

The Influence of Learning Communities, Work Ethic, and Achievement Motivation on Teacher Professional Competence: A Quantitative Study in Public Elementary Schools in Candisari District, Semarang City

Fina Febriyanti*, Maryanto Maryanto, Ngasbun Egar

Universitas Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia, Semarang, Indonesia

*Email: finaheptula@gmail.com

Abstract: One of the key determinants of educational quality is the professional competence of teachers, which directly impacts student achievement and the overall standard of education. This study examines the influence of learning communities, work ethic, and achievement motivation on the professional competence of elementary school teachers in Candisari District, Semarang. Recent performance evaluations indicate that teachers' professional competence remains lower than other competencies, highlighting the need for targeted improvement. Learning communities serve as collaborative platforms for teachers to share experiences and solve instructional challenges, especially relevant with the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which demands greater flexibility and student-centered approaches. Additionally, a strong work ethic and high achievement motivation are essential for teachers to enhance their instructional quality and responsibility. However, observations reveal that teachers' achievement motivation in Candisari remains low, as reflected in the limited non-academic achievements at the district level. This quantitative study employs a causal survey design, involving all 242 teachers in the district, and utilizes multiple regression analysis to assess the relationship between the independent variables (learning community participation, work ethic, and achievement motivation) and the dependent variable (professional competence). The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers and school leaders in developing strategies to strengthen teacher professionalism and improve educational outcomes at the elementary level.

Keywords: professional competence; learning community; work ethic; achievement motivation; inclusion.

INTRODUCTION

One of the key factors determining the quality of education is the teacher, especially in the context of inclusive classrooms where diverse student needs must be addressed. Teachers act as learning agents and play a pivotal role in shaping inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all learners, including those with special educational needs. A professional teacher in an inclusive setting must demonstrate not only deep content knowledge but also competence in differentiated instruction, inclusive pedagogy, and collaborative practices with special educators and parents (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

Professional competence encompasses a wide and deep mastery of learning materials, including mastery of the curriculum and the ability to develop effective and inclusive learning processes. As professionals, teachers must meet the four competencies established in Law No. 19 of 2005 concerning the National Education Standards, namely pedagogical, personal, professional, and social competencies. However, this research will focus more specifically on teachers' professional competence, particularly in the context of inclusive education.

At SD Negeri in Candisari District, Semarang City, the results of the 2024 Teacher Performance Assessment (PKG) show that teachers' professional competence still requires more attention. According to available data, teachers' professional competence received a lower average score compared to other competencies. Table 1 shows that professional competence only received an average score of 70.5, which falls into the "Sufficient"

category, while other competencies, such as pedagogical, personal, and social, received better scores.

Table 1. Teacher Performance Assessment (PKG) Results at SD Negeri Candisari, Semarang City

No	Competency	Expected Score	Achieved Score	Category
1	Pedagogical	91 - 100	76.2	Good
2	Personal	91 - 100	87.6	Good
3	Social	91 - 100	84	Good
4	Professional	91 - 100	70.5	Sufficient

Source: UPT Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Candisari, Semarang, 2024

In inclusive classrooms, professional competence also includes the ability to apply inclusive teaching strategies, adapt learning materials, and ensure active participation of students with diverse needs. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 70 of 2009 on inclusive education, teachers must be able to design, implement, and evaluate instructional strategies that accommodate individual differences. Inclusive education requires professional competence not only in the subject matter but also in empathy, flexibility, and collaboration (Nilholm, 2021; Martika & Salim, 2017).

Teachers' professional competence can be improved through various efforts, one of which is by participating in learning communities. Learning communities serve as a forum for teachers to discuss, share experiences, and solve learning-related problems. This program becomes particularly relevant with the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, where teachers are expected to have greater abilities in managing flexible, student-centered, and inclusive learning (Arnes et al., 2023; Aprilia, 2017). Furthermore, a strong work ethic and achievement motivation significantly affect a teacher's work quality. Sinamo (2019) explains that a work ethic is a set of behaviors arising from strong fundamental beliefs, reflecting an individual's commitment to their work. A good work ethic can increase achievement motivation, which is an internal drive to achieve optimal results in work. Teachers with high achievement motivation will be more responsible in performing their duties, including improving the quality of teaching (Siagian, 2020).

