developing curriculum and planning learning that is in accordance with the characteristics of students. The theory of teacher professional development, which states that collaboration between teachers

enriches teaching practices, is the main foundation for the existence of this learning community. Through discussion and joint reflection, teachers can find new approaches in designing a curriculum that is more responsive to student needs. The theory of pedagogical competence supports the importance of curriculum development that is not only oriented towards achieving basic competencies, but also pays attention to the potential and needs of individual students. In the learning community, teachers not only learn about new educational theories and principles, but also share best practices in designing effective learning. Through this activity, teachers can also understand the importance of adjusting learning plans to real conditions in the classroom, which allows them to be more adaptive to changes and challenges faced in the learning process.

Self-evaluation is an important aspect of pedagogical competence, because it allows teachers to regularly assess the effectiveness of the learning that has been implemented. The theory of educational evaluation suggests that evaluation is not only aimed at measuring the achievement of student learning outcomes, but also to improve the quality of learning (Suyanto & Jihad, 2013). By conducting regular self-evaluations, teachers can identify weaknesses in their teaching methods and make necessary improvements. This evaluation process also plays a role in ensuring that learning objectives are achieved and students' basic competencies can develop properly. Self-evaluation is carried out by teachers to adjust the learning approach to the evolving needs of students, which ultimately has an impact on improving the overall quality of education. In this context, pedagogical competence requires teachers to have the skills to design and implement effective evaluations, which not only measure learning outcomes but also provide insight into how the learning process can be improved.

The use of technology in learning is an important element in pedagogical competence, because it can increase the effectiveness of communication and student involvement in the learning process. The theory of pedagogical competence emphasizes the importance of clear, empathetic, and polite communication between teachers and students (Akbar, 2021). Technology can be a very effective tool in facilitating this communication, as implemented by teachers at SMP Ulumul Qur'an, especially by using media such as Quizizz, YouTube, or other online platforms. Learning theories such as constructivism and technology-based learning also show that the use of technology can help students learn in a more interactive and engaging way. With technology, subject matter can be delivered in a more varied way, which helps improve student understanding. It also allows teachers to create a more flexible and dynamic learning environment, where students can learn independently or collaboratively. In addition, technology allows teachers to track student progress more accurately and provide faster and more targeted feedback, which contributes to increased learning effectiveness.

Based on the theoretical study at the beginning of this article, the principal plays a very important role in supporting the evaluation and assessment of learning. Through structured supervision, the principal can help teachers in assessing the success of the learning process and ensuring that the goals that have been set are achieved. Educational management theory shows that effective principal leadership focuses on coaching and developing teacher professionalism, one of which is through the supervision process (Mulyasa, 2009). With a clear evaluation system, the principal of SMP Ulumul Qur'an Pidie Jaya provides constructive feedback to teachers, which can be used to improve their teaching methods. In addition, neat documentation of evaluation and supervision results allows the principal to monitor teacher development in a more transparent and targeted manner. Through a continuous evaluation system, the principal can ensure that the quality of learning continues to improve, and teachers can continue to develop their pedagogical competence in order to achieve more optimal educational goals.

Appreciation of teaching innovations carried out by teachers is one way to encourage the development of student potential. Motivation theories in education, such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation theories, show that appreciation for teacher creativity can increase their enthusiasm to continue innovating in learning. This appreciation is also in line with the theory of professional development which emphasizes the importance of giving awards to improve teacher performance. By appreciating innovative teachers, schools not only increase teacher

motivation but also create a learning culture that is innovative and open to change. Teaching innovations provided by teachers can lead to more optimal achievement of learning objectives, because they can be adjusted to the diverse needs of students. Thus, appreciation for teaching innovation supports the achievement of students' best potential and makes learning more meaningful.

Personal approach in teaching is an important part of pedagogical competence that supports a deep understanding of student characteristics. With a personal approach, teachers can more easily identify students' needs, interests, and talents, which makes learning more relevant and meaningful (Yasin, 2011). The principal of SMP Ulumul Qur'an emphasized the importance of this approach encouraging teachers to get to know each student individually and adjust teaching methods to their characteristics. A personal approach is also expected by teachers to pay greater attention to students' social, emotional, and academic development, which in turn will increase student engagement and motivation in learning. Thus, pedagogical competence that focuses on understanding individual student characteristics is very important to create a more effective and comprehensive learning experience.

Based on the findings of the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that strengthening teacher competence does have significant implications for the quality of learning. As stated by Akbar (2021), pedagogical competence includes the teacher's ability to plan, implement, and evaluate learning, which directly affects the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process (Akbar, 2021). This study shows that when teachers have a deep understanding of learning theory and the ability to adjust learning methods to student characteristics, the quality of learning produced will be better. This is in line with Setiawan's findings, in his research which states that the competence of Islamic religious education teachers greatly influences students' learning difficulties (Setiawan et.al., 2023). With better competence, teachers can be more effective in overcoming various student learning difficulties, so that learning outcomes can be achieved more optimally.

Furthermore, research by Roehanah (Rohaenah et.al, 2020) also reviews the importance of the role of the principal in improving teacher competence, which shows that support from school leaders greatly influences the development of teachers' pedagogical abilities. Principals who are active in providing supervision and training will help teachers improve their performance in the classroom. This was also expressed by Mulyati, who studied the role of the principal as a motivator in improving the competence of religious teachers in elementary schools (Mulyati, 2022). This support reinforces the fact that pedagogical competence is not only influenced by formal training and experience, but also by motivational factors provided by the principal. Therefore, based on the research results that have been presented, researchers can expand the scope of findings and new theories that strengthening teacher competence integrated with good managerial support will improve the quality of learning which ultimately has positive implications for the academic and non-academic development of students.

#### **4. Conclusions and Suggestions**

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that strengthening the pedagogical competence of teachers at SMP Ulumul Qur'an Pidie Jaya is carried out through various effective strategies, such as periodic class supervision, internal and online training, and learning communities. This strengthening focuses on understanding student characteristics, mastery of learning theories, and skills in designing and implementing relevant learning. The implication is that teachers with good pedagogical competence are able to adjust learning methods according to student needs, so that the learning process becomes more effective, interesting, and contributes to the achievement of academic and non-academic achievements.

Supporting factors in strengthening this competence include the support of the principal through supervision and training, as well as the active involvement of teachers in the learning community. The obstacles faced include limited time for training, facilities, and challenges in adapting teaching methods to student diversity. However, with continuous efforts, these

obstacles can be overcome, so that teachers' pedagogical competence continues to develop, which has a positive impact on improving the quality of learning in schools.

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