

The Professionalism of Educators in Kindergarten Education Management: A Literature Review

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Article Information

Article History

Received, December 8, 2025

Revised, December 23, 2025

Accepted, December 24, 2025

Published, December 26, 2025

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ABSTRACT

The professionalism of educators in the management of kindergarten education is a fundamental factor in guaranteeing the quality of early childhood education services. This study aims to analyze the concepts, dimensions, and challenges of kindergarten teacher professionalism through a literature review of relevant national and international journals, books, and research reports. The findings of the review indicate that the professionalism of kindergarten teachers is proven to be highly determinant of the quality of early childhood learning and is influenced by pedagogical competence, academic supervision, and school principal management. Suboptimal supervision and weak evaluation of training are the main obstacles to improving teacher performance. Competence development is proven to have a positive impact, but it is not yet evenly distributed due to limitations in facilities, experience, and access to learning. Furthermore, internal and external factors such as motivation, administrative burden, and working conditions significantly affect the teachers' sustained professionalism.

Keywords: Teacher, Management, Education, Professionalism, Kindergarten.

1) INTRODUCTION

Education is a long-term investment in developing the quality of a nation's human resources (Arifin, 2023; Daulay et al., 2024; Muhandi, 2004). As a long-term investment, education not only improves individual knowledge and skills but also fosters values, ethics, and national competitiveness (Kurniawan, 2020; Sanga & Wangdra, 2023). Through quality education, a nation can create a productive, innovative, and adaptive generation to global change, thus strengthening the foundation for sustainable economic, social, and cultural development.

Early childhood education, particularly at the kindergarten (TK) level, plays a strategic role in establishing the foundation for children's physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development (Harianja et al., 2023; Kalsum et al., 2023). Early childhood is known as *the golden age*, a period that significantly determines the success of individual development in subsequent stages (Bonita et al., 2022; Setiowati, 2021). Therefore, education management at the kindergarten level must be carried out optimally, systematically, and professionally.

Educators, or teachers, are the primary actors in the educational process (Etisnawati, 2020; Mulyanti, 2024). Teacher professionalism is a crucial prerequisite for achieving a quality learning process (Risdiyanti, 2021). Professional teachers not only master the teaching material but also possess the competence to design learning that is appropriate to student characteristics, implement learning creatively, and conduct ongoing evaluation (Rosni, 2021).

At the kindergarten level, the role of teachers is even more complex because they must be able to integrate aspects of play, learning, and character building in a single learning unit (Fitria et al., 2024; Mahmuda, 2024; Yulianti et al., 2023). At the kindergarten level, teachers act as primary facilitators in forming the foundation for holistic child development (Hidupi et al., 2024; Zhianta et al., 2024). The complexity of the teacher's role at the kindergarten level lies in their ability to combine elements of play as a fun learning tool with a meaningful learning process oriented towards character development (Masrokhah, 2022; Parwoto et al., 2024). Through a thematic and interactive approach, teachers are expected to stimulate children's cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects in a balanced manner. Furthermore, teachers also serve as role models in instilling moral values, discipline, empathy, and cooperation (Harahap & Savitri, 2022; Rahmawati & Jamilah, 2024). Therefore, the success of kindergarten education is not only measured by academic achievement, but also by the development of independent, self-confident, and noble personalities in children (Mildasari & Susanti, 2025). However, various studies indicate that the professionalism of kindergarten educators still faces several challenges (Supratiwi, 2024; Yasin, 2022). There are still kindergarten teachers who do not meet the academic qualifications according to standards, minimal ongoing training, low welfare, and limitations in the use of learning technology (Ananda et al., 2025; Ita, 2020; Yuliariatiningsih & Setiaty, 2012). These conditions have the potential to impact the quality of educational management in kindergarten units, both in terms of planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning. On the other hand, changes in education policy, increasingly dynamic curriculum demands, and advances in information technology require kindergarten teachers to continuously improve their competencies (Suryani et al., 2024; Uzliah & Suryana, 2022). Professionalism is no longer understood as a mere status, but as a continuous process of self-development (Notanubun, 2019).