However, based on field observations, the achievement motivation of teachers in SD Negeri Candisari is still low. This can be seen from the underperformance in non-academic achievements, as shown in Table 2. In 2022, out of 16 schools, only two schools achieved accolades at the district level second place in the National Science Olympiad (OSN) for SD Negeri Candi 1 and third place in the National Student Art Festival (FLS2N) for SD Negeri Tegalsari 1. In the following year, no achievements were recorded from the schools in Candisari District.

Table 2. Non-Academic Achievements of SD Negeri in Candisari District, Semarang City

No	School Name	2022	2023	2024
1	SD Negeri Candi 01	-	2	-
2	SD Negeri Tegalsari 1	3	-	-

Source: UPT Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Candisari, Semarang, 2024

This decline in performance is directly related to the low achievement motivation of teachers. Several factors contributing to this issue include a lack of recognition from the school and limited teaching resources. Teachers feel that despite their efforts, the outcomes do not correspond to the work they put in, leading to a decrease in motivation to perform at their best (Musfah, 2017).

Based on the background above, this study aims to examine the influence of learning communities, work ethic, and achievement motivation on the professional competence of teachers in inclusive public primary schools in Candisari District, Semarang City. This research is expected to provide insights into the importance of these factors in enhancing inclusive teaching quality at the primary school level.

Previous studies have extensively discussed the influence of individual factors such as work ethic and motivation on teacher performance (Siagian, 2020; Sinamo, 2019). However, limited research has examined the combined influence of learning communities, work ethic, and achievement motivation on professional competence in inclusive classrooms, particularly amid the demands of the Merdeka Curriculum. Studies by Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin (2012) emphasize the need for teacher preparation programs to develop inclusive teaching competencies. Similarly, Fitchett and Heafner (2018) show that differentiated instruction skills are crucial for improving equity in student outcomes.

This study offers novelty by focusing on the combined influence of learning communities, work ethic, and achievement motivation on teachers' professional competence in inclusive settings. It also contributes to a better understanding of how these factors interplay in supporting teachers' ability to deliver quality education for all students, including those with disabilities, in line with SDG 4 on inclusive and equitable education (UNESCO, 2020). Furthermore, this research addresses a phenomenon in the public elementary schools of Candisari District that has not been widely explored, thus offering meaningful contributions to inclusive education policy and practice.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach, emphasizing the collection and analysis of numerical data to examine the causal relationships among variables. The approach allows for statistical analysis to test hypotheses and evaluate how independent variables affect the dependent variable (Sugiyono, 2020). The method employed is a causal survey, which is appropriate for analyzing relationships and determining the direction of effects among variables (Ghozali, 2020). In this study, the dependent variable is treated as stochastic, while the independent variables are considered fixed during repeated sampling.

The research was conducted in public elementary schools in Candisari District, Semarang City, comprising 16 schools with a total population of 242 teachers. All schools in the district share relatively similar geographical features lowland areas with easy road access ensuring environmental homogeneity. Although the initial plan involved total population sampling (Sugiyono, 2017), only 151 teachers were ultimately included in the study. This adjustment was made due to practical constraints, including time limitations, varied response rates across schools, and the minimum sample size requirement for statistical power in multiple regression (Cohen, 1992). Therefore, the study adopted a proportional random sampling method, ensuring that teachers were selected proportionally from each school to maintain representativeness (Sugiyono, 2020).

The study employed a structured questionnaire developed based on operational definitions of four variables: learning communities (X_1), work ethic (X_2), achievement motivation (X_3), and teacher professional competence (Y). The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale, with response categories as follows: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree (Arikunto, 2020). To interpret the questionnaire scores, ideal mean and standard deviation calculations were used. The scores were categorized as: 81–100 = Very High, 61–80 = High, 41–60 = Moderate, 21–40 = Low, and 1–20 = Very Low.

