

## The role of German teachers' community as a pioneer in improving teacher competence

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### ABSTRACT

The role of professional communities in improving teacher performance is crucial in this era. One such organization is the German language teachers' community. This research aimed to describe two things: i) The role of the German language teacher community as a pioneer of the teacher community; and ii) The role of teachers as learning leaders in planning, implementing, and evaluating German language learning. The qualitative approach was used in this study. Furthermore, the research subjects were the head of the German language teachers' community and German language teachers in Ambon City, Indonesia as members. Researchers collected data through observation, interviews, and documentation studies and analyzed the data following an interactive analysis model with analysis steps including data reduction, presentation, and verification. The results in this study showed that: i) The German language teacher community generally designs programs to strengthen teacher capacity through workshops, seminars, exchanging experiences, and making learning tools; ii) These programs are carried out according to a mutually agreed schedule by presenting competent resource persons; iii) The German language teacher community assists teachers in planning, implementing, and evaluating German language learning; and iv) As community members and learning leaders, teachers benefit from the above programs to independently practice the material they have learned at school. Implementing this role can be used as a role model for other communities.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers are one of the crucial factors in the overall education system, in addition to other factors [1]. In practice, a teacher's position and job are challenging. The role and work of the teacher require special skills that only some can do because the teacher is an element that deals directly with students [2]. As the main component in education, teachers must balance and even exceed the development of science and technology in society [3]. Through the teacher's touch, the community hopes that the school will produce students who have high competence, are ready to face life's challenges, and are full of confidence and increased self-confidence. Teacher performance is often in the public spotlight [4]. When there is a decline in the quality of education, for example, the graduation percentage in the national exam does not match the community's expectations, or when many graduates are not accepted in higher education or are not absorbed in the world of work. The statement above shows the teacher's very central role in improving the quality of

teaching and must continue to be evaluated and improved. Therefore, teachers, individually and in groups, must continue to enhance their competencies to carry out their duties properly to achieve the expected performance or work performance.

Teachers are professional educators with the main task of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students in early childhood education through formal, primary, and secondary education [5]. Teachers must have the expertise and competencies to carry out their duties and responsibilities properly. As stipulated in the law on teachers and lecturers, competence is a set of knowledge, skills, and behaviours that teachers or lecturers must possess, be internalised, and master in carrying out professional duties. Teacher competencies include academic, professional, social, and personality. The four competencies are related to achieving the expected educational goals. Becoming an experienced teacher is a basic need not usually negotiable [6]. National education standards consist of content, process, competency of graduates, education personnel, infrastructure, management, financing, and education assessment, which must be planned and periodic [7].

Teachers must improve and continuously develop academic qualifications and competencies [8]. The government makes efforts to achieve higher qualifications or levels of education, namely: i) Every teacher is required to meet the nationally applicable academic qualification and competency standards; and ii) Academic qualification standards, and teacher competence [9]. In this regard, an independent and professional teacher development forum is needed to improve academic qualifications and teacher competencies to be programmed and carried out correctly. In connection with this, teachers' communities are a forum for collaboratively gathering teachers of similar subjects in a specific area (district/city) [10]. It is to improve and strengthen teacher competence through various discussions and training to solve multiple problems, enhance and improve learning quality, and continuously improve knowledge [11].

The teachers' community has the following objectives: i) Encouraging teachers to improve their abilities and skills in planning, implementing, and evaluating teaching and learning activities; ii) As a forum for negotiating problems teachers face in carrying out their daily obligations and to find solutions based on the subjects' characteristics, teachers, school conditions, and society; iii) Providing opportunities for teachers to share information and experiences regarding the implementation of the curriculum, as well as to develop science and technology; iv) Providing opportunities for teachers to express their opinions; and v) Building cooperation with other institutions to create a process conducive, practical and fun teaching and learning [12]. Furthermore, the teachers' community has the role of: i) Reformer: tasked with carrying out classroom and learning reforms, especially in creating effective and enjoyable learning following the standard of the Education process; ii) Mediator: teachers community is tasked with developing and improving teacher competence; iii) Supporting agency: teachers' community is responsible for implementing various school innovations in classroom management; iv) Collaborators: teachers' community to collaborate with different related units and relevant professional organizations; v) Teachers' community is in charge of evaluating and developing reform schools in the context of school-based management, school-based quality improvement management, and curriculum implementation; and vi) Clinical and academic supervisors and the teachers' community supervise the assessment and other approaches needed according to the situation and field conditions.

