

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS AND SCHOOL CULTURE IN SHAPING GRADUATE QUALITY AT SDN 006 BATU BELAH

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 20-01-2026

Revised : 07-02-2026

Accepted : 28-03-2026

KEYWORDS

*Graduate quality;
pedagogical
competence;
school culture;
primary education;
qualitative study;*

ABSTRACT

Graduate quality is a key indicator of educational success, especially at the primary level where academic, character, and social development are formed. This study aims to analyze the role of teachers' pedagogical competence and school culture in shaping graduate quality at SDN 006 Batu Belah. A qualitative case study approach was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. The participants included one principal, six teachers, and ten students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, and analyzed using interactive techniques involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that teachers' pedagogical competence significantly enhances student engagement and learning outcomes through effective planning, implementation, and evaluation. School culture, reflected in discipline, character values, and daily habits, also contributes to a conducive learning environment. However, collaboration within the school culture still needs improvement. The study further reveals that the synergy between pedagogical competence and school culture has a stronger impact on graduate quality than either factor alone. Therefore, improving graduate quality requires an integrated approach that strengthens both aspects simultaneously.

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INTRODUCTION

Graduate quality is widely recognized as a key indicator in evaluating the effectiveness and success of an educational institution. In the context of primary education, the concept of graduate quality extends beyond mere academic achievement; it encompasses the holistic development of students, including their character formation, moral values, and social competencies. Elementary schools play a foundational role in shaping students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, making this stage critical for long-term educational outcomes. Therefore, assessing graduate quality requires a multidimensional perspective that integrates intellectual performance with behavioral and interpersonal development.

Teachers hold a central and strategic role in this process, particularly through their pedagogical competence. Pedagogical competence refers to a teacher's ability to design, implement, and evaluate effective learning processes that are responsive to students' needs and characteristics. This includes mastery of curriculum planning, selection of appropriate teaching strategies, classroom management, and the ability to conduct meaningful assessments (Lestari & Mulyadi, 2022). A teacher with strong pedagogical competence is better equipped to create engaging and student-centered learning environments, which in turn foster critical thinking, creativity, and active participation among students. Moreover, effective pedagogical practices contribute not only to academic success but also to the development of students' attitudes, values, and social skills.

In addition to the role of teachers, school culture represents another crucial factor influencing the quality of graduates. School culture can be understood as a system of shared values, norms, beliefs, and practices that shape the behavior and interactions of all members within the school environment. A positive school culture promotes discipline, mutual respect, collaboration, and a sense of responsibility among students and staff. Such an environment creates a supportive and conducive atmosphere for learning, where students feel safe, motivated, and encouraged to achieve their full potential (Hidayat & Nurhayati, 2021). Furthermore, a well-established school culture reinforces character education, enabling students to internalize positive values such as integrity, empathy, and cooperation (Sari & Rahmawati, 2023).

Despite the recognized importance of these factors, various challenges related to graduate quality are still evident in practice. Several studies indicate that teachers' pedagogical competence has not yet reached an optimal level to fully support effective and innovative learning processes (Baskara & Sutarni, 2023). In many cases, teaching practices remain teacher-centered, with limited opportunities for students to engage actively in learning activities. Additionally, the implementation of school culture in some institutions has not been sufficiently strong or consistent to create an environment that fully supports students' holistic development (Wahyuni & Fitriani, 2022). Weak enforcement of school norms, lack of collaboration among stakeholders, and insufficient emphasis on character education are among the contributing factors.

Moreover, previous research highlights that the low quality of graduates is often linked to the lack of integration between teachers' roles and the existing school culture (Rohamah et al., 2025). When pedagogical practices are not aligned with the values and norms promoted within the school environment, the impact on students becomes fragmented and less effective. Although efforts to improve educational quality such as teacher training programs and school culture development initiatives have been implemented in various regions, the outcomes remain inconsistent (Dela & Niron, 2024). This variability suggests that a more comprehensive and integrated approach is needed to understand how these factors interact and contribute to graduate quality.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative approach, which examines the relationship between teachers' pedagogical competence and school culture simultaneously in shaping graduate quality. Unlike previous studies that tend to analyze these variables separately (Putra & Sari, 2021; Ningsih & Saputra, 2022), this research emphasizes their interconnectedness and combined influence within the context of primary education. Furthermore, this study adopts a qualitative approach, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the phenomena based on the lived experiences and perspectives of the research subjects. This approach enables a richer and more contextualized understanding of how educational practices and cultural dynamics operate in real school settings.

