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Reflective Mentoring Model in Improving Teachers' Pedagogical Competence (A Case Study of Raudhatul Athfal Learning in the Implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum)

Ifa Fachiriyah[1]
[1]Doctoral Program in Education Universitas Islam Nusantara, Bandung, Indonesia
Suharyanto H Soro[2]
[2]Doctoral Program in Education Universitas Islam Nusantara, Bandung, Indonesia
Ayi Najmul Hidayat[3]
[3]Doctoral Program in Education Universitas Islam Nusantara, Bandung, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: fachriyah50@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines a reflective mentoring model for improving the pedagogical competence of Raudhatul Athfal teachers in implementing the Love-Based Curriculum. The research focuses on how reflective mentoring assists teachers in understanding learner characteristics, designing meaningful learning activities, conducting humane classroom practices, and evaluating children's development in a more systematic manner. This study uses a qualitative case study approach conducted at RA Al Nusantara and RA Mansyaatul Islamiyah in East Jakarta. Data were collected through classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, documentation, and teachers' reflective notes. The data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that reflective mentoring strengthens teachers' pedagogical competence by creating structured opportunities for self-evaluation, dialogic feedback, and continuous improvement. In the context of the Love-Based Curriculum, this model is relevant because it helps teachers translate the values of love, empathy, respect, care, and responsibility into everyday classroom interaction, learning design, classroom management, and assessment. Reflective mentoring can therefore be positioned as an adaptive, collaborative, and contextual professional development strategy for improving the quality of Islamic early childhood education.

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Keywords: Love-Based Curriculum; pedagogical competence; Raudhatul Athfal teachers; reflective mentoring.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are a strategic element in the educational process, as the quality of learning is fundamentally shaped by their competence. In the context of Islamic Early Childhood Education (ECE), particularly in Raudhatul Athfal, teachers are responsible not only for delivering academic content but also for supporting students' cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual development. This multifaceted role requires a solid foundation of pedagogical competence to ensure the creation of meaningful, child-friendly learning environments that align with the developmental stages of students. Pedagogical competence is defined as the ability to understand student characteristics, design appropriate learning activities, foster student potential, and assess learning outcomes effectively. These competencies cannot be fully developed through one-way training but require an ongoing, dialogic process of professional development. Reflective mentoring plays a crucial role in this continuous process, enabling teachers to engage critically with their teaching practices and adapt them for improved educational outcomes (Pemerintah Republik Indonesia, 2005; Schön, 1983; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Reflective mentoring encourages teachers to reflect on their teaching methods, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and adjust their approaches based on feedback. Rather than treating teachers as passive recipients of evaluation, this method involves them as active participants in their own professional development. In the context of Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta (Love-Based Curriculum), which emphasizes values such as love, empathy, respect, and social responsibility, reflective mentoring helps teachers incorporate these principles into their everyday practices, including classroom interactions, activity design, class management, and student evaluations. The Love-Based Curriculum requires that these values not only be taught but also integrated into the fabric of the classroom environment to foster holistic student development (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2025; Kusumaningrum, 2020; Jamilah, 2019). By engaging in reflective practices, teachers are better equipped to translate these values into concrete actions that support both the academic and character development of their students (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2025; Kusumaningrum, 2020; Ningsih, 2018).

Research into teacher professional development has shown that reflective mentoring can significantly enhance pedagogical competence by helping educators bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in the classroom. Reflective mentoring allows

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teachers to assess their instructional practices, make adjustments as necessary, and develop more effective teaching strategies over time. Through continuous reflection, teachers can align their teaching with the values of Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta, creating a learning environment that is both academically rigorous and emotionally supportive for students. As such, reflective mentoring becomes an essential strategy for improving the overall quality of teaching and learning, particularly in early childhood education settings where values-based teaching is critical (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Miles et al., 2014; Schön, 1983; Sugiyono, 2022; Wilson et al., 2019).

