

Analysis of the Effectiveness of Teachers' Competencies on the Meaning of Teachers for Grade X Students at SMA Negeri 1 Cilacap

Kusma Setyaningrum¹, Hamdan Tri Atmaja²

^{1,2}Master Program of Social Studies Education, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences. Universitas Negeri Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Kusma Setyaningrum

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20260604>

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the implementation of teacher competencies in social studies learning, examine the role of the school environment in supporting teacher competencies, and identify how Grade X students interpret the role of teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Cilacap. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach using Symbolic Interactionism Theory by Herbert Blumer and Habitus Theory by Pierre Bourdieu as the theoretical framework. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving students, social studies teachers, the principal, and the vice principal for curriculum affairs. The findings reveal that teachers have implemented pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competencies in the learning process, although several aspects still require improvement, particularly in the use of interactive learning methods and educational technology. The school environment significantly supports teacher competency implementation through academic culture, facilities, and social interactions within the school. Students interpret teachers not only as providers of academic material but also as motivators, mentors, role models, and facilitators in the learning process. Positive interactions

between teachers and students contribute to meaningful learning experiences and increased student motivation in social studies learning. The study concludes that teacher competencies significantly influence students' perceptions of teachers and the quality of learning interactions in the classroom.

Keywords: teacher competence, social studies learning, symbolic interactionism, habitus, student perception, school environment

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a central role in developing human resources capable of adapting to rapid social, technological, and cultural transformations. In formal educational institutions, teachers are considered the most influential actors in determining the quality of learning processes and educational outcomes. The success of educational practices is highly dependent on teachers' competencies in designing, implementing, and evaluating learning activities that are responsive to students' needs and social realities. According to Indonesian Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, teachers are required to possess four core competencies: pedagogical competence, professional competence, social

competence, and personality competence. These competencies are essential in creating meaningful, student-centered, and holistic learning experiences.

The development of twenty-first-century education has significantly transformed the expectations placed upon teachers. Teachers are no longer viewed merely as transmitters of knowledge but as facilitators of learning, mediators of social values, and agents of educational transformation. Herlinawati (1) emphasized that effective teachers must integrate critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity into classroom practices to prepare students for contemporary societal challenges. Similarly, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2) highlighted that modern education requires teachers to possess adaptive competencies that enable them to respond to technological advancement and increasingly diverse student characteristics.

In the context of social studies education, teacher competencies become even more important because social studies aim not only to transfer knowledge but also to develop students' social awareness, civic responsibility, tolerance, and critical understanding of social realities. Social studies teachers are expected to connect theoretical concepts with students' daily experiences, encouraging reflective and contextual learning processes (3). Consequently, the effectiveness of teacher competencies directly influences how students perceive learning experiences and interpret the meaning of teachers in their academic and social lives.

Despite the increasing importance of teacher competencies, previous studies indicate that many educational practices still rely heavily on conventional teacher-centered learning approaches. Research conducted by Nurul Laily Al Arsyadh (4) revealed that many teachers experience difficulties in consistently implementing competency-based curricula despite participating in various professional training programs. Other studies also found that limited

interaction, passive classroom participation, and overreliance on lecture-based methods reduce students' engagement and hinder meaningful learning experiences (5).

Initial observations conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Cilacap showed that social studies learning in Grade X classes was still dominated by lectures and written assignments, while opportunities for discussion, collaborative learning, and technology integration remained relatively limited. Students tended to perceive teachers mainly as providers of subject matter and assignments rather than facilitators who guide them in critically understanding social phenomena. This condition demonstrates a gap between the ideal implementation of teacher competencies and students' actual experiences in the classroom.

Students' interpretations of teachers are formed through continuous social interactions occurring in classroom activities. Xiong (6), students who perceive teachers as supportive, competent, and caring demonstrate higher learning motivation, stronger classroom engagement, and more positive attitudes toward school subjects. Similarly, Ni Putu Diana Sari (7) argued that teachers' verbal and non-verbal behaviors function as social symbols interpreted by students in constructing the meaning of teachers. Therefore, understanding students' interpretations of teacher competencies becomes essential in evaluating educational quality and improving teacher-student relationships.