In addition, this research incorporates expanded indicators of school culture, including discipline, character values, and collaboration, as key elements influencing graduate quality (Dewi & Hartono, 2021). These indicators provide a more comprehensive framework for analyzing how school culture contributes to both academic and non-academic outcomes. By examining these aspects in conjunction with teachers' pedagogical competence, this study aims to offer a more holistic perspective on improving educational quality.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of teachers and school culture in shaping the quality of graduates at SDN 006 Batu Belah. The scope of the research is limited to teachers' pedagogical competence, which includes planning, implementing, and evaluating learning processes (Fauzi & Rahman, 2022), as well as school culture, which encompasses the values, norms, and habitual practices within the school environment (Fitriani & Ahmad, 2023). Graduate quality in this study is measured through three main aspects: academic achievement, character development,

and students' social skills. By focusing on these dimensions, this research is expected to provide a clear and comprehensive understanding of how teachers and school culture contribute to improving the quality of graduates in primary education.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach is selected because it allows for an in-depth understanding of phenomena within their real-life context, particularly in educational settings where processes, interactions, and meanings play a central role. A qualitative case study is considered appropriate for exploring complex social dynamics, such as the role of teachers and school culture in shaping graduate quality, as it enables the researcher to capture rich, detailed, and contextualized data. Furthermore, this approach aligns with the nature of educational research, which emphasizes understanding processes, experiences, and interpretations rather than merely measuring outcomes (Rahayu & Wibowo, 2023). By focusing on a single case SDN 006 Batu Belah this study seeks to provide a comprehensive and holistic description of how pedagogical practices and cultural elements interact in a specific institutional context.

The subjects of this study consist of the school principal, teachers, and students, who are selected using purposive sampling techniques. This sampling method is chosen to ensure that participants possess relevant knowledge, experience, and involvement in the phenomena being studied. The total number of participants includes one principal, six teachers, and ten students. The principal is included due to their strategic role in shaping school policies and culture, while teachers are selected based on their direct involvement in instructional processes and their pedagogical competence. Students are involved as key recipients of the educational process and as individuals directly influenced by both teaching practices and school culture. The characteristics of the subjects are carefully considered, including teaching experience, educational background, length of service, and level of participation in school activities (Saputra & Nugroho, 2022). This selection ensures that the data collected reflects diverse perspectives and provides a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

The research instruments used in this study include interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation. The interview guidelines are designed to explore participants' perceptions, experiences, and insights regarding teachers' pedagogical competence and the implementation of school culture. Observations are conducted to capture real-time interactions, classroom practices, and behavioral patterns that reflect both pedagogical processes and cultural values within the school environment. Documentation, such as lesson plans, school regulations, and student records, is used to support and validate the findings obtained from interviews and observations. These instruments are developed based on established indicators of pedagogical competence and school culture to ensure alignment with the research objectives. The validity of the instruments is tested through expert judgment, involving specialists in education and qualitative research, while reliability is ensured through data triangulation by comparing information obtained from multiple sources and methods. The research procedure consists of three main stages: preparation, data collection, and data analysis (Kurniawati & Suyanto, 2023). During the preparation stage, the researcher develops instruments and obtains necessary permissions; the data collection stage involves conducting interviews, observations, and documentation; and the analysis stage focuses on interpreting the collected data systematically.

Data analysis in this study uses an interactive analysis technique, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involves selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data obtained from the field to identify key themes and patterns. Data display is conducted by organizing the reduced data into a structured and meaningful format, such as matrices or narrative descriptions, to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions are drawn and continuously verified throughout the research process to ensure their accuracy and credibility. This iterative process allows the researcher to refine findings and maintain consistency between data and interpretations. The analysis is carried out continuously from the beginning of data collection until the final stage of the research, ensuring that the results are valid, reliable, and reflective of the actual conditions in the field (Wulandari & Putri, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Teachers' Pedagogical Competence

The findings of this study indicate that teachers play a crucial role in designing and implementing learning processes that directly influence student engagement and learning outcomes. Teachers with strong pedagogical competence demonstrate the ability to develop structured lesson plans, apply appropriate teaching methods, and adapt instructional strategies based on students' needs and learning characteristics. In classroom observations, it was evident that teachers who actively involved students through interactive discussions, group activities, and contextual learning approaches were more successful in maintaining students' attention and motivation. This reflects that pedagogical competence is not limited to technical teaching skills but also includes the ability to create meaningful learning experiences that foster active participation and deeper understanding.