However, numerous studies have found that teachers' failure to integrate play and character building into kindergarten learning stems from the complexity of their roles, which are not matched by adequate academic qualifications and well-being. Teachers with educational backgrounds that do not meet standards tend to have limited understanding of early childhood education (PAUD) pedagogy, particularly in designing meaningful and character-oriented educational games. Poor well-being also impacts teachers' motivation, focus, and opportunities to participate in ongoing professional training. This condition often leads to routine, administrative-oriented, and less reflective learning practices. Consequently, the potential of play as a strategic medium for character building has not been optimized systematically and sustainably (Suryani et al., 2024; Uzliah & Suryana, 2022); (Mildasari & Susanti, 2025)...

Therefore, a study of the professionalism of educators in managing education at the kindergarten level is crucial for providing a conceptual overview and recommendations for strengthening early childhood education practices. By examining professionalism, this study identifies structural and individual challenges faced by kindergarten teachers, offering evidence-based strategies to enhance capacity building, policy support, and sustainable professional development to improve the overall quality of early childhood education.

Based on this background, this article aims to comprehensively examine the concept of professionalism of educators, the competence of kindergarten teachers, the role of teachers in educational management, as well as the challenges and strategies for strengthening the professionalism of kindergarten teachers based on the results of a literature review.

2) RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a literature study method with a narrative literature review approach. Data were collected through a review and comparison process of various credible reference sources, such as indexed international journals and relevant e-books. All information obtained was then selected and integrated based on related theories, supporting models, and the author's interpretation of the study's focus, namely the professionalism of educators in Kindergarten Education

Management. This stage allows for a comprehensive and in-depth understanding by integrating various previous research findings.

3) RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

From the results of a review of various literature, 9 journals were found that discuss Kindergarten Education Management, which are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Literature Study related to Kindergarten Education Management.

No	Name (Year). Research Title	Analysis Method	Research result
1	Wisra & Nurhafizah (2019). Teacher Professionalism in Realizing Quality Learning in Kindergarten	Qualitative Descriptive Analysis	Research results indicate that the majority of kindergarten teachers in Solok Regency still demonstrate a low level of professionalism in implementing early childhood education. This condition directly impacts the quality of the learning process, as limited pedagogical competency can hinder the optimization of children's cognitive, social, and emotional development during the golden age.
2	Kuraesin (2020). The Role of Supervisors in Improving Teachers' Professional Skills.	Qualitative Descriptive Analysis	The results of the study indicate that: 1) Supervisors have not been optimal in improving the professional abilities of kindergarten teachers because supervisors have not been optimal in observing, organizing, controlling and evaluating teachers in the learning process. 2) There are obstacles for supervisors in improving the professional abilities of kindergarten teachers due to the lack of active roles from principals and teachers in participating in supervisory activities carried out by supervisors. 3) There are efforts to overcome obstacles for supervisors in improving the professional abilities of teachers. This is done by increasing the active role of principals and teachers in participating in supervisory activities carried out by supervisors in improving problems faced by teachers.
3	Pupíková et al. (2021). How Kindergarten Teachers Assess Their Own Professional Competencies	Quantitative Descriptive Analysis	This study demonstrates the need to create in-service courses for kindergarten teachers to deepen their 'diagnostic knowledge' and thus ensure the sustainability of the quality of preschool education for children. Teachers' self-assessments of their own teaching competencies align with their educational needs, supporting the relevance of the findings regarding the continuing education needs of kindergarten teachers.
4	Maemunah et al. (2021). Principals' academic supervision management in improving the personality competencies of kindergarten teachers.	Descriptive qualitative analysis.	Based on the research results, it was concluded that: (a) The planning function has not been fully implemented, (b) The implementation of supervision is in accordance with the theory of implementation of supervision, (c) The principal carries out supervision without conducting evaluation, and (d) The supporting factor for academic supervision is the existence of adequate resources. academic supervision is the limited understanding of the principal about the importance of academic supervision management.
5	Marzuki et al. (2022). Management of Kindergarten Teacher Professional Development.	Descriptive qualitative analysis.	The results of the study show that the principal's management in developing the teacher profession has been implemented well, where the principal directs the teachers to take part in basic training on early childhood learning which is held once a year.
6	Karmila & Eliza (2022). Developing Teacher Professionalism Through	Quantitative Descriptive	Based on the results of research on teacher professional development through improving professional and pedagogical competencies, namely: First, there is an increase in pedagogical abilities, the ability to design learning, the ability

