CLASSROOM ACTION RESEARCH AS A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE TEACHER COMPETENCE IN VARIOUS EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AREAS

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Keywords:	ABSTRACTS
Classroom Action Research, teacher competence, educational services, reflection, innovative learning.	This study aims to explore the implementation of Classroom Action Research (CAR) as a professional development strategy for teachers across various areas of educational services at SMP Negeri 21 Kota Bekasi. Using a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design, the research involved teachers as the primary subjects, with school principals and students as supporting data sources. Data were collected through observation, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation, and analyzed using the Miles & Huberman model. The findings indicate that CAR enhances teachers' pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies. Furthermore, it strengthens educational services such as academic instruction, counseling, and classroom management. The study also reveals several structural and cultural challenges, which can be addressed through school management support and a collaborative culture. CAR is proven to be an effective reflective strategy for improving the quality of learning while empowering teachers as facilitators of change in the classroom.

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A. INTRODUCTION

The role of teachers as the central driving force in the education system requires ongoing strengthening of professional competence (Badrun, 2024). In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers are expected not only to master academic content but also to adapt their teaching methods and approaches to suit students' diverse needs. Classroom Action Research (CAR) has emerged as an adaptive approach to meet these challenges, allowing teachers to reflect on and improve their teaching practices directly within the classroom setting (Kurniati et al., 2024).

This study was conducted at SMP Negeri 21 Kota Bekasi, a school that actively encourages its teachers to engage in CAR as part of efforts to improve the quality of educational services. Within the broader educational framework, teacher competence is one of the key factors that determine the quality of instruction and student learning outcomes. As the educational landscape grows increasingly complex, teachers are expected to possess not only subject-matter expertise but also the ability to manage classrooms, integrate technology into learning, and foster positive social relationships with students (Ali & Associate Professor, Department of Business Administration,University of Scholars, Dhaka, Bangladesh., 2024). Classroom Action Research has proven to be an effective strategy for enhancing teacher competence across various dimensions of educational service. This study aims to explore how CAR can be utilized to improve teacher competence at SMP Negeri 21 Kota Bekasi.

According to Irwan Maulana, (2023) , highly competent teachers contribute significantly to the quality of instruction and student success. Therefore, teacher professional development must be continuous and involve approaches that are responsive to field dynamics (Falah et al., 2023). Teachers serve as a vital component in achieving quality education outcomes. In the era of the Merdeka Curriculum, the role of teachers has become increasingly complex and dynamic (Islam, 2021).

They are expected not only to understand the content deeply but also to design instructional strategies that are relevant, differentiated, and transformative, tailored to the varied needs and characteristics of students. In this context, strengthening teacher competence becomes imperative, as the quality of teaching directly correlates with students' holistic learning achievements (Chan, 2023). Classroom Action Research presents itself as a relevant and flexible approach to support this educational transformation. CAR allows teachers to become more reflective of their teaching practices, moving beyond the role of deliverers of content to becoming researchers, evaluators, and agents of pedagogical improvement (Program Studi Pendidikan Teknologi dan Kejuruan, Universitas Negeri Padang et al., 2020).

The CAR process integrates planning, action, observation, and reflection within authentic classroom settings, enabling teachers to accurately identify instructional challenges and devise applicable solutions tailored to their classroom context (Karlen et al., 2023). Thus, CAR functions not only as a technical improvement tool but also as a medium for developing deeper and more contextual professional competence. This study was conducted at SMP Negeri 21 Kota Bekasi, a public junior high school that has

demonstrated a strong commitment to encouraging teacher engagement in reflective, research-based practices.

The school fosters a learning environment grounded in real classroom needs and promotes a meaningful dialogue between educational theory and practice (Badrun, 2024). CAR implementation in this setting is not only aimed at solving technical instructional issues but also at strengthening professional teaching culture, enhancing sensitivity to student needs, and building synergy between individual teacher development and institutional quality improvement.

Teacher competence forms a foundational pillar for delivering meaningful, dynamic, and future-oriented learning. With the rapid advancement of science, technology, and evolving societal demands, teachers are required to master classroom management, integrate digital tools into instruction, and build constructive interpersonal relationships with students, parents, and colleagues (Sary et al., 2024). These multifaceted expectations elevate the importance of teacher competence development as a central agenda in both policy and practice.

Through CAR, teachers cultivate academic sensitivity and shape a professional character rooted in lifelong learning. The approach is not normative but grounded in real-life classroom experience, making it a highly contextual and practical means of improvement. CAR empowers teachers to become active agents in the educational ecosystem through reflective engagement and analytical teaching practice. This participatory process enables teachers to take greater control over the quality of instruction they deliver (Freire, P, 2021).