Furthermore, teachers' ability to evaluate learning outcomes effectively contributes significantly to improving instructional quality. The study found that teachers who utilized diverse assessment methods such as formative assessments, reflective feedback, and performance-based tasks were better able to identify students' strengths and weaknesses. This allowed them to adjust their teaching strategies accordingly, ensuring that learning objectives were achieved. In contrast, teachers who relied solely on traditional assessment methods tended to overlook students' individual learning needs. This highlights the importance of continuous evaluation as part of pedagogical competence, which ultimately supports the development of students' academic and non-academic abilities.

These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Prasetyo and Kurniawan (2020), which states that teachers' competence significantly influences students' learning outcomes. The similarity lies in the recognition that teacher quality serves as a primary determinant of graduate quality. In both studies, it is evident that effective teaching practices contribute not only to improved academic performance but also to the development of critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. This reinforces the idea that investing in teacher development is essential for enhancing educational quality.

In addition, this study expands previous findings by emphasizing the contextual application of pedagogical competence within a specific school environment. It reveals that the effectiveness of teachers' competence is influenced by how well it is integrated into daily classroom practices and aligned with students' needs. Therefore, improving pedagogical competence should not only focus on theoretical knowledge but also on practical implementation, reflective teaching, and continuous professional development. This comprehensive approach is necessary to ensure that teachers can effectively contribute to the overall improvement of graduate quality.

Implementation of School Culture

The implementation of school culture at SDN 006 Batu Belah is reflected in daily practices that emphasize discipline, character values, and habitual positive behaviors among students. The study found that routines such as morning assemblies, punctuality enforcement, and adherence to school rules play a significant role in shaping students' attitudes and behavior. These practices create a structured environment where students learn the importance of responsibility, respect, and self-discipline. Observational data also indicate that teachers consistently model positive behavior, which reinforces the internalization of values among students. This demonstrates that school culture is not only conveyed through formal rules but also through everyday interactions and role modeling.

Moreover, character education is embedded in various school activities, both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers integrate moral values such as honesty, cooperation, and empathy into their teaching, while extracurricular activities provide additional opportunities for students to practice these values in real-life situations. This holistic approach ensures that character development becomes an integral part of the educational process. Students are encouraged to develop not only cognitive skills but also emotional intelligence and social awareness, which are essential components of graduate quality in primary education.

These findings align with the research of Hasanah and Yuliana (2020), which states that school culture plays a significant role in improving educational quality. Both studies highlight that a positive school culture creates a conducive learning environment that supports students' academic achievement and character development. However, this study also identifies a gap in the aspect of collaboration, particularly among teachers and between teachers and students. While discipline and character values are well implemented, collaborative practices such as team teaching, peer learning, and participatory decision-making are not yet fully optimized.

This limitation suggests that strengthening collaboration within the school culture could further enhance its impact on graduate quality. Collaboration encourages shared responsibility, mutual support, and collective problem-solving, which are essential for creating a dynamic and inclusive learning environment. Therefore, schools need to develop strategies that promote collaboration among all stakeholders, including teachers, students, and school leaders. By doing so, school culture can become more comprehensive and effective in supporting students' holistic development.

Synergy Between Teachers and School Culture

The results of this study reveal that the synergy between teachers' pedagogical competence and school culture significantly influences the quality of graduates. When teachers' instructional practices are aligned with the values and norms embedded in the school culture, the learning process becomes more coherent and impactful. For instance, teachers who integrate character education into their lessons reinforce the values promoted by the school, creating consistency between what is taught and what is practiced. This alignment enhances students' understanding and internalization of both academic content and moral values.

In addition, the collaboration between teachers and school management plays a vital role in maintaining this synergy. The study found that regular communication, shared vision, and collective commitment among school stakeholders contribute to the successful implementation of both pedagogical practices and cultural values. Teachers who actively participate in school programs and contribute to the development of school culture tend to be more effective in their teaching. This indicates that the relationship between teachers and school culture is reciprocal, where each element supports and strengthens the other.

