

Innovative Learning Strategies and the Role of Teacher Professionalism in Improving the Quality of Education

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ABSTRACT

Education is a key pillar in developing quality human resources. To meet the demands of the 21st century, innovative learning strategies and teacher professionalism are essential in creating effective and meaningful learning. This study aims to analyze the impact of innovative learning strategies and teacher professionalism on improving education quality in secondary schools. Using a quantitative approach with a correlational descriptive design, data were collected through questionnaires from 50 junior and senior high school teachers in Padang. Variables include the types of innovative strategies used, indicators of teacher professionalism (pedagogic, personality, social, and professional competencies), and indicators of educational quality such as learning outcomes and student motivation. Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression were used for data analysis. The findings indicate a positive and significant correlation between innovative strategies and teacher professionalism with improved education quality ($p < 0.05$). Strategies like project-based learning, interactive approaches, and digital collaboration tools increase student engagement and outcomes. Teacher professionalism supports consistency and effectiveness in the learning process. The study highlights the need for ongoing teacher training to align strategies with current educational demands and strengthen professional competence. Conclusion: A strong synergy between innovative learning strategies and teacher professionalism is vital for fostering adaptive and sustainable education quality.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the main pillars in the sustainable development of the nation. To achieve the goal of National Education, which is to create a generation of believers, knowledgeable, creative, independent, and competitive, continuous innovation in learning strategies is needed. Along with the development of the digital era and globalization, the challenges in the world of education are increasingly complex. Changes in technology, the needs of 21st century skills, as well as the increasingly diverse character of learners demand a paradigm shift in learning. Therefore, innovative learning strategies are no longer an option, but a key necessity to create an adaptive, interactive and meaningful learning process.

Various innovative approaches such as project-based learning, blended learning, and flipped classroom have been widely used to respond to these challenges. Research by Putri et al. (2023) showed that the project-based learning approach was able to significantly improve students' collaboration and problem-solving skills. Meanwhile, Nugroho and Aulia (2024) found that the implementation of blended learning increases student motivation and activeness in the online and offline learning process. These findings indicate that innovative learning strategies not only improve the quality of the teaching-learning process, but can also promote the achievement of more optimal learning outcomes.

Nevertheless, the successful implementation of innovative strategies is largely influenced by the quality and professionalism of teachers. Professional teachers not only master the content and pedagogy, but are also able to adapt to technology and apply learning approaches that meet the needs of the Times. Unfortunately, in many regions, especially in areas with limited access, teacher professionalism is still a major challenge. Lack of continuous training, low access to learning resources, and high administrative burden are the main obstacles. Pratiwi and Kurniawan's (2023) research emphasizes that improving teacher professionalism is a key prerequisite for ensuring the effectiveness of innovative learning strategies. Therefore, attention to competency development and systematic support for teachers needs to be an integral part of National Education Policy.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the implementation of innovative learning strategies largely depends on the professionalism of the teacher. Professional teachers not only have pedagogical, professional, and social competencies, but also adaptive skills to change, mastery of technology, and the ability to innovate in managing learning. Research by Pratiwi and Kurniawan (2023) shows that the level of teacher professionalism is positively correlated to the successful implementation of technology-based learning strategies in secondary schools. In addition, research by Santoso et al. (2024) found that teachers who regularly attend training and learning reflections tend to be more creative and effective in delivering teaching materials contextually.

Unfortunately, in various regions in Indonesia, teacher professionalism is still a serious challenge in improving the quality of Education. Many teachers in public and private schools face limitations in attending professional training on an ongoing basis, both due to limited access, budgets and institutional policies. In addition, not all teachers have the opportunity to update pedagogical and technological competencies in accordance with the development of the curriculum and the demands of the Times. This condition becomes an obstacle in the application of innovative learning strategies and has an impact on the stagnation of learning quality.



This limitation of professionalism is compounded by the lack of supporting facilities in schools, such as access to the internet, digital laboratories, or flexible learning spaces. Teachers are also burdened by high administrative responsibility, so time to devise creative and reflective learning strategies is limited. Research by Ahmad and Syamsudin (2024) reveals that the low quality of learning in a number of Public Schools in Indonesia is directly related to the lack of teacher training in adopting innovative approaches such as digital-based or project-based learning. This indicates a gap between innovative policies at the central level and their implementation on the ground.