Meanwhile, the teachers' community functions include: i) Preparing long, medium, and short-term programs and arranging the place and schedule of activities regularly; ii) Motivating teachers to play an active role in various activities regularly; iii) Improving the quality of teacher professional competence in planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating learning to improve the quality of education in schools; iv) Developing a supervision service program; v) Developing syllabus and lesson plans; vi) Striving for workshops, symposia, and similar activities; vii) Formulating varied and practical models, media, and learning resources; viii) Actively participate in subject teachers' association at the provincial level; ix) Reporting the results of activities regularly; and x) Initiating the establishment of subject teachers' associations and develop the articles of association and bylaws of teacher communities in districts and cities [13], [14].

The explanation above shows how the virtual teachers' community is a forum for driving the teacher community. The participation of teachers in the teachers' community is so that teachers can have the necessary competencies to carry out their duties to achieve optimal performance levels [15]. Teachers' community activities are helpful and run as expected. Members should be involved in every stage of organizational activities, such as program planning, implementation, and evaluation [16]. The previous research stated that the English language teaching community's (MGMP) role in improving professionalism is planning, implementing, and evaluating the program. The research also produced MGMP's strategy in improving the professionalism of English teachers by conducting training, non-training, certification programs, and educational supervision programs and paying attention to these four important domains, namely teacher needs, MGMP activities, evaluation and feedback, and teacher professional development [17].

Realize the importance of the teachers' community as a vehicle for improving and developing teacher competencies, but in its implementation, it has yet to run well. This situation can be seen from the performance of teachers' community collaborative activities that have yet to run optimally [18]. The management process, which tends to lack the benefits of the teachers' community, impacts institutionally losing the existence of the teachers' community. Previous research explains that the teachers' community organizational structure has not run optimally. A good disposition/attitude is owned by the management and all leaders of the teachers' community in collaborating to optimise the teachers' community program. Organizational resources, namely English teachers in the teachers' community environment of Ciamis Regency, Indonesia need to understand the meaning of teachers' community policies that must be implemented [19]. In addition, the results of other studies state that coaching activities for teachers through MGMP must begin with measuring teacher achievement motivation. Not only that, the methods teachers use should be methods that can increase teacher creativity in designing lessons [10].

The German language teacher community differs from other communities because it cooperates with foreign parties, including the Goethe Institute, a German cultural centre responsible for developing German culture and language abroad. Few studies discuss the realisation of the role of the German teachers' community both as a pioneer for the German language teacher community and teachers as beneficiaries of the programs developed by the teachers' community. In its realisation, this community is assisted by Goethe Institute multipliers. Multipliers in this context are teachers or lecturers selected and fostered by the Goethe Institute further to help the German language teacher community in the area. The German language teacher community's collaboration, discussions, and activities can positively impact student learning achievement [20]. The importance of cooperation between German teachers is to reduce teacher problems in the learning process in the classroom by exchanging ideas and teaching materials and bringing together teachers from different backgrounds [21]. This fact shows that the Goethe Institute supports and facilitates German language learning [22]. In addition, teachers must have the Goethe-Zertifikat B1 language level. Goethe-Zertifikat B1 is a German language test for teenagers and adults. In the European Union Agreement on Levels of Language Competence, which divides languages into a six-level scale, this exam is at the third level (B1) [23]. The Goethe Institute also organizes linguistic tests and requires German teachers in Indonesia to take them according to the German teacher competency exam requirements [24]. To improve the competence of German language teachers, teachers must take advantage of the opportunities the teachers' community offers to positively impact German language learning in Indonesia. However, German teachers also do not design lessons well due to a lack of relevant teaching materials and material substance that is not following the field of expertise [25]. Therefore, good management is needed in designing learning by involving the teachers' community so that they can exchange ideas to improve the quality of German language learning. In addition, it is also caused by the low frequency of teacher participation in individual self-development activities through training activities [26].