This study focuses on Grade X students because the transition from junior high school to senior high school represents a critical stage in students' academic and social development. At this stage, students begin developing more independent learning attitudes, forming academic identities, and reconstructing their perceptions of teachers as authority figures, mentors, and learning partners. In social studies learning, this transition phase becomes particularly significant because students are expected to develop critical, analytical, and reflective

thinking toward increasingly complex social realities(8).

The present study aims to analyze the implementation of teacher competencies in social studies learning, examine the role of the school environment in supporting teacher competencies, and investigate how students interpret the meaning of teachers in classroom interactions at SMA Negeri 1 Cilacap. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to social studies education research and practically to improving teacher competency development and teacher-student relationships in Indonesian secondary education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher Competence in Social Studies Education

Teacher competence refers to a set of integrated abilities that enable teachers to effectively conduct educational processes and facilitate meaningful student learning. Indonesian educational policy classifies teacher competencies into four dimensions: pedagogical competence, professional competence, social competence, and personality competence (9).

Pedagogical competence involves teachers' abilities to understand students' characteristics, design instructional strategies, implement learning activities, and evaluate learning outcomes. Effective pedagogical competence enables teachers to create active, contextual, and student-centered learning environments (5). In social studies education, pedagogical competence becomes essential because learning activities should encourage students to critically examine social realities and develop civic values (10).

Professional competence refers to mastery of subject content and the ability to continuously develop professional knowledge and instructional practices. Faliki (11) emphasized that professional teachers should integrate contemporary issues, technological resources, and interdisciplinary perspectives into classroom learning. Teachers' professional competence

also influences students' trust and respect toward teachers as credible educational figures.

Social competence concerns teachers' abilities to establish effective interpersonal communication with students, colleagues, parents, and the broader community. Teachers with strong social competence can create supportive learning environments that enhance students' confidence and participation (12). Meanwhile, personality competence involves teachers' integrity, emotional maturity, discipline, and exemplary behavior. Zega (13), personality competence significantly influences students' emotional attachment and respect toward teachers.

Previous research consistently demonstrates the importance of teacher competence in improving educational quality. Annisa Fithri Dwi Jayanti et al. (14) found that contextual teaching approaches implemented by competent social studies teachers improved students' engagement and understanding of social issues. Pratiwi et al. (15) further argued that teacher competence significantly affects students' satisfaction with educational services.

Symbolic Interactionism Theory

This study adopts Herbert Blumer's Symbolic Interactionism Theory as the primary theoretical framework. Blumer (16) argued that individuals act based on meanings derived from social interactions. Meaning does not inherently exist within objects or individuals; instead, it is constructed and interpreted through continuous interaction processes.

In educational settings, teachers' actions, communication styles, gestures, and attitudes function as social symbols interpreted by students. Through repeated classroom interactions, students construct meanings regarding teachers' roles, personalities, and competencies. Zen (17) explained that students' perceptions of teachers are dynamic and continuously reconstructed through daily educational experiences.

Blumer identified three central premises of symbolic interactionism. First, humans act toward things based on the meanings those things hold for them. Second, meanings arise from social interactions. Third, meanings are modified through interpretive processes. In this study, teacher competencies become symbolic representations interpreted by students in shaping the meaning of teachers within social studies learning contexts.

Habitus Theory

Pierre Bourdieu's Habitus Theory provides an additional perspective for understanding how social structures and educational experiences shape students' perceptions and behaviors. Bourdieu (18) defined habitus as a system of dispositions formed through social experiences and reproduced through daily practices.

Within educational environments, teachers possess cultural and social capital that influence students' learning experiences and interpretations. Competent teachers are capable of creating educational practices that shape students' academic dispositions, values, and perceptions. School environments also function as social arenas where interactions between teachers and students continuously reproduce or transform educational meanings.

Bourdieu's perspective is particularly relevant in understanding how teacher competencies and school environments collectively influence students' interpretations of teachers. Teachers who demonstrate inclusive, empathetic, and contextual educational practices contribute to the formation of positive student habitus, increasing students' academic motivation and social awareness.

MATERIALS & METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore teacher competencies and students' interpretations of teachers within natural educational settings. The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Cilacap

involving Grade X students, social studies teachers, the principal, and the vice principal for curriculum affairs as research participants.

Data collection techniques included classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation analysis. Classroom observations focused on teachers' instructional practices, communication patterns, and student participation during social studies learning activities. Interviews were conducted to explore participants' perspectives regarding teacher competencies, school environment conditions, and students' interpretations of teachers.

Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods. The data analysis process involved data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing following Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model.

RESULT

Implementation of Teacher Competencies in Social Studies Learning at SMA Negeri 1 Cilacap

The findings revealed that social studies teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Cilacap had implemented the four major teacher competencies: pedagogical competence, professional competence, social competence, and personality competence. However, the effectiveness of each competency varied depending on classroom interaction patterns, learning methods, and the availability of educational resources.

Pedagogical competence was reflected in teachers' abilities to prepare lesson plans, organize classroom activities, and guide students during learning processes. Teachers generally understood students' academic needs and attempted to deliver learning materials systematically. Nevertheless, classroom learning activities were still largely dominated by lecture methods and written assignments. This instructional pattern limited students' opportunities to actively participate in discussions, express

opinions, and connect social studies materials with their own social experiences. Professional competence was demonstrated through teachers' mastery of social studies content and their abilities to explain concepts related to social realities. Teachers were capable of relating learning materials to contemporary social issues, citizenship values, and community life. However, the integration of technology-based learning media and innovative instructional strategies remained relatively limited. Teachers still tended to rely on conventional learning approaches due to limited facilities and habitual instructional practices.

Social competence appeared in teachers' communication and interpersonal interactions with students. Teachers who demonstrated empathy, openness, and responsiveness were generally perceived positively by students. Classroom observations indicated that teachers attempted to maintain respectful communication and create a supportive learning atmosphere. Positive interactions contributed to students' comfort and willingness to participate during learning activities.

Personality competence was reflected through teachers' discipline, responsibility, integrity, and exemplary behavior within the school environment. Students perceived teachers who consistently demonstrated fairness, patience, and commitment as role models not only in academic contexts but also in social and moral dimensions. These findings indicate that personality competence significantly influenced students' emotional attachment and respect toward teachers.

Overall, the implementation of teacher competencies contributed positively to classroom learning processes. However, the study identified the need for greater emphasis on student-centered learning approaches, interactive teaching strategies, and educational technology integration to improve the effectiveness of social studies learning.

The Role of the School Environment in Supporting Teacher Competency Implementation

The findings showed that the school environment played a significant role in supporting the implementation of teacher competencies at SMA Negeri 1 Cilacap. The school environment consisted of physical, social, and academic dimensions that collectively influenced teacher performance and classroom interaction quality.

From the physical aspect, the availability of classrooms, learning facilities, and educational infrastructure supported teachers in conducting learning activities. Although several technological facilities were available, their utilization in classroom learning remained limited. Teachers still encountered challenges related to access to digital learning media and the optimization of technology integration in social studies instruction.

The social environment within the school contributed positively to teacher-student interactions. Relationships among teachers, students, and school administrators were generally characterized by mutual respect and cooperation. This supportive social atmosphere enabled teachers to demonstrate social competence more effectively and helped create a conducive learning environment. Students felt more comfortable interacting with teachers who showed openness and concern toward their academic and personal needs.

The academic environment also played an important role in supporting teacher competencies. The school promoted academic discipline, learning responsibility, and collaboration among educational stakeholders. Support from school leadership encouraged teachers to carry out instructional responsibilities and maintain educational quality. In addition, collaborative relationships among teachers facilitated the exchange of teaching experiences and instructional strategies.

The findings further indicated that a supportive school environment strengthened

teachers' confidence and motivation in implementing their competencies. Teachers working within positive educational environments tended to demonstrate more adaptive, communicative, and innovative instructional behaviors. Conversely, limitations in facilities and instructional resources could potentially reduce the effectiveness of classroom learning activities.

Therefore, the study concludes that the school environment functions as an important supporting factor influencing the successful implementation of teacher competencies and the quality of teacher-student interactions in social studies learning.

Students' Interpretations of the Meaning of Teachers in Social Studies Learning

The study found that Grade X students at SMA Negeri 1 Cilacap interpreted teachers through various academic, emotional, and social dimensions formed through daily classroom interactions. Students did not merely perceive teachers as providers of subject matter but also as mentors, motivators, facilitators, and role models in their educational experiences.