The instrument's validity was tested using Pearson's Product Moment correlation, with items considered valid if the correlation coefficient exceeded the critical r-value (r-table) at $\alpha = 0.05$ and $n = 151$ ($r_{table} \approx 0.159$). Reliability was tested using the split-half method and Cronbach's Alpha. A reliability coefficient of $\alpha > 0.70$ was accepted as evidence of internal consistency (Ghozali, 2020).

Before performing regression analysis, assumption testing was conducted to ensure data appropriateness for parametric testing. Normality was tested using Shapiro-Wilk and confirmed by histogram and Q-Q plot analyses. Results showed that data were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$). Linearity was assessed using scatterplots between each independent variable and the dependent variable, showing a linear pattern. Multicollinearity was examined using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). All VIF values were below 10, indicating no multicollinearity issues. Homoscedasticity was tested using the Glejser test and residual scatterplots. The results indicated no heteroscedasticity, as residuals were evenly dispersed.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to describe trends in each variable and inferential statistics to test hypotheses. The analysis included correlation coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), and multiple linear regression to assess the simultaneous and partial effects of learning communities, work ethic, and achievement motivation on teacher professional competence (Ghozali, 2020; Santoso, 2021).

This methodological approach offers a comprehensive framework for identifying the factors influencing teacher professional competence in inclusive school settings, aligned with current efforts to implement the Merdeka Curriculum. By integrating teacher collaboration (learning communities), internal drive (achievement motivation), and professional attitude (work ethic), this study seeks to offer empirical evidence to inform policy and practice related to inclusive and equitable education improvement (Sugiyono, 2020; Ghozali, 2020).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding(s)

This study was conducted with the involvement of 151 teachers from 16 primary schools in Candisari District, Semarang City. The data from the respondents indicate that the majority of teachers are employed as Government Employees with Work Agreements (PPPK), totaling 90 individuals or 59.6% of the respondents, while 61 teachers, or 40.4%, are Civil Servants (PNS). This reflects a shift in the composition of teaching staff in primary schools in Candisari District, in line with government policies on PPPK recruitment. The majority of the respondents are classroom teachers, totaling 144 individuals or 95.4% of the respondents. Meanwhile, there are 5 teachers of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) (3.3%) and 2 teachers of Physical Education, Sports, and Health (PJOK) (1.3%). This indicates that the main focus of teaching in the public primary schools of Candisari District primarily involves classroom teachers who teach various subjects. The respondents come from 16 primary schools in Candisari District, with the largest number of respondents from SDN Candi 01 and SDN Jatingaleh 01, with 20 individuals (13.2%) from each school. This reflects a fairly even distribution of respondents across schools, suggesting that the data collected is representative of the professional competencies of teachers in the area.

The descriptive analysis shows that the variable of Learning Communities has an average score of 3.98, falling into the "High" category. The highest scoring indicator is "Supportive Conditions-Structure," with an average of 4.25, indicating that structurally, the work environment strongly supports the formation of learning communities in the primary schools of Candisari District. On the other hand, the lowest-scoring indicator is "Honesty," with an average of 3.65. Although still categorized as "High," this area requires more attention to improve openness and transparency among community members. The analysis indicates that the work ethic of teachers in Candisari District primary schools falls under the "Moderate" category with an average score of 3.32. While the "Responsibility" indicator has a high score (4.01), the "Honesty" indicator received the lowest score (2.61), highlighting challenges in building a solid work ethic among teachers. This suggests the need for improvements in positive attitudes, hard work, and honesty as part of the work culture in schools. The average score for this variable is 3.44, which falls within the "High" category. The highest-scoring indicator is "Attitude and Creativity" (4.08), reflecting teachers' innovative spirit in teaching. However, some indicators, such as "Need for Affiliation" (2.68) and "Expectations for Results" (3.17), received lower scores, indicating the need for improvement in social collaboration aspects and expectations of work outcomes. The professional competence of the teachers shows an average score of 3.51, which is categorized as "High." The highest-scoring indicator is "Mastery of Subject Matter and Knowledge" (3.67), demonstrating that teachers possess a good understanding of the subject matter being taught. However, the "Supporting Professional Qualifications" indicator (3.21) received the lowest score, indicating room for improvement in additional skills that support teachers' professional competencies.