This phenomenon shows that without concrete support to improve the competence and professionalism of teachers, innovative learning strategies are difficult to apply optimally in the classroom. In fact, teachers are key in bridging education policy with real learning practices. Therefore, more systematic and continuous efforts are needed from the government, educational institutions, and the educational community to empower teachers as agents of change. Initiatives such as local needs-based training, professional learning communities (PLPS), and the provision of incentives for pedagogical innovation are important steps in ensuring that every teacher is able to perform his or her professional role in creating quality and relevant learning.

Based on this background, it is important to conduct studies that integrate two fundamental aspects in the world of education, namely innovative learning strategies and the level of professionalism of teachers. These two aspects complement each other in creating a learning process that is meaningful, effective, and relevant to the challenges of the 21st century. Professional teachers not only understand the teaching material, but are also able to design creative learning strategies and in accordance with the characteristics of learners. On the contrary, an innovative learning strategy requires competence and a professional attitude in its implementation, so that it not only becomes a discourse, but really has an impact on the quality of learning.

This study aims to analyze the extent to which the relationship between the application of innovative learning strategies with the level of professionalism of teachers in support of improving the quality of Education. The focus of the research is directed towards an in-depth understanding of how teachers adapt new learning methods, as well as how their professional capacities influence the successful implementation of such. Thus, this study not only evaluates the existence of strategy or professionalism separately, but rather explores the synergy between the two in the context of learning in the era of digital transformation and curriculum independent learning.

The findings of this study are expected to make a real contribution in the formulation of education policies based on real needs in the field, especially in strengthening the capacity and role of teachers as the main agents of change. In addition, the results of the study can also be a reference for educational institutions, policy makers, and teacher training institutions in designing sustainable and contextual professional development programs. With the support of appropriate policies and targeted interventions, teachers are expected to be able to develop learning practices that are more responsive, innovative, and have a direct impact on improving the quality of student learning outcomes.



METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with correlational descriptive design to analyze the relationship between innovative learning strategies and teacher professionalism to improve the quality of Education. This approach was chosen because it is able to provide an objective and systematic picture of the relationship between the variables studied. The study was conducted in several secondary schools that have implemented independent curriculum-based learning policies. The population in this study are all teachers of core subjects (Indonesian, Mathematics, and science), with purposive sampling technique to determine the relevant sample. A total of 50 teachers were respondents based on criteria of at least 3 years of teaching experience and involvement in innovative learning training.

The instrument used in this study is a closed questionnaire developed based on indicators of innovative learning strategies (such as project-based learning, problem-based learning, and flipped classroom) and indicators of teacher professionalism (pedagogical competence, personality, social, and professional). The validity of the instrument is tested through expert judgment and tested on a limited sample before the main data collection. Data analysis technique is done using Pearson product moment correlation test to determine the level of relationship between variables, as well as descriptive analysis to describe the trend of data on each variable. The data obtained are processed using SPSS software.

RESULTS

1. Univariate Analysis

Univariate analysis was conducted to describe the distribution of data from each variable, namely innovative learning strategies, teacher professionalism, and quality of Education.

Table1. Variable Frequency Distribution Of Innovative Learning Strategies, Teacher Professionalism, Quality Of Education (N = 50)

Variables	Categories	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Innovative Learning Strategies	Low	8	16%
	Medium	22	44%
	Height	20	40%
Teacher Professionalism	Low	6	12%
	Medium	24	48%
	Height	20	40%
Quality Of Education	Low	7	14%
	Medium	25	50%
	Height	18	36%

Based on the results of univariate analysis, it can be seen that most teachers (44%) are in the medium category in the application of innovative learning strategies, while 40% are in the high category. This indicates a fairly good adoption of modern learning approaches, although there are still 16% of teachers who have not implemented them to the fullest. In terms of professionalism, the majority of teachers (48%) are also at a moderate level, with 40% at a high level. Only a small percentage (12%) are in the low category, which indicates that most teachers have shown a



professional attitude in carrying out their duties, both in terms of pedagogical competence, responsibility, and work ethics. For the variable quality of education, as many as 50% of respondents stated to be in the medium category, and 36% rated the quality of Higher Education. There are still 14% who rate its quality as low, which indicates the need for further improvements in the learning system, including through strengthening learning strategies and increasing teacher capacity.