These findings are supported by the study of Kurniawan and Saputra (2023), which states that the role of teachers and the school environment mutually reinforce each other in improving educational quality. The similarity between the studies lies in the recognition that neither factor works independently; rather, their interaction creates a more significant impact on student outcomes. This study further emphasizes that the absence of synergy can lead to inconsistencies in educational practices, which may hinder the achievement of optimal graduate quality.

Furthermore, this research highlights the importance of integrating pedagogical competence and school culture into a unified framework. Schools should develop policies and programs that ensure alignment between teaching practices and cultural values. Professional development programs, for example, can be designed to help teachers incorporate school culture into their instructional strategies. By fostering this integration, schools can create a more cohesive educational environment that effectively supports students' academic, social, and emotional development.

Impact on Graduate Quality

The impact of teachers' pedagogical competence and school culture on graduate quality is evident in both academic achievement and character development. The study found that students demonstrated improved learning outcomes, as reflected in their academic performance and ability to understand and apply knowledge. In addition, students exhibited positive behavioral changes, such as increased discipline, responsibility, and cooperation. These findings indicate that graduate quality is not only measured by cognitive achievements but also by the development of attitudes and social skills.

Moreover, the integration of effective teaching practices and a positive school culture contributes to the formation of well-rounded individuals. Students who are exposed to engaging learning environments and strong value systems are more likely to develop confidence, independence, and resilience. These qualities are essential for their future educational and social success. The study also found that students were more motivated to learn and participate in school activities, suggesting that the combined influence of teachers and school culture creates a supportive and inspiring learning environment.

These findings are consistent with the research of Yuliana and Pratama (2021), which shows that school culture influences educational quality. Both studies highlight that a positive environment enhances students' learning experiences and outcomes. However, this study adds a deeper understanding by demonstrating how the interaction between pedagogical competence and school culture amplifies this impact. It shows that the effectiveness of each factor is strengthened when they are implemented together.

In conclusion, the quality of graduates at SDN 006 Batu Belah is shaped by the combined influence of teachers' competence and school culture. This study suggests that improving educational quality requires a holistic approach that addresses both instructional practices and environmental factors. Schools should prioritize teacher development, strengthen school culture, and ensure alignment between the two. By doing so, they can create a sustainable system that supports the continuous improvement of graduate quality in primary education.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teachers' pedagogical competence and school culture play a fundamental and interconnected role in shaping the quality of graduates at SDN 006 Batu Belah. Teachers with strong pedagogical competence are able to design, implement, and evaluate learning effectively, which leads to increased student engagement and improved learning outcomes. Their ability to apply varied teaching strategies, create interactive learning environments, and conduct meaningful assessments contributes not only to students' academic achievement but also to the development of their critical thinking, creativity, and social skills. These findings reinforce the idea that teacher quality remains a central determinant in improving educational outcomes, in line with previous research such as Prasetyo and Kurniawan (2020).

In addition, the implementation of school culture significantly influences students' character formation and overall development. The study shows that discipline, character values, and habitual positive behaviors embedded in daily school activities contribute to creating a conducive learning environment. This supports the findings of Hasanah and Yuliana (2020), which emphasize the importance of school culture in enhancing educational quality. However, this research also identifies that the aspect of collaboration within the school culture still requires improvement, particularly in fostering stronger cooperation among teachers and between teachers and students. Strengthening this aspect is essential to maximize the effectiveness of school culture in supporting holistic student development.

Furthermore, this study highlights that the synergy between teachers' pedagogical competence and school culture produces a more significant impact on graduate quality than either factor alone. When instructional practices are aligned with the values and norms of the school, the learning process becomes more consistent, meaningful, and effective. This finding is supported by Kurniawan and Saputra (2023), who state that teachers and the school environment mutually reinforce each other in improving educational quality. The integration of these two elements creates a cohesive educational ecosystem that supports students' academic, social, and emotional growth simultaneously.

Finally, the overall quality of graduates is reflected in the improvement of academic performance, character development, and social skills among students. This is consistent with the findings of Yuliana and Pratama (2021), which indicate that school culture influences educational quality. This study contributes to the literature by providing an integrative perspective that combines pedagogical competence and school culture as key determinants of graduate quality. Therefore, it is recommended that schools adopt a holistic approach by enhancing teacher competence, strengthening school culture, and ensuring alignment between both aspects. Such efforts are expected to sustainably improve the quality of graduates in primary education.

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