Academically, students interpreted teachers as important sources of knowledge and guidance in understanding social studies materials. Teachers who explained concepts clearly, connected learning materials with social realities, and encouraged classroom discussions were viewed positively by students. Students considered such teachers more capable of helping them understand complex social phenomena and developing critical thinking skills.

Emotionally, students valued teachers who demonstrated empathy, patience, and personal concern. Teachers who listened to students' difficulties, provided encouragement, and created comfortable classroom environments were perceived as caring and supportive figures. Positive emotional relationships increased students' confidence and learning motivation. Conversely, teachers who relied excessively

on one-way communication and rigid instructional approaches tended to create emotional distance between themselves and students.

Socially, students interpreted teachers as role models whose attitudes and behaviors influenced students' personal development. Teachers who displayed discipline, fairness, politeness, and responsibility were respected by students and considered examples of positive social behavior. These findings indicate that students' interpretations of teachers were shaped not only by instructional competence but also by teachers' everyday interactions and moral conduct within school environments.

The findings also demonstrated that students' interpretations of teachers were dynamic and continuously constructed through repeated social interactions. Teachers who actively involved students in learning activities and fostered communicative classroom relationships were more likely to be interpreted as inspirational and meaningful educational figures.

Overall, the study concludes that students' interpretations of teachers are strongly influenced by the effectiveness of teacher competencies and the quality of teacher-student interactions in classroom learning processes.

DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that teacher competencies significantly influence students' interpretations of teachers in social studies learning. Symbolic interactionism explains that meanings are constructed through repeated social interactions between teachers and students. Teachers' instructional approaches, communication patterns, and attitudes function as symbols interpreted by students in forming perceptions about teachers' roles and significance.

Teachers who demonstrate empathy, responsiveness, and effective communication are more likely to be interpreted as caring and inspirational

figures. Conversely, overly teacher-centered instructional practices may create emotional distance between teachers and students, reducing meaningful classroom engagement. These findings support Gustianto (19) argument that teacher-student relationships are socially constructed through ongoing interaction processes.

From Bourdieu's perspective, teacher competencies represent forms of cultural and social capital shaping students' educational experiences and dispositions. Teachers who integrate contextual and participatory learning approaches contribute to the development of positive student habitus. In social studies education, this process becomes particularly important because learning activities aim to develop critical social awareness, civic responsibility, and democratic values.

The role of school environments also emerged as an important factor influencing teacher competency effectiveness. Positive academic cultures and supportive social environments strengthen teachers' abilities to create meaningful learning experiences.

The study further indicates that students' interpretations of teachers extend beyond academic dimensions. Teachers are perceived as emotional supporters, moral guides, and facilitators of personal growth. These findings are consistent with Quan (20), who found that positive emotional relationships between teachers and students significantly affect learning satisfaction and academic outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teacher competencies at SMA Negeri 1 Cilacap generally reflect pedagogical, professional, social, and personality dimensions, although improvements are still needed in implementing interactive learning methods and educational technology integration.

The school environment plays a significant role in supporting teacher competency implementation through academic culture, social interaction, and educational facilities.

Supportive environments strengthen the effectiveness of teacher-student relationships and contribute to meaningful learning experiences.

Students interpret teachers not only as providers of academic knowledge but also as mentors, motivators, facilitators, and role models who influence their social and personal development. Therefore, improving teacher competencies and creating supportive educational environments are essential for enhancing the quality of social studies education and meaningful classroom interactions.

Declaration by Authors

Acknowledgement: None

Source of Funding: None

Conflict of Interest: No conflicts of interest declared.

REFERENCES

1. Herlinawati H, Marwa M, Ismail N, Liza O, David D, Situmorang B. Heliyon The integration of 21st century skills in the curriculum of education. *Heliyon* [Internet]. 2024;10(15): e35148. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e35148>
2. Sibley L, Fabian A, Plicht C, Pagano L, Ehrhardt N, Wellert L, et al. Adaptive teaching with technology enhances lasting learning. *Learn Instr.* 2025; 99:102141.
3. İlhan İter. Concept-Teaching Practices in Social Studies Classrooms: Teacher Support for Enhancing the Development of Students' Vocabulary. *Educ Sci THEORY Pract.* 2017; 8:1135–64.
4. Laily N, Arsyadhi A, Dewi L, Hernawan AH, Indonesia UP. Evaluation of teacher readiness in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka in elementary schools. *Inov Kurikulum.* 2024;21(2):1149–60.
5. Sholiha SSS. Penanaman Nilai- Nilai Karakter Dalam Pembelajaran Ips Di Smp Negeri 3 Jember. *PROMOSI (Jurnal Pendidik Ekon* [Internet]. 2021;9(1). Available from: <https://doi.org/10.24127/pro.v9i1.3840>
6. Xiong X. Influence of teaching styles of higher education teachers on students 'engagement in learning: The mediating role