On the other hand, as a learning leader (classroom manager), the teacher must create a compelling and conducive learning climate in carrying out the task [27]. Developing an effective and conducive classroom climate with the effectiveness of the learning process is only sometimes done partially. Still, it must be done completely and thoroughly, from planning and implementation to monitoring and evaluation [13]. The implementation of learning is the implementation of the lesson plans, including preliminary, core, and closing activities [28].

One indication is that teachers must show their potential effectively and efficiently. This fact can be seen from the fact that there are still teachers who still need to make a mature and measurable lesson plan contained in lesson plan. In addition, in the teaching and learning process, teachers do not conduct careful and continuous evaluations so that teachers do not find shortcomings in the planning contained in the lesson plan. This situation makes teachers unable to follow-up on the progress of German learning to get improvements. Another problem observed is that teacher discipline still needs to improve. Often late in collecting teaching tools, they ended lessons prematurely and failed to follow-up on the results of learning evaluations that impact performance quality. Based on the problem's background, this research focuses on: i) The role of the teachers' community as a pioneer for the teacher community in planning, implementing, and evaluating German language learning; and ii) The teacher's role as a learning leader.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This was a descriptive qualitative research that produced descriptive data in the form of written words from people who can be observed. The data collected follow the focus of the research, namely: i) The role of the teachers' community as a community pioneer for German language teachers in planning, implementing, and evaluating German language learning; and ii) The role of German language teachers as learning leaders. The data in this study are primary and secondary. The research was conducted in the

German teachers' community in Ambon City, Indonesia. The research subjects as informants were the German teachers' community. Data collection techniques used observation, interviews, and documentation. The data analysis technique used in this study followed an interactive analysis model with analysis steps including data reduction, data presentation, and verification. Figure 1 shows data analysis steps using the Miles and Huberman method [29].

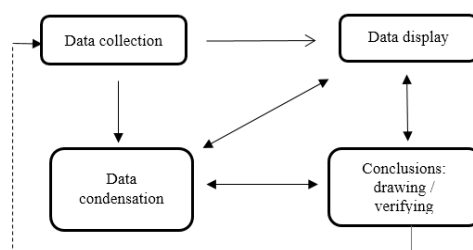


Figure 1. Data analysis steps using the Miles and Huberman method

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. The role of the teachers' community as a pioneer for the German language teacher community in planning, implementing and evaluating German language learning

The teachers' community facilitates subject teachers in increasing the success of their teaching and learning activities, starting from lesson planning, implementation, and evaluation. Figure 2 shows the results of the questionnaire from the teachers' community, among others. The data from Figure 2 reveals that the role of the teachers' community is significant in facilitating subject teachers in increasing the success of their teaching and learning activities. The data analysis results show that 86% of the teachers' community are pioneers of the German language teacher community in designing German language learning. There are 87% of the teachers' community very active as pioneers of the German language teacher community in implementing German language learning, and 87% of the teachers' community are very active as teachers of German in evaluating German language learning.

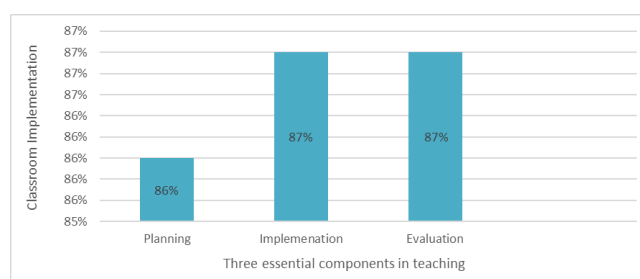


Figure 2. The role of the teachers' community as a pioneer for German language teachers in planning, implementation and evaluation