No	Name (Year). Research Title	Analysis Method	Research result
	Improving Professional and Pedagogical Competence at Pratiwi III Kindergarten, Ladang Panjang	Analysis (Case Study)	to understand students, the ability to assess processes and results, the ability to carry out the learning process, and the ability to develop student potential. Second, the increase in professional abilities can be described as the ability to master the field of study according to the teacher's educational background based on academic qualifications and teaching teachers according to their expertise and majors, as well as having the ability and understanding of students, the ability to master educational learning through the ability to understand the type of subject, organize learning materials, and utilize learning resources.
7	Wulandari et al. (2024). Teacher professionalism development in kindergarten in Banjarmasin.	Qualitative Descriptive Analysis	The results of the study show that the principal's management in developing the teacher profession has been implemented well, where the principal directs the teachers to take part in basic training on early childhood learning which is held once a year.
8	Sari (2024). Professional Competence of Teachers in Managing Early Childhood Classes in Kindertagens	Qualitative descriptive analysis	Research findings indicate that early childhood education teachers' professional competence in classroom management is suboptimal due to limited work experience and personal development. Obstacles to professional competence include student discipline and limited textbook resources. Principals' efforts to address these challenges include developing and mastering their role as teachers, developing instructional materials, developing and implementing lesson plans, and organizing administration.
9	Brinia et al. (2024)	Phenomenological qualitative analysis	The results show that supervisors perceive job satisfaction based on emotional type definitions. This research's innovation lies in its first attempt to qualitatively investigate the internal and external factors that negatively impact the professional satisfaction of small kindergarten principals in an island region during the pandemic.

Source: Secondary Data (2025)

From Table 1, several points and core points of the literature review can be explained, including:

1. **Kindergarten Teacher Professionalism and Learning Quality**
A literature review shows that kindergarten teacher professionalism remains a major challenge in improving the quality of learning. Teacher professionalism is strongly influenced by educational background, work experience, and access to ongoing training as part of the capacity development of early childhood educators.
2. **The Role of Supervision in Improving Teacher Competence**
Academic supervision has been proven to play a crucial role in improving kindergarten teacher competency, but its implementation has been suboptimal. The main obstacles stem from the weak role of supervisors, limited understanding of supervision by principals, and low teacher participation. Effective supervision should encompass planning, implementation, evaluation, and ongoing follow-up.
3. **Principal Management in Teacher Professional Development**
Studies show that principals play a strategic role in teacher professional development through training planning, coaching, and facilitating competency development. Targeted training planning helps teachers develop competencies tailored to classroom learning needs. Ongoing coaching also encourages teachers to reflect on and improve their performance.
4. **Development of Pedagogical and Professional Competence of Kindergarten Teachers**

Literature shows that improving pedagogical and professional competencies directly impacts the quality of learning. Teachers experience improvements in planning, implementation, assessment, and mastery of teaching materials. Professional competency is also reflected in the appropriateness of educational background to the field of study. However, limited facilities and experience remain significant obstacles.