- of learning motivation. *Educ Chem Eng*. 2025;51(2):87–102.
7. Sari NPD, Kogoya PS, Wibawa IGSA, Putrayasa IB, Rasna IW SI. Educational Communication and Learning: The Foundation of Effective Interaction in the Teaching and Learning Process. *Bull Pedagog Res*. 2025;5(1).
 8. Sapietro NTR RB. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COGNITIVE LEARNING OUTCOMES IN SOCIAL STUDIES FOR PHASE D OF KURIKULUM MERDEKA (INDONESIA'S MERDEKA CURRICULUM). *SOSIOEDUKASI J Ilm ILMU Pendidik DAN Sos*. 2026;15(1):1250–61.
 9. Abrianto D, Tumiran, Rangkuti C UH. TEACHERS' PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE IN THE LEARNING PROCESS OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT MUHAMMADIYAH 02 PRIVATE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL MEDAN. *Edukasi Islam J Pendidik Islam*. 2024;13(November):889–908.
 10. Junianto R, Ningsih T. THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS IN DEVELOPING DEEP LEARNING-BASED CURRICULUM TO FACE THE CHALLENGES OF THE DIGITAL ERA. *SOSIOEDUKASI J Ilm ILMU Pendidik DAN Sos*. 2026;15(2):420–30.
 11. Faliki AN, Nurkhasanah AT, Soraya E, Muhamad, Chamdani. Meningkatkan Kualitas Guru untuk Menjawab Tantangan Abad 21. *Soc Humanit Educ Stud*. 2025;8(3):48–53.
 12. Wijaya C, Ginting LR, Iswanto J, Nadia M, Rahman AA. Improving the Quality of Education by Developing the Social Competency of Teachers. 2023; 15:3666–74.
 13. Zega F, Sihombing H. The Influence of Teachers' Personality Competence on Students' Character Formation in the Light of Didaktikos: A Case Study at SMK Negeri 2 Tuhemberua. *Didakt Pedagog J Educ Relig [Internet]*. 2025;1(4):171–4. Available from: <https://internationalleiden.com/didaktika-pedagogia/article/download/171/174>
 14. Fithri A, Jayanti D, Afifah SN, Larasati DA, Virgiawan B. The Implementation of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) to Foster Students' Social Attitudes in Social Studies Learning at SMPN 1 Gedangan. 2026;6(1):98–110.
 15. Pratiwi C, Noor I, Rozikin M. The Influence of Education Personnel Competence on Student Satisfaction in Educational Services in Higher Education. 2024; 7:272–84.
 16. Blumer H. Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method. Berkeley: University of California Press; 1969.
 17. Zen S, Ropo E. Heliyon Constructing inclusive teacher identity in a Finnish international teacher education programme: Indonesian teachers' learning and post-graduation experiences. *Heliyon*. 2023;9(6).
 18. Bourdieu P. A social critique of the judgement of taste. Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press; 1984.
 19. Gustianto R, Cangara H, Rahman A. Analysis of Teacher and Student Interaction Patterns During Online Learning at the Covid-19 Pandemic Period at SMP Negeri 3 Anggeraja [Internet]. Vol. 1. Atlantis Press SARL; 2023. 502–510 p. Available from: http://dx.doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-07-7_57
 20. Quan Q, Gao Y, Wang Q. Acta Psychologica the impact of teacher emotional support on students' engagement in AI-mediated English learning environments: The mediating role of resilience and self-efficacy. *Acta Psychol (Amst) [Internet]*. 2025; 260(September):105766. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.105766>
- How to cite this article: Kusma Setyaningrum, Hamdan Tri Atmaja. Analysis of the effectiveness of teachers' competencies on the meaning of teachers for grade X students at SMA Negeri 1 Cilacap. *International Journal of Research and Review*. 2026; 13(6): 29-36. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20260604>