In addition to multiple linear regression analysis, this study also used simple linear regression tests to evaluate the impact of each independent variable on teachers' professional competence separately. The purpose of this test was to measure the contribution of each independent variable Learning Communities (X1), Work Ethic (X2), and Achievement Motivation (X3) towards Professional Competence (Y). The simple linear regression test between Learning Communities (X1) and Professional Competence (Y) showed a regression coefficient of 0.224 with a t-value of 2.496 and a p-value of 0.005 (< 0.05), indicating that Learning Communities have a positive and significant effect on professional competence. This means that improving the quality of learning communities can enhance teachers' professional competencies.

The simple regression equation: $Y = 50.251 + 0.224X1$. The simple linear regression test for work ethic (X2) on Professional Competence (Y) showed a regression coefficient of 0.106 with a t-value of 2.885 and a p-value of 0.008 (< 0.05). This indicates that Work Ethic also has a positive and significant effect on Professional Competence. Improving work ethic will contribute to enhancing teachers' professional competencies. The simple regression equation: $Y = 50.251 + 0.106X2$. The simple linear regression test for achievement motivation (X3) on professional competence (Y) produced a regression coefficient of 0.482 with a t-value of 3.663 and a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05), showing that achievement motivation has a very strong and significant effect on professional competence. Increasing achievement motivation among teachers will have a larger impact on improving their competencies. The simple regression equation: $Y = 50.251 + 0.482X3$. The results of the multiple linear regression analysis show that all three independent variables Learning Communities, Work Ethic, and Achievement Motivation collectively have a positive and significant effect on teachers' Professional Competence. The regression equation obtained is as follows: $Y = 50.251 + 0.224X1 + 0.106X2 + 0.482X3$.

The t-test results indicate that all independent variables significantly influence Professional Competence. Specifically: (1) Learning Communities (X1) significantly affect Professional Competence, with t-value = 2.496 and p-value = 0.005 (< 0.05). (2) Work Ethic (X2) also significantly affects Professional Competence, with t-value = 2.885 and p-value = 0.008 (< 0.05). (3) Achievement Motivation (X3) significantly affects Professional Competence, with t-value = 3.663 and p-value = 0.000 (< 0.05). The following table shows the partial t-test results of the three independent variables on Professional Competence:

Table 4. Partial t-test Results

Variable	Coefficient (B)	t-value	Sig.	Impact on Professional Competence
Learning Communities (X1)	0.224	2.429	0.005	Positive and Significant
Work Ethic (X2)	0.106	2.885	0.008	Positive and Significant
Achievement Motivation (X3)	0.482	3.663	0.000	Positive and Significant

Source: Primary Data, Processed, 2025

The following graph illustrates the hypothesis test results regarding the impact of variables on Professional Competence. This graph displays the results of simple and multiple linear regression tests, along with the t-test results for measuring the impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable (Professional Competence).

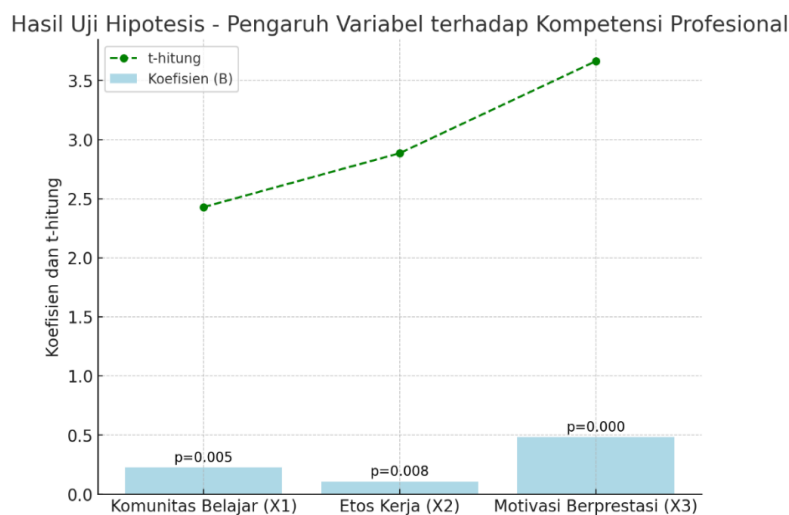


Figure 1. Hypothesis Test Results - Impact of Variables on Professional Competence

Figure 1 shows: (1) Bar plot (Coefficient B): Representing the regression coefficient values for each variable (Learning Communities, Work Ethic, and Achievement Motivation). (2) Line plot (t-value): Displaying the t-values for each variable used in the partial hypothesis test (t-test). (3) P-value markers: Indicating the p-value for each variable, showing the significance of the hypothesis test results. P-values less than 0.05 indicate that the variable's effect is significant.