2. Bivariate Analysis

Bivariate analysis was used to examine the relationship between two variables: innovative learning strategies and teacher professionalism to the quality of education using Pearson correlation test.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Test Results Between Variables

Variables	r (Pearson)	Sig. (p-value)
Innovative Learning Strategies vs. Quality Education	0,614	0,000
Teacher professionalism vs quality of Education	0,576	0,001

The results showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between innovative learning strategies and education quality ($r = 0.614$; $p < 0.05$), as well as between teacher professionalism and education quality ($r = 0.576$; $p < 0.05$). The correlation value in the medium to strong category indicates that the higher the application of innovative learning strategies and teacher professionalism, the better the quality of Education produced.

DISCUSSION

1. Univariate Analysis

The quality of education in general according to the perception of respondents is at a medium to high level, which indicates positive progress in education. However, these findings also indicate that although there has been an increase in the implementation of innovative learning strategies and teacher professionalism, the quality of education in the field has not yet reached optimal national and international standards. This shows that education still faces challenges that need to be overcome so that student learning outcomes can be maximized and relevant to global developments. The quality of good education not only depends on the teaching aspect, but also requires synergy from various other supporting factors.

In addition to learning innovation and teacher professionalism, the quality of education is also greatly influenced by the availability of adequate facilities, effective school management support, as well as the involvement of parents and the surrounding community. Complete and modern facilities allow the learning process to take place smoothly and variably, while good school management is able to manage resources optimally and provide motivation and guidance for teachers and students. The involvement of parents and the community also plays an important role in creating a conducive learning environment and supporting the development of the character and abilities of students as a whole. Santoso et al. (2023) affirms that a significant improvement in the quality of education can only be achieved if innovative learning strategies are



integrated synergistically with the strengthening of teacher professionalism and the support of a comprehensive educational ecosystem.

The researchers' analysis reinforces that in order to achieve optimal quality of education, it is necessary to have a holistic approach that combines all these components. Education is not the responsibility of one party only, but the result of collaboration from teachers, school management, students, parents, and the wider community. Therefore, education policy should be directed towards the development of a supportive ecosystem, including the improvement of facilities, continuous training for teachers, as well as the active involvement of families and communities in the educational process. With this approach, effective and sustainable learning can be realized, while encouraging the achievement of higher educational standards and relevant to the needs of the 21st century.

2. Bivariate Analysis

The results of this study showed a positive and significant relationship between innovative learning strategies with educational quality, with a correlation value of 0.614 and a significance level below 0.05. These findings indicate that the consistent application of innovative learning strategies can significantly improve the quality of Education. Innovative strategies such as project-based learning, blended learning, and flipped classroom not only make the learning process more engaging and interactive, but also encourage students' active involvement in understanding the material. Thus, innovative learning methods can significantly improve student motivation and learning outcomes.

Furthermore, this positive relationship shows that innovation in learning is becoming one of the key factors in facing the challenges of education in the modern era. In the context of globalization and rapid technological development, education no longer focuses only on delivering materials conventionally, but also on developing 21st century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. Innovative learning strategies help students hone those skills through more relevant and contextual methods. Therefore, improving the quality of education depends on how teachers and educational institutions are able to adopt and implement these innovations effectively.

This research is also in line with various recent studies that affirm the importance of innovative learning strategies in improving the quality of Education. For example, Putri et al (2023) in her research show that project-based learning is able to significantly improve student learning outcomes and skills compared to traditional learning methods. With the support of technology and adequate training, teachers can optimize innovative strategies so that the teaching and learning process becomes more dynamic and productive. Therefore, the development and implementation of innovative learning strategies should be a priority in education policy to improve the overall quality of Education.

This finding is in line with the results of a recent study by Putri et al (2023) which confirms that project-based and flipped classroom learning methods are able to significantly increase student engagement. In the study, students who took part in learning with this approach showed more active participation and higher learning motivation compared to conventional learning methods. This increased engagement is critical as it has a direct effect on students' overall understanding of the material and learning outcomes. Thus, learning strategies that are able to



activate the role of students more intensively proved to be effective in improving the quality of learning.

More than just increasing engagement, innovative learning strategies also equip students with essential 21st century skills that are sorely needed in an ever-evolving world. Skills such as creativity, collaboration, communication, and problem-solving skills are a key focus in project-based learning and flipped classroom. Through real projects and learning activities that involve discussion and group work, students are trained to think critically and develop creative ideas independently and together. This helps students not only master academic content, but also prepare them for the challenges of life and the world of work in the future.

