

Professional Learning through Coaching: toward the Enhancement of the Teachers' Pedagogical Competence

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Abstract

Coaching is mainly purposed to build teacher capacity to enhance the success of learning and the quality of education in general. This paper is aimed at describing the coaching materials, methods, and the effectiveness of coaching in English Foreign Language (EFL) learning to strengthen the teachers' pedagogical competence. Six Junior High School EFL teachers of Central Java, Indonesia (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, and T6) attended three-month weekly coachee-centered coaching leading to the implementation of student-centered learning. Observation of the teaching-learning process, review of the lesson plan, and an interview with the EFL teachers through Focus Group Discussion were done before coaching was carried out to identify the coachees' preliminary pedagogical competence and needs. The coaching materials encompassed using songs in EFL class, learning principles and activity-based learning, teaching methods, teaching vocabulary, teaching grammar, teaching the four language skills, assessing attitude, knowledge, and skill, and process skills. Coachee-centered coaching was implemented to present the materials through such methods as Demonstration, Scientific Approach, Lecturing and Discussion, Problem-Based Learning, Task-Based Learning, Inquiry Learning, Presentation-Practice-Production.

Key words: professional learning, coaching, pedagogical competence

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Introduction

Building teacher capacity and professional culture are demanded to improve and sustain professional practices. Professional learning may bridge the implementation of effective teaching practices. Through professional learning a teacher will interact with other teachers to involve in such activities as an academic discussion, sharing, peer lesson, lesson study, mentoring, etc. The rapid change of science and technology boosts teachers to equip themselves with adequate competence to bring students to the standardized outcome.

The emergence of studies on the implementation of coaching in educational practices represents the importance of that matter. Rivera-McCutchen & Panero (2014, pp. 86-101) examine the effectiveness of highly detailed “low-inference” transcripts (LITs) of peer coaching conversations to explore the kinds of interactions that led peers to be more reflective about their instructional practice. The transcripts were drawn from two public US high schools in New York City and used to identify an “Aha!” moment; a moment of the shift of the peer’s prior belief about their instruction and/or planning. Findings suggested that “Aha!” moment involved a thoughtful and strategic use of the low-inference transcripts during the coaching conversation and passive use of the transcripts was less successful. Butler & Yeum (2016, pp. 72-89) studied the dialogic competence of five Korean primary school English teachers in online peer coaching. It was found that, teachers need to (a) engage in internal dialogues (intradialogues) using their own knowledge and experience in order to interpret their peers’ behaviors and intentions and then (b) verbalize their intradialogues into interdialogues, in the process of modifying and negotiating the content with others. Meng & Tajaroensuk (2013, pp. 44-53) investigated the activities and effectiveness of a workshop as a part of Multilayered Peer Coaching Model (MPC Model) developed for twelve Guiyang University’s EFL teachers in-service professional development . The results showed that the workshop was effective in the follow-up teaching practice. Eastman (2016, pp. 105-115) used fictional characters to develop coaching practice of post graduate students. A cohort of students played as the source of hypothetical scenarios. It was directed to simulate workplace problems and functioned as a simulative context in which coaching students could apply theoretical models. The success of its implementation was assessed qualitatively using the excerpts of the students’ written work. The result suggested literary fictional texts supported the enhancement of coach training since it could facilitate coach students to create stronger and more creative narratives in their work-based projects. Foen Ng, Confessore & Abdullah (2012, pp. 191-204) assess the effect of a five-week coaching intervention on Learner Autonomy Profile (LAP) scores and academic success of pre-diploma university students in Malaysia. It used quasi-experimental designed. Participants completed the LAP pre- and post-intervention. 35 students of the experimental group participated in five-week learner autonomy coaching and wrote reflection logs in the computer between meetings. Fifty-two students of the control group received no intervention. Students who got intervention experienced significant increases in the mean post- over pre-intervention LAP scores or in GPA. Jauregi & Melchor-Couto (2017) find coaching effective in teacher competence development for telecollaboration.

Literature Review

Professional Learning

Cole (2012,) defines professional learning as “the formal and informal learning experiences undertaken by teachers and school leaders that improve their individual professional practice and

the school's collective effectiveness as measured by improved student engagement and learning outcomes" (p. 4) The term of professional learning is commonly embraced with professional learning community. This is due to learning may not be assured effectively unless through others. International Center for leadership in Education (2016) suggests that professional learning community is a self-supportive and created learning. Professional learning brings the participants to be professional; to be able to execute their tasks at any time, in any situation. Professional learning is mainly characterized by "a shared intellectual purpose and a sense of collective responsibility for student learning." (Wei, 2009, p. 11).