The F-test results show that all three independent variables together have a significant effect on Professional Competence. The F-value of 16.184 with a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05) indicates that this regression model can explain the variation in Professional Competence as a whole. The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.742 indicates that 74.2% of the variation in Professional Competence can be explained by Learning Communities, Work Ethic, and Achievement Motivation. The remaining 25.8% of variation is explained by other

factors not included in this study. From the results of the multiple linear regression analysis and partial tests, it can be concluded that Learning Communities, Work Ethic, and Achievement Motivation significantly contribute to enhancing teachers' Professional Competence. Achievement Motivation contributes the most to professional competence, while Learning Communities and Work Ethic also provide significant positive contributions, albeit with slightly smaller effects.

Discussion(s)

This study aims to examine the impact of Learning Communities, Work Ethic, and Achievement Motivation on teachers' Professional Competence in the public primary schools of Candisari District, Semarang City. Based on the results of the multiple linear regression test and t-test, there is strong evidence that all three independent variables have a significant effect on teachers' professional competence. The following discussion elaborates on these findings in greater depth and provides possible explanations, including contextual and cultural considerations.

The research results indicate that Learning Communities have a positive and significant effect on teachers' Professional Competence, with a t-value of 2.496 and a p-value of 0.005 (< 0.05). The regression coefficient of 0.224 suggests that for every one-unit increase in Learning Communities, teachers' Professional Competence will increase by 0.224 units. Learning Communities serve as a platform for teachers to share knowledge and enhance their pedagogical skills, which leads to better professional development (Asmani, 2019; Musfah, 2017). This is particularly relevant in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, which demands more flexible, student-centered instruction. The effectiveness of such communities depends not only on the structure but also on active participation, open communication, and support from educational leadership (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022; Halim, 2024; Nasution, 2023). In inclusive settings, learning communities can play an additional role in helping teachers develop inclusive teaching strategies through peer collaboration, as emphasized by Milani et al. (2023).

Work Ethic also shows a positive and significant effect on Professional Competence, with a t-value of 2.885 and a p-value of 0.008 (< 0.05). However, among the three variables, Work Ethic exhibits the lowest regression coefficient (0.106), indicating a relatively smaller contribution. This could be attributed to cultural and structural factors. In Candisari District, anecdotal evidence and informal observations suggest that teachers often face a high administrative burden and limited career progression opportunities, which may demotivate them from fully embodying a high work ethic in daily practice. Furthermore, a collectivist culture may place more emphasis on harmony and compliance rather than on individual initiative and excellence (Sinamo, 2015; Priansa, 2016). As a result, work ethic may not always translate directly into increased professional competence unless supported by tangible incentives or institutional support systems (Sukriyanto, 2019; Wahjosumidjo, 2016; Devi & Diana, 2019).

Achievement Motivation was found to have the strongest effect on teachers' Professional Competence, with a t-value of 3.663 and a highly significant p-value of 0.000. The regression coefficient of 0.482 suggests that this internal drive contributes substantially more than the other variables. In the sociocultural context of Indonesia particularly in urban areas like Semarang teachers with strong achievement motivation tend to actively pursue further education, engage in innovation, and participate in professional development programs despite limited structural support. Achievement motivation serves as an intrinsic force that propels teachers to find creative ways to overcome teaching challenges and to continually strive for better performance (Sardiman, 2019; Jamaris, 2018). This result aligns

with McClelland's theory that individuals with high need for achievement (n-Ach) are persistent in seeking success. The emphasis on personal accomplishment, reinforced by recognition and reward mechanisms in schools, plays a critical role in enhancing competence (Berman, 2020; Slameto, 2020; Wahjosumidjo, 2016).