5. Internal and External Factors Influencing Teacher Professionalism

Internal factors such as motivation, job satisfaction, and teacher experience significantly influence professionalism. External factors include supervision, school policies, learning facilities, and working conditions, including the pandemic. The literature reviewed found that administrative pressures and limited resources negatively impact kindergarten teachers' performance and professional satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

Kindergarten Teacher Professionalism and Learning Quality

Studies by Kuraesin (2020) and Wisra & Nurhafizah (2019) show that the professionalism of kindergarten teachers remains a fundamental issue in improving the quality of early childhood education. Low pedagogical competence, mastery of learning strategies, and limited understanding of child development directly impact the quality of the teaching and learning process. Teachers are not yet fully capable of integrating cognitive, social, emotional, and moral aspects in a balanced manner.

Studies by Karmila & Eliza (2022) and Pupíková et al. (2021) emphasize that professionalism is determined not only by academic qualifications but also by teaching experience, work motivation, and opportunities for personal development. Without the support of ongoing training and a structured coaching system, the professionalism of kindergarten teachers struggles to develop optimally, resulting in the low quality of early childhood education services. A similar sentiment was expressed by Ita (2020), who concluded that the low level of professionalism of the Ade Irma Kindergarten teachers significantly hampers the quality of education provided.

In educational management, these findings indicate that improving the quality of kindergarten learning depends heavily on systematically managing teacher professionalism through ongoing training planning, structured coaching, and strengthening motivation and work experience. Weak management of teacher human resource development will directly impact the low quality of early childhood education services (Ashadi, 2016).

The Role of Supervision in Improving Teacher Competence

Academic supervision plays a strategic role in improving the professional skills of kindergarten teachers, but its implementation still faces various obstacles, as found in research conducted by Marzuki et al. (2022). Supervisors are often suboptimal in conducting learning observations, performance evaluations, and ongoing mentoring. Furthermore, weak coordination between supervisors, principals, and teachers leads to supervision being administrative rather than coaching. Low teacher participation in supervisory activities also weakens the expected impact of improvements. Effective supervision should be based on teacher needs, oriented towards improving the quality of learning, and supplemented with constructive feedback and systematic follow-up.

A similar sentiment was echoed by Melati et al. (2024), who concluded that the principal's supervision significantly impacted teacher enthusiasm at MIN 1 Rejang Lebong. Teachers feel motivated when they feel cared for and supported, and they tend to demonstrate higher levels of commitment and performance in the learning process.

The link to educational management demonstrates that academic supervision is a function of controlling the quality of learning. Weak observation, evaluation, and coordination indicate a suboptimal managerial oversight function, resulting in teacher performance improvements that are not systematic, sustainable, and based on actual learning needs.

Principal Management in Teacher Professional Development

The principal plays a key role in the success of teacher professional development through managerial functions including planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising. Through thorough planning, the principal can accurately map teacher competency needs. Effective organization ensures a clear and collaborative division of tasks. Consistent implementation of development programs encourages continuous improvement in teacher performance. Meanwhile, the supervisory function ensures that each program is running according to its objectives through systematic evaluation and follow-up, thus ensuring more focused and sustainable teacher professional development.

The results of the literature review analysis shown in the study by Wulandari et al. (2024) indicate that the principal has directed teachers to participate in basic PAUD training regularly as an effort to improve competency. However, the evaluation function is still not running optimally so that the results of the training have not been fully measured in improving teacher performance. The principal's limited understanding of supervisory management is also a barrier. This is also explained in the research findings of Sari (2024) and Wahidah et al. (2024) that there are still obstacles in increasing the effectiveness of supervision carried out at SMA Darul Ulum 2 Unggulan Jombang. Therefore, strengthening the managerial capacity of the principal is an important factor so that teacher professional development runs more focused, sustainable, and has a real impact on the quality of learning.