The development of teacher competence through CAR aligns with Suyanto and Yuliana's findings, which emphasize that competent teachers have a direct impact on students' academic success (Suyana, 2024). Competence in this regard is not simply an administrative measure, but the outcome of sustained reflection, training, collaboration, and innovation. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that efforts to enhance teacher competence are conducted systematically, purposefully, and based on real classroom conditions (Lutovac et al., 2024). This study seeks to provide a concrete illustration of how CAR is implemented at SMP Negeri 21 Kota Bekasi and how it contributes to strengthening teacher competence across multiple areas of educational service.

B. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach focusing on an in-depth understanding of teachers' reflective processes in implementing Classroom Action Research (CAR). This approach was chosen for its ability to capture the natural dynamics of classroom learning and the changes that occur as a result of teacher-led interventions. CAR was implemented through a cyclical process involving planning, action, observation, and reflection, with the aim of continuously improving teaching practices. As a descriptive study, this research sought to portray the processes and

outcomes of CAR in a contextual manner—not for generalization, but as a concrete effort to improve learning quality at the classroom level.

The research subjects included teachers at SMP Negeri 21 Kota Bekasi who were actively involved in classroom instruction, the principal as a policy director, support staff such as guidance counselors and educational technology coordinators, as well as students who were directly affected by the implemented teaching actions. The school was selected as the research site due to its representative characteristics of an urban school environment, marked by high social diversity and significant challenges in curriculum implementation. Moreover, the strong support from school leadership provided a conducive environment for conducting the study.

Data were collected through direct observation of teacher activities in the classroom, semi-structured interviews with teachers, the school principal, and students, questionnaires containing both open- and closed-ended items to assess perceptions of CAR, and documentation analysis involving instructional materials and teachers' reflective journals. To ensure data validity, triangulation of both technique and source was conducted, allowing the researchers to obtain more comprehensive and credible information. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction to select relevant information, data display in narrative and thematic matrix forms, and conclusion drawing based on patterns and meanings that emerged during the research process.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Findings

This study was conducted at SMP Negeri 21 Kota Bekasi, a public junior high school located in an urban area characterized by diverse student socio-economic backgrounds. The school has implemented the Merdeka Curriculum and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), and upholds a vision of becoming an outstanding institution in academic achievement, character building, and environmental awareness. The diversity among students presents both a strength and a challenge in managing effective and inclusive learning. With approximately 800 students and adequate learning facilities, the school serves as a representative setting for examining the effectiveness of Classroom Action Research (CAR) in improving teacher competence.

The implementation of CAR at the school began with identifying instructional problems encountered by teachers, such as low student participation, limited use of learning media, and a lack of variety in teaching methods. Teachers designed action plans that included cooperative learning approaches, the integration of digital media, and the development of alternative assessments. Implementation was carried out gradually in each classroom, accompanied by peer observation and documentation. Reflections were based on observation findings, learning data, and student feedback, forming the basis for improvements in subsequent cycles.

The outcomes of CAR implementation indicated significant improvements in teacher competence, particularly in pedagogical and professional aspects. Teachers became more skilled in designing active and contextual learning experiences, demonstrated greater creativity in selecting teaching methods, and developed more

communicative relationships with students. A culture of reflection also began to take root, with teachers routinely evaluating their teaching practices and being more open to feedback from colleagues and school leaders. School management played a crucial role in this success by facilitating internal workshops, academic supervision, reflective discussions, and the dissemination of CAR results.

CAR also had a substantial impact on students. Their responses to the changes in instructional strategies were highly positive, marked by increased learning enthusiasm, greater confidence in expressing ideas, and stronger peer interaction during group work. Observational data revealed that active student participation in classroom discussions rose from 40% to 75% after two action cycles. Students also showed improvements in punctuality in submitting assignments, class attendance, and overall learning attitudes.

Nevertheless, the implementation of CAR was not without challenges. These included limited teacher understanding of CAR methodology, heavy administrative workloads, a lack of support from external facilitators or experts, and an underdeveloped culture of reflection among some teachers. However, these challenges were balanced by several enabling factors, such as strong support from school leadership, the availability of technological resources, a collaborative culture within internal teacher working groups (MGMP), and growing professional awareness among teachers of the importance of innovation and continuous improvement in teaching practices.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that Classroom Action Research is an effective strategy for enhancing teacher competence across various areas of educational service. Teachers not only became more reflective and innovative but also more responsive to the pedagogical and emotional needs of their students. At the same time, students experienced more meaningful and participatory learning. These findings suggest that CAR can serve as a systematic approach to improving educational quality in schools, particularly in junior secondary school settings facing dynamic challenges under the Merdeka Curriculum era.