This research aims to explore how reflective mentoring can improve teachers' pedagogical competence in implementing Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta in Raudhatul Athfal institutions. The study will examine how reflective mentoring practices can be integrated into teacher development programs, with a focus on enhancing both the teaching methods and the value-driven approach of early childhood education. The research will explore how this process strengthens teachers' ability to integrate love-based values into their pedagogical practices and how it can improve student engagement and outcomes.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

How is reflective mentoring implemented to improve teachers' pedagogical competence in the context of Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta in Raudhatul Athfal? What specific aspects of pedagogical competence can be enhanced through reflective mentoring? What factors facilitate or hinder the implementation of reflective mentoring in Raudhatul Athfal institutions?

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are to investigate the implementation of reflective mentoring in improving teachers' pedagogical competence within Raudhatul Athfal, specifically regarding the application of Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta. Additionally, the study aims to identify the specific aspects of pedagogical competence that can be enhanced through reflective mentoring and to analyze the factors that support or hinder the effective implementation of reflective mentoring in Raudhatul Athfal institutions.

Contribution of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to contribute significantly to the field of teacher professional development, particularly in Islamic early childhood education. By examining the

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impact of reflective mentoring, the study will provide insights into how teachers' pedagogical competencies can be improved in alignment with the Love-Based Curriculum. This research will offer practical recommendations for designing more effective teacher development programs, with a focus on integrating reflective mentoring as a core component. Furthermore, the study will highlight the potential of reflective mentoring to enhance the teaching practices of Raudhatul Athfal teachers, ensuring that they are better equipped to foster both academic and moral development in their students, thereby supporting the broader goals of Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta.

METHOD

Approach and Type of Research

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because the study seeks to understand the process, meaning, and dynamics of reflective mentoring in a real educational context. This choice is consistent with the nature of qualitative research, which emphasizes natural settings, meaning, and contextual interpretation (Moleong, 2017; Sugiyono, 2022). The case study design was selected because the research focuses on a specific case examined in depth within Raudhatul Athfal institutions.

Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted at RA Al Nusantara and RA Mansyaatul Islamiyah in East Jakarta. The research participants included the heads of the Raudhatul Athfal institutions, classroom teachers, and other relevant parties involved in the implementation of reflective mentoring. Participants were selected purposively because they possessed information related to the focus of the study.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and reflective notes. Observation was used to examine classroom practice and mentoring activities. Interviews were conducted to explore participants' views, experiences, and perceptions. Documentation was used to examine lesson plans, activity records, photographs, and supporting institutional documents. Reflective notes were used to capture the development of teachers' thinking during the mentoring process.

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Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted interactively through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and focusing the data according to the research objectives. Data display was carried out in the form of systematic narrative descriptions. Conclusions were drawn after consistent patterns, relationships, and meanings emerged from the collected data. This analytical logic follows the interactive model of qualitative data analysis developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014).

Trustworthiness of Data

The trustworthiness of the data was strengthened through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and confirmation of interview results with informants. These procedures were applied to ensure that the findings were credible and able to represent the researched context accurately, as commonly emphasized in qualitative research procedures (Moleong, 2017; Sugiyono, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General Description of the Research Sites

RA Al Nusantara and RA Mansyaatul Islamiyah are Islamic early childhood education institutions that provide learning services for young children by emphasizing religious values, character formation, social-emotional development, and cognitive growth. In this study, both institutions served as practical contexts for examining how the Love-Based Curriculum is understood and implemented, as well as how teachers are mentored to strengthen their pedagogical competence.

Overall, learning conditions in both institutions show that teachers have a commitment to creating a conducive learning atmosphere. Nevertheless, the implementation of love-based values still requires more systematic strengthening, particularly in lesson planning, learning method variation, classroom management, and developmental assessment.