The method used by the teachers' community as a pioneer for the German language teacher community in planning learning is step-by-step. It starts by determining the time allocation for scheduled meetings related to preparing the annual/semester program, preparing the syllabus, preparing the lesson plans, and designing evaluations. The activity was carried out at the beginning of the school year to equalise perceptions about using uniform learning tools in the teachers' community forum. This action is done to avoid various versions of documents produced by high schools and vocational high schools on German subjects that can be used in the German language teacher community in Ambon City. Learning planning is a component of cognitive competence. The sub-competences of pedagogy that teachers must possess are: i) Mastering various developments and issues in the education system; ii) Mastering creativity development strategies; iii) Mastering the basic principles of learning and learning; iv) Getting to know students in-depth; v) Mastering various learning approaches according to student characteristics; vi) Mastering the principles of curriculum development; vii) Designing strategies for the use of various teaching materials in learning; viii) Designing learning strategies; and ix) Designing information and communication technology or ICT-

based learning strategies [26]. In addition, strengthening digital literacy for German teachers in designing, implementing and evaluating learning is also carried out by the German teacher community through training guided by multipliers to increase the motivation and professional development of German teachers in preparing lessons. This statement is justified by the research results that technical guidance provided to the teacher community has a positive impact on increasing teacher motivation, literacy, and confidence in teaching and learning [30].

Furthermore, another way used by the teacher community as a pioneer for the German language subject teacher community in implementing learning is to provide opportunities for tiered subject teachers to practice knowledge in the form of in on, which can be assessed directly by the teacher community. This fact is done to monitor whether the learning process is in accordance with the design at the beginning of learning. Curriculum changes also impact teacher readiness in planning, implementing and evaluating German language learning, so it is important for the German language teacher community to jointly find solutions to unite perceptions in preparing appropriate teaching materials. For this reason, it is necessary to have criteria that teachers must use in choosing suitable textbooks so that they become a priority in implementing of German language learning [31].

The last method used by the teacher community, as the German language subject teacher community is a pioneer in evaluating learning, is to gather subject teachers. This activity aims to assess the ongoing activity program and report all activities carried out during one semester. If the assessment has weaknesses, it will be followed up by the teacher community, subject teachers, supervisors and principals in the following semester. Evaluating the program that the teacher community has carried out includes what obstacles are experienced in the learning process, the material used by the teacher, the presentation of the material, producing lesson plan products, and the teacher's ability to teach evaluated together [32]. Thus, the evaluation stage through the teacher community program positively impacts teacher competence and professionalism [33].

The analysis above shows that the German language teacher community in Ambon City has carried out its role as a pioneer forum for the German language teacher community because it has gone through the program's planning, implementation, and evaluation stages. The success of the German language teachers is inseparable from the support and role of multipliers as an extension of the Goethe Institut as the organizer in providing German language teaching training to the community of German language teachers in Ambon City. The results of the interview analysis also show the alignment between the programs offered by the German language teacher community to facilitate German language teachers in Ambon City to improve school quality. This situation means teachers can organize effective German language learning to obtain good student learning outcomes. As a result, it dramatically impacts improving teachers' professional competence in designing learning.

### **3.2. The role of the German teacher as a learning leader**

The teachers are a figure with various roles to fulfil, and one of the roles is as leaders [34]. They are the holder of control and wise decision-maker when learning. The success of the learning process certainly depends on the extent to which teachers can plan, implement, and evaluate learning [35]. The following are the analysis results of interviews and observations made with subject teachers, including:

#### **3.2.1. Planning lessons**

To start the teaching and learning process in class, the teacher must have preparation [36]. The preparation of learning begins with the preparation of the annual program, described in the semester program, then proceeds with the preparation of the syllabus, lesson plans, teaching materials, teaching aids, learning methods, and practice evaluation tools. Still, some informants said that the trial before teaching is only done by preparing the lesson plans without paying attention to the previous stages.

The teacher's next step is compiling an annual program by reviewing the education calendar, which includes effective days and holidays in one year/semester. This situation is done to ensure teachers can only design effective learning programs weeks in one semester. In other school conditions, some teachers only make semester programs without making annual programs which are an overall picture of the activities carried out in the current year.