The F-test results show that Learning Communities, Work Ethic, and Achievement Motivation collectively have a significant effect on Professional Competence. The F-value of 16.184 with a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05) indicates that the model can explain the overall variance in the dependent variable. The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.742 suggests that 74.2% of the variance in teachers' Professional Competence can be explained by these three variables. This highlights their crucial role, although it is acknowledged that other unmeasured variables such as leadership support, inclusive teaching training, and access to differentiated learning tools may also influence competence (Wibowo, 2017; Fitriani & Usman, 2020).

One important limitation of this study is the potential for social desirability bias in the self-reported questionnaires. Teachers may tend to present themselves in a more favorable light, especially when responding to items related to work ethic or motivation. This may inflate the observed relationships between variables. Although anonymity was assured, the nature of self-assessment in hierarchical work environments such as schools may still lead to overreporting of positive behaviors or attitudes. Future research may consider combining self-reports with observational assessments or peer evaluations to reduce this bias and provide a more holistic picture of professional competence.

In summary, the findings suggest that Learning Communities, Work Ethic, and Achievement Motivation significantly influence teacher professional competence in Candisari District's public elementary schools. Among these, Achievement Motivation emerges as the most influential factor, likely due to its intrinsic nature and alignment with individual goals. Conversely, Work Ethic's weaker influence may reflect broader systemic and cultural constraints that inhibit its direct translation into professional outcomes. To enhance teacher competence, efforts must therefore go beyond training and include structural support, recognition systems, and inclusive school cultures that foster professional growth.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that Learning Communities, Work Ethic, and Achievement Motivation have a significant impact on teachers' Professional Competence in the public primary schools of Candisari District, Semarang City. Learning Communities have been proven to enhance teachers' professional competence by fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing, while a high Work Ethic positively influences teaching quality and discipline. Among the three, Achievement Motivation has the greatest impact, indicating that teachers who are highly motivated to achieve tend to demonstrate stronger professional competence. These findings suggest that strengthening these three factors is crucial for improving the quality of education at the primary school level.

The improvement of teachers' professional competence can be achieved through the development of learning communities that not only support pedagogical collaboration but also promote inclusive practices. For instance, learning communities can serve as platforms for teachers to share strategies related to Universal Design for Learning (UDL), assistive technologies, and differentiated instruction to support students with disabilities. Such communities can also facilitate peer-led discussions on inclusive pedagogies and attitudes toward inclusion, making them powerful tools for promoting equity in the classroom. In

terms of policy implications, education authorities should leverage learning communities as a formal part of professional development programs to enhance teachers' readiness for inclusive education. Schools can institutionalize collaborative reflection practices, encourage inclusive lesson planning, and provide training hours specifically dedicated to special education and inclusive strategies. Moreover, Achievement Motivation should be considered in teacher performance frameworks, with schools creating recognition systems that reward inclusive and innovative teaching practices. Building a supportive school culture that aligns motivation with inclusive educational outcomes is essential in this regard.

However, this study has several limitations. First, it was conducted only in the public primary schools of Candisari District, Semarang City, and thus the results may not be generalizable to other regions with different socio-cultural or institutional characteristics. Second, the use of self-reported questionnaires may lead to social desirability bias, as teachers may overstate their competence or motivation. Third, the study relied solely on quantitative methods without qualitative triangulation, which limits deeper insights into the contextual factors influencing teacher behavior and beliefs. Future research could expand the scope by incorporating additional influencing factors such as school leadership, inclusive school culture, or teachers' socio-economic conditions. It would also be beneficial to conduct qualitative studies exploring the lived experiences of teachers, particularly in low-performing or inclusive schools, to better understand the barriers and motivations influencing their professional competence. Further studies might also explore specific variables such as "attitudes toward inclusion," "inclusive training hours," or "access to special education resources" to provide more targeted recommendations for inclusive education policies and practices.

In conclusion, enhancing professional competence among teachers requires both systemic support and individual motivation. Learning communities, if well-designed and inclusive in nature, can become transformative spaces that not only raise teaching quality but also ensure all students, regardless of ability, have equitable opportunities to learn and succeed.

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