This emphasizes that in educational management, teacher training must be accompanied by measurable performance evaluation and effective supervision. Weak managerial capacity among school principals hinders the systematic, sustainable planning-implementation-evaluation cycle of teacher professional development and directly impacts the quality of learning.

Development of Pedagogical and Professional Competence of Kindergarten Teachers

The development of pedagogical and professional competencies in kindergarten teachers has shown a positive impact on the quality of the learning process. Teachers have improved their ability to design lessons, understand student characteristics, conduct evaluations, and develop children's potential (Karmila & Eliza, 2022; Maemunah et al., 2021). Indicators of improved teacher competence can be seen in their ability to design lessons, demonstrating their increasing understanding of planning based on early childhood developmental needs. Understanding student characteristics helps teachers adapt more appropriate learning strategies, methods, and approaches (Sutomo & Aini, 2024).

On the other hand, professional competence also improves through mastery of teaching materials according to educational background. This is also believed by Sulastri et al. (2020), who concluded that a teacher's educational background significantly impacts the understanding of the teaching materials presented to students. However, this development is uneven due to constraints such as limited work experience, limited learning facilities, and limited access to learning resources. This situation indicates that competency improvement cannot be achieved solely by relying on formal training; it needs to be supported by a learning culture, optimal supervision, collaboration between teachers, and a conducive school environment (Maemunah et al., 2021).

The findings of this study confirm that from the perspective of educational management, improving teacher competency requires planned human resource development management through teacher placement according to their scientific background, providing facilities, strengthening supervision, and creating a collaborative learning culture so that competency improvement takes place evenly and sustainably.

Internal and External Factors Influencing Teacher Professionalism

Kindergarten teacher professionalism is influenced by interrelated internal and external factors. Internal factors include work motivation, professional satisfaction, teaching experience, and commitment to the profession. External factors include the quality of supervision, school policies,

administrative workload, learning facilities, and the work environment, including the pandemic (Kuraesin, 2020).

Research by Brinia et al. (2024) shows that administrative pressure and limited resources are dominant factors that reduce teacher performance and job satisfaction. Excessive administrative pressure diverts teachers' focus from the primary task of teaching to bureaucratic work that consumes time and energy. Limited resources also limit creativity and learning effectiveness. This condition has direct implications for declining teacher performance, motivation, and job satisfaction in the long term. These findings emphasize the importance of effective educational management in controlling administrative burdens and ensuring the availability of learning resources. Good school management must be able to balance bureaucratic and pedagogical aspects to ensure teachers remain focused on learning. Proper resource management will continuously improve teacher performance, motivation, and job satisfaction (Kusumaningrum et al., 2024).

Therefore, improving teacher professionalism must be done comprehensively through improved work systems, policy support, provision of infrastructure, and strengthening teacher welfare and motivation. This is to encourage the strengthening of teachers' role as not only educators but also role models for students and the nation (Basir B et al., 2025).

4) CONCLUSION

The literature review findings indicated that the professionalism of kindergarten (TK) teachers is proven to be highly determinant of the quality of early childhood learning and is influenced by pedagogical competence, academic supervision, and school principal management. Suboptimal supervision and weak evaluation of training are the main obstacles to improving teacher performance. Competence development is shown to have a positive impact, but it is not yet evenly distributed due to limitations in facilities, experience, and access to learning. Furthermore, internal and external factors, such as motivation, administrative burden, and working conditions, significantly affect the teachers' sustained professionalism.

This research contributes to the development of education management by affirming the link between teacher professionalism, academic supervision, and school principal management in improving the quality of kindergarten learning. These findings enrich the managerial perspective on the importance of systematic planning, evaluation, and continuous coaching as strategies for improving the quality of educational human resources.

The recommendations of this study encourage the need for an integrated approach to enhance the professionalism of kindergarten educators through strengthening academic supervision, continuous competency development, and optimizing the role of the school principal. The government and educational institutions are expected to expand access to training, improve facilities, and sustainably enhance teacher welfare.

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