After completing the design and preparation of the annual program and semester program, teachers compile learning tools with several German teacher friends to collaborate and add references in the process of preparing learning tools. Usually, the teachers gather the syllabus and lesson plan based on the draft developed together through the teacher community program. Then the learning tools are adapted according to school needs by referring to the National Education Standards. However, on the other hand, it was found that some teachers only copy from friends and directly apply it in learning German without making adjustments to school conditions, knowledge, skills, language levels and student needs. In this context, the teacher must

act as a learning leader with creativity and innovation in developing learning tools by modifying learning tools [37]. Directly copying someone's work is an act of plagiarism, so it needs a technique teachers can use, namely quoting partially and developing according to needs [38]. In addition, in designing lessons, teachers must be able to use technology well in language learning. With the collaboration between technology and education, it can improve students' language knowledge and students' activeness [39]. For this reason, German language teachers within the teacher community's scope collaborate to design technology-based learning as outlined in the lesson plan. The German teaching materials prepared by the teacher are from textbooks and learning videos on YouTube. YouTube videos are very effective in being used as additional teaching materials for students [40]. The explanation shows that the learning planning process carried out by German language subject teachers is the learning planning step. However, subject teachers still need to implement these steps optimally, especially for teachers whose access is far from the place of the German language teachers' community.

### 3.2.2. Implementing learning

German language learning at school aims to enable students to master the four language skills, namely, listening, reading, writing, speaking, and being able to use them to communicate simple communication. Therefore, teachers are expected to be able to implement the learning that suits the needs of students. Appropriate learning steps are needed in the teaching and learning process. The results of interviews with German language teachers vary greatly.

The average informant explained that they started the learning by giving greetings, prayers, and roll calls. For the introductory stage, they begin by providing motivation and apperception. In the core activities, the presentation of learning materials follows the steps of the teaching and learning process, such as (exploration, elaboration, and confirmation), while for closing activities, it is done by summarising the material taught, evaluation, reflection, and follow-up. Some informants explained that they could carry out learning independently.

The answers above show that most teachers have followed the stages of implementing learning well because they include the pre-teaching, teaching, and post-teaching steps. These stages have been well organized following the sequence so that teachers can easily carry out learning. However, in practice, some teachers still need to follow these stages properly because they cannot manage time properly, so the goals to be achieved in the learning process still need to be fulfilled. The implementation of learning activities is an effort made by the teacher. This effort aims to realize the design prepared in the syllabus and follow the lesson plan.

The implementation of learning is carried out through three stages (initial, core, and closing) [41]. The initial stage includes apperception by the teacher, seeing students' physical and psychological conditions, conveying learning objectives, and warming up. At the core stage, the teacher gives instructions to students according to the learning methods used and the material to be delivered, and the closing includes evaluating the course of the learning process, providing assignments and motivation to students as well as cooling down during the implementation of learning activities carried out by a teacher.

In line with the analysis above, any teaching organizes and structures students' learning processes. When thinking about dividing lessons into phases (instructional phases), teachers have in the background the desire to support this learning process as much as possible. Of course, behind all phase models are didactic concepts of how foreign languages are (should be) learned. The urge to divide lessons into sequences or phases, i.e., into clearly delimited learning steps, is also a reaction to the fact that especially young learners' attention span decreases after a specific time and that a sense of achievement is necessary to maintain motivation. In school pedagogy, this is also referred to as the rhythm nation of lessons: phases of concentration alternate with phases of relaxation so that the student's attention and willingness to perform remain permanently high. Hilbert Meyer also describes three primary stages of instruction: i) Introduction like opening, orientation, motivation, and possibly elaboration; ii) Work phases like elaboration, concretization, application, practice, and transfer; and iii) Securing results like learning control, documentation, presentation, and reflection [42]. Thus, teachers must appropriately apply the stages in German teaching and learning processes in the classroom to achieve the desired learning objectives.