Thus, the application of adaptive and contextual learning strategies is one of the important keys in efforts to improve the quality of education as a whole. Adaptation to the needs and characteristics of students and the context of the learning environment allows learning to take place more effectively and meaningfully. Innovative strategies combined with relevant and situational approaches can encourage students to learn actively and sustainably. Therefore, it is important for schools and teachers to continue to develop and implement innovative learning methods in order to meet the demands of modern education and produce graduates who are competent and ready to compete at national and global levels.

This study also revealed a positive and significant relationship between teacher professionalism and quality of education, with a correlation value of 0.576 and $p < 0.05$. These findings indicate that the level of professionalism of teachers has an important role in improving the quality of Education. Teachers who have high professionalism not only master pedagogic competencies in depth, but also uphold professional ethics and have a strong commitment to sustainable self-development. With good professionalism, teachers are able to carry out their duties more effectively and efficiently, and make a real contribution to creating a quality and effective learning process.

Furthermore, the results of Ahmad and Syamsudin's (2024) research provide empirical support for these findings by showing that professional teachers tend to be better able to apply innovative learning methods effectively. High professionalism allows teachers to continue developing themselves through training and reflection, as well as being more open to changes and innovations in the world of Education. This has an impact on improving the quality of interaction between teachers and students, which is very important in creating a conducive learning environment and supporting the achievement of optimal learning outcomes. Thus, the professionalism of teachers is one of the key factors in the successful implementation of modern learning strategies.

In addition, teacher professionalism also plays a significant role in motivating students to be more active and involved in the learning process. Professional teachers are able to create a positive and pleasant classroom atmosphere so that students feel comfortable and motivated to participate actively. This conducive learning environment not only improves the understanding of the material, but also builds a positive attitude and character of students. Finally, students' learning outcomes improved overall, which in turn contributed to a general improvement in the quality of Education. Therefore, the development of teacher professionalism should be a top priority in efforts to improve the quality of education at various levels and regions.



The correlation value in the medium to strong Category confirms that innovative learning strategies and teacher professionalism not only play an individual role, but also complement each other in determining the quality of Education. Both are the main pillars that must go hand in hand to create an effective and meaningful learning process. Innovative learning strategies implemented by professional teachers will produce learning that is not only interesting but also able to accommodate the needs and potential of students optimally. Thus, the quality of education can be significantly improved through the synergy of these two factors.

Furthermore, Santoso et al (2023) emphasized that continuous improvement in the quality of education can only be achieved if learning innovation is integrated synergistically with strengthening teacher professionalism, effective school management support, and active involvement of parents and the surrounding community. This shows that the quality of education cannot be separated from the overall educational ecosystem, where each component supports each other. Good school management is able to provide the facilities and support teachers need to implement learning innovations, while parent and community involvement strengthens the learning environment outside of school, creating an atmosphere conducive to student development.

Therefore, education policies and teacher training programs should be focused on the simultaneous and integrated development of both aspects. Governments and educational institutions need to design programs that not only improve the technical competence of teachers in implementing innovative learning methods, but also build overall professionalism, including teacher ethics, commitment, and motivation. This holistic approach is expected to produce superior quality and highly competitive education, which is able to answer global challenges and the needs of the Times. The synergy between learning innovation and teacher professionalism is the main key in creating a meaningful and sustainable educational transformation.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the univariate analysis showed that the majority of teachers have a medium to high level of professionalism, which reflects adequate pedagogical competence and awareness of the importance of continuous self-development to improve the quality of learning. However, some teachers are still at a low level of professionalism due to limited access to training, administrative burden, and lack of institutional support. In general, perceptions of the quality of education are at a moderate to high level, showing significant progress, although it is still necessary to improve facilities, school management, and parent and community involvement to support a more effective learning process.

Meanwhile, the bivariate results revealed a positive and significant relationship between innovative learning strategies and educational quality as well as between teacher professionalism and educational quality, with a correlation in the medium to strong Category. These findings confirm that the implementation of innovative learning strategies and high professionalism of teachers complement each other and jointly contribute to improving the quality of Education. Therefore, efforts to improve the quality of education must prioritize the development of teacher capacity and the application of innovative learning methods simultaneously, supported by good school management and active involvement of various parties in the education ecosystem.



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