Results

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of Classroom Action Research (CAR) at SMP Negeri 21 Kota Bekasi plays a significant role in improving teacher competence across various domains of educational services. CAR has served not only as a tool for enhancing the teaching and learning process but also as a reflective medium that fosters the transformation of teacher professionalism. The improvement observed extends beyond technical aspects of content delivery to the reinforcement of essential values such as reflection, collaboration, and innovation within educational practice (Karlen et al., 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, these findings align with the concept of the *reflective practitioner* introduced by Donald Schön, who posits that effective teachers are those who continuously reflect on their own practices in order to identify weaknesses, find solutions, and implement sustained improvements (Woodcock et al.,

2022). At SMP Negeri 21, teachers engaged in CAR by following a reflective cycle identifying problems, designing action plans, executing teaching interventions, and conducting evaluations. This process enabled them to recognize instructional challenges and develop more effective strategies tailored to their classroom contexts (Brown et al., 2005).

Substantively, the results of this study indicate improvements in teacher competence in accordance with the four core competencies outlined in Indonesia's Ministry of National Education Regulation No. 16 of 2007: pedagogical, professional, social, and personal. Teachers became more creative in designing contextual and active learning activities, demonstrated greater mastery of subject matter, established more positive communication with students, and exhibited integrity and exemplary conduct in their roles (Arif et al., 2024). This transformation affirms CAR as a strategic avenue for teachers to develop their capacity in a comprehensive and sustainable manner.

The application of various innovative teaching strategies during the CAR process such as group discussions, project-based learning, simulations, and technology integration also reflects the constructivist learning approach as described by Vygotsky and Piaget (Cil & Dotger, 2017). In this framework, students are positioned not as passive recipients of knowledge but as active participants who construct understanding through direct experience, social interaction, and meaningful engagement. Teachers function as facilitators who provide scaffolding to guide students toward their fullest potential. This approach aligns with Vygotsky's *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD), where the teacher supports learners in achieving tasks they could not complete independently (Munthe & Westergård, 2023).

The role of the teacher as a facilitator in CAR also illustrates that professional transformation encompasses more than just instructional planning it includes how students are engaged and how learning experiences are contextualized. Teachers become mediators between curricular content and real-life student experiences, fostering open discussions, encouraging experimentation, and supporting student reflection on their learning (Munthe & Westergård, 2023). Teachers are also beginning to view themselves as lifelong learners those who not only teach but also research, reflect, and refine their practices based on evidence gathered from the classroom.

The impact of CAR on students is likewise substantial. There has been a noticeable increase in both active and reflective student engagement. Students demonstrated greater enthusiasm, confidence, and accountability in their learning (Doni Ferdiansyah & Honest Ummi Kaltsum, 2023). They participated more actively in class activities and began to regularly provide feedback on the learning process. Over time, this contributed to the development of student characteristics such as independence, critical thinking, and collaboration qualities that are aligned with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum and the principles of 21st-century education (Fatmawati, 2021).

Nevertheless, the successful implementation of CAR is not without its challenges. Structurally, teachers face administrative burdens, time constraints, and limited

technical support in understanding CAR methodology. Some teachers struggled with defining research focus areas, processing data, and preparing systematic reports. Access to relevant academic references also remains limited, hindering the development of evidence-based action plans.

Culturally, challenges are rooted in the underdeveloped reflective and collaborative habits among teachers. Some still perceive CAR as a bureaucratic obligation primarily for career advancement rather than a tool for personal and professional growth. As a result, reflective practices are sometimes treated as mere formalities and have yet to become a professional norm. Moreover, the absence of strong academic discourse forums—both within the school and through teacher communities like MGMP—has hindered the dissemination of best practices arising from CAR implementation (Arbain Nurdin et al., 2024).

Despite these challenges, this study also reveals considerable opportunities for strengthening CAR in the future. Active support from school management through training programs, academic supervision, and discussion forums has provided a foundation for building a professional, reflective culture among teachers. The availability of technological resources, growing professional awareness, and initial successes in improving instructional quality all provide strong justification for institutionalizing CAR as a core strategy in school-based quality improvement efforts (Ikhwan & Yuniana, 2022).

In conclusion, this study not only provides empirical evidence of CAR's effectiveness in enhancing teacher competence but also offers a critical reflection on the importance of establishing a school ecosystem that supports reflective and collaborative practices. CAR should not be seen merely as an administrative tool, but rather as a scientific and participatory approach that empowers teachers as agents of change within the education system. In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum which calls for flexible, contextual, and student-centered learning CAR stands as a relevant and sustainable strategy for addressing the challenges of 21st-century education.

D. CONCLUSION

The implementation of Classroom Action Research (CAR) at SMP Negeri 21 Kota Bekasi has proven effective in enhancing teacher competence across pedagogical, professional, social, and personal dimensions. Through a systematic process of reflection, teachers were able to identify instructional problems contextually and design relevant solutions aligned with students' needs. The use of active and participatory learning strategies positively impacted students' motivation, participation, and learning attitudes.

This study also highlights that CAR is not merely a technical instrument, but an integral part of continuous professional development that empowers teachers as facilitators, learners, and agents of change in the classroom. Although structural and cultural challenges remain—such as heavy teacher workloads and a limited culture of

reflection—supportive school leadership and collaborative engagement among teachers are key factors driving the successful implementation of CAR in the school environment.

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