### 3.2.3. Learning evaluation

After the teacher carries out the teaching and learning process, then to find out the ability of students to master the material taught, a teacher conducts an assessment. Evaluation or review of education is held to collect evidence or information and data about the results of achieving goals. This situation is pursued through educational activities or programs. Teaching evaluation relates to teaching objectives achieved through teaching and learning activities by teachers and students in the classroom [43]. This study found various steps teachers use in the learning evaluation process.

The average informant said that the implementation of the learning evaluation began with the evaluation phase, namely needs analysis, determining assessment objectives, identifying competencies and learning outcomes, compiling grids, developing draft instruments, testing and analyzing questions, revising and assembling questions. Teachers assess one semester's learning according to the education calendar's plan. Usually, teachers conduct formative evaluations after some essential competencies or after some topics or subjects have been presented. Conversely, teachers conduct summative assessments at the end of the semester after all the subject matter has been taught to students. Some informants said that learning evaluation began by testing student learning outcomes.

The answer above explains that the learning evaluation has met the criteria because it follows the evaluation stages. Even so, in its implementation, informants still need to implement the evaluation stages fully. As a result, understanding the steps in learning evaluation has yet to be fully mastered. The evaluation component is intended to assess the achievement of predetermined goals. The results of the evaluation activities can be used as feedback to improve learning activities related to the materials used, media selection, approaches, and learning methods. In connection with the above, teachers can implement three important implications, namely: i) Evaluation is a continuous process not only at the end of learning but starting before the implementation of learning until the end of learning; ii) The evaluation process is always directed to specific goals, to obtain answers about improving learning; and iii) Evaluation requires using accurate and meaningful measuring tools to gather the information needed to make decisions [44]. Thus, teachers must have specific innovations in learning evaluations because assessment is a benchmark used to measure the success of a lesson [45].

The success of the teachers' community as a pioneer can be seen in the seriousness of the teacher in carrying out his duties, both in learning planning, implementation, evaluation, and following up on the evaluation results. This finding can indicate that the German language teachers community can mobilize and facilitate German language teachers. To carry out their primary tasks to grow teacher enthusiasm to improve abilities and skills in preparing, implementing, and evaluating teaching and learning activities programs in an attitude of trust. As teachers, equalize the abilities and skills of teachers in charge of conducting classroom and learning reforms, especially in carrying out teaching and learning activities to support efforts to increase the distribution of quality education. Discuss problems teachers face in daily tasks and find appropriate solutions with the characteristics of subjects, teachers, school conditions, and the environment. Share information and experiences to adjust the development of science and technology. In this context, teachers benefit from every program of activities designed and carried out by the teachers' community. Therefore, the government must continue to support it through broader cooperation with other agencies.

Based on the results of the analysis of three critical points, namely planning, implementation and evaluation of German language learning described above, the teacher as a learning leader must be able to play a role in various situations: i) Make decisions based on the principles of learning leaders; ii) Realize and use moral principles in making decisions; and iii) Apply strategies in designing, implementing, and evaluating learning well to avoid problems with the school leadership code of ethics and conflicts of interest. In addition, there needs to support from various education stakeholders to facilitate German language teachers in teacher community activities so that they can continue to compete in the world of education and not be left behind with important information. The involvement of multipliers in the German teacher community to guide the teachers also resulted in good progress. Thus, the German language teachers' community in Ambon City has succeeded in carrying out its duties as a pioneer to facilitate teachers in the learning process by planning, implementing, evaluating and following up on the evaluation results.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Based on the research, processing, and data analysis results, the authors can conclude: i) Generally, the German language teacher community leaders design programs to strengthen teachers' capacity through workshops, seminars, exchanging experiences, and making learning tools; ii) These programs are implemented according to a mutually agreed schedule by presenting competent resource persons; iii) German language teacher community leaders assist teachers in planning, implementing and evaluating German language learning; and iv) Teachers as community members and learning leaders benefit from the above programs so that they can independently practice the material learned in their schools. Implementing this role can be used as a role model for other communities.

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