Implementation of Reflective Mentoring

Reflective mentoring was implemented through several stages: identifying teachers' needs, observing classroom practice, conducting reflective dialogue, providing feedback, and planning follow-up actions. In the initial stage, teachers were invited to identify recurring learning problems, such as difficulty linking daily activities with the values of the Love-Based Curriculum.

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The next stage was classroom observation. Through observation, mentors obtained direct information about teacher-child interaction, learning strategies, and assessment patterns. After observation, teachers and mentors engaged in reflective dialogue to discuss the findings. This dialogue functioned as a reflective space that enabled teachers to view their teaching practices more objectively and critically.

Based on the reflective process, teachers then prepared follow-up actions. These included revising lesson plans, strengthening empathetic communication, using more meaningful play-based activities, and adjusting the forms of child development assessment. Thus, reflective mentoring did not stop at evaluation; it moved toward concrete improvement in classroom practice.

Improvement of Teachers' Pedagogical Competence

The analysis shows that the reflective mentoring model contributes positively to strengthening teachers' pedagogical competence. First, it improves teachers' ability to understand learner characteristics. Teachers became more sensitive to children's needs, interests, and differences in ability, so learning was no longer treated in a uniform manner.

Second, reflective mentoring strengthens teachers' ability to design learning activities. Teachers began to develop activities that were more focused, contextual, and aligned with the values of the Love-Based Curriculum. Learning activities were not only oriented toward completing materials, but also toward strengthening attitudes, positive habits, and healthy social relationships.

Third, improvement appeared in the implementation of learning. Teachers became more aware of the importance of gentle communication, positive reinforcement, and educative classroom problem-solving. This indicates that reflective mentoring helps teachers translate the concept of love into concrete pedagogical action.

Fourth, reflective mentoring improved assessment practices. Teachers were encouraged not only to assess final outcomes, but also to observe children's processes, engagement, behavior, and social-emotional development during activities. This change reflects a more holistic orientation of pedagogical competence.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Several factors supported the implementation of reflective mentoring, including the commitment of institutional heads, teachers' openness to feedback, a collaborative work climate,

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and shared awareness of the importance of child-centered learning. These factors facilitated reflection and follow-up improvement.

The inhibiting factors included limited time, teachers' administrative workload, routine teaching habits, and uneven understanding of the Love-Based Curriculum. These conditions indicate that reflective mentoring requires institutional support so that it can be implemented continuously and does not become a short-term intervention.

DISCUSSION

Conceptually, the findings reinforce the view that teacher competence development is more effective when it is grounded in practice and reflection. Reflective mentoring provides teachers with opportunities to interpret learning experiences rather than merely receive normative instructions. In the context of Raudhatul Athfal, this approach is especially relevant because learning occurs in dynamic situations that require high sensitivity to young children's development.

The relationship between reflective mentoring and the Love-Based Curriculum lies in the internalization of values. The Love-Based Curriculum cannot be implemented only as an institutional slogan. It must be present in behavior, communication, learning strategies, classroom management, and assessment. Reflective mentoring therefore becomes an appropriate strategy for helping teachers transform values into consistent and observable pedagogical practices.

CONCLUSION

The reflective mentoring model is a relevant approach for improving teachers' pedagogical competence in Raudhatul Athfal learning within the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum. This model positions teachers as subjects of professional development who learn through observation, reflection, dialogue, feedback, and follow-up improvement.

Reflective mentoring contributes to strengthening teachers' ability to understand learner characteristics, design contextual learning activities, implement humane learning practices, and evaluate child development comprehensively. In the context of the Love-Based Curriculum, it helps teachers translate the values of love, empathy, respect, and care into daily pedagogical actions.

Therefore, reflective mentoring can be positioned as an adaptive and sustainable teacher development strategy to support the improvement of learning quality in Raudhatul Athfal. For broader application, institutional leaders need to provide regular mentoring schedules, reduce

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unnecessary administrative burdens, and build a collaborative culture that encourages teachers to reflect and improve continuously.

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