Other characteristics of professional learning are posited by Newmann and Associates (2002) as cited in Vescio, 2006, pp. 3-4). In their opinion, professional learning should meet five essential characteristics: (1) shared values and norms in relation to such points as the views about children and children's ability to learn, school priorities for the use of time and space, and the proper roles of parents, teachers, and administrators, (2) clear and consistent focus on student learning, that it is not simply to ensure that students are taught but also learn, (3) reflective dialogue about curriculum, instruction and student development, (4) group collaboration.

Professional learning requires interaction among members to share and learn each other about current educational issues and practices. Through professional learning teachers meet on a regular schedule in learning teams organized by shared responsibility for their students' success and based on the determined plan. The plan is made after examining student data and identifying the areas of student needs. The learning team engages in developing powerful lessons and assessments, applying new strategies in the real learning process. Professional learning stimulates teachers to leave their comfort zone by having more challenging teaching.

Coaching

Coaching is devoted primarily to teaching participants new skills. There are four steps required to deliver the skills. The steps are: (1) presentation of the theory or skill, (2) demonstration of the skill, (3) repeated opportunities to practice the skill under both simulated and actual classroom conditions, (4) repeated feedback on the practice efforts (Keith & Robert, 1991, pp. 200-204).

Lofthouse, Leat & Towler (2010, p. 8) define coaching as focused professional dialogue aims at aiding the coachees in developing certain professional skills to improve their teaching repertoire. The coachees are commonly given space to experiment with new classroom strategies. As it purposes to enhance teaching repertoire, coaching needs to meet the following key qualities: (1) promoting professional dialogue on teaching issues that are of interest to the coachees, (2) planning, developing and evaluating teaching activities in collaborative ways, (3) facilitating experimentation and reflection, (4) fostering reflection that will help effective teachers when planning and evaluating their teaching by discussing pedagogical issues in their teaching (McGrane & Lofthouse, 2010, p. 188).

"Coaching is inherently a reflective process." (Jackson, 2004, p. 57) As a reflective process, coaching is directed at making better changes to the sector becoming its focus of attention. In the

educational field, a coaching program is a form of teacher professional development expected to improve the quality of teaching-learning process, which ends up with the quality of student outcomes. In EFL class, reflective practices may be done through journal writing, peer observation, lesson report, and classroom action research. The area may be covered in the reflection are teachers' and learners' beliefs, teacher decision making, teachers' role, the structure of a lesson, classroom interaction, classroom activities, and language use (Richard, 2007, pp. v-vii). Such a comprehensive reflection contributes to the better EFL class and students' language competence and performance.

Based on the notions of coaching above it may be concluded that coaching in EFL learning is directed to improve the EFL teachers' repertoire in teaching based on the content, process, and assessment. An efficient coaching may be reached through a thorough plan, attentive control to the process, and appropriate follow up.

Pedagogical Competence

Indonesian Government Regulation No. 19 Year 2005 on National Standard of Education Article 28 Sub-article 3 defines pedagogical competence as the competence to manage the learning of learners which covers understanding learners, planning and implementing a lesson, evaluating products of learning, and developing learners to actualize their potentials. In addition, the addendum of the Indonesian Minister of Education's Decree No. 16 Year 2007 on the standard of academic qualification and teacher competence mentions the cores of pedagogical competence as follow: (1) understanding students' characteristics from physical, moral, spiritual, social, cultural, emotional, and intellectual aspects, (2) mastering theories and principles of learning, (3) developing curriculum in relation to the taught subject, (4) conducting educational learning; (5) employing information and communication technology for the purpose of learning, (6) facilitating the development and the actualization of learners' potential, (7) communicating with learners effectively, emphatically, and politely, (8) conducting assessment and evaluation of the process and the product of learning, (9) making use of assessment and evaluation for learning purposes, and (10) doing reflective activities to improve the quality of learning.

Akhyak (2013, p. 4) defines pedagogical competence as the competence to organize teaching learning process of learners. It consists of three competences, i.e. planning, process, and assessment and evaluation. The competence in planning teaching learning process comprises describing objectives, selecting materials, determining methods and strategies, determining learning sources and media, designing assessment and evaluation instruments, determining assessment and evaluation techniques, and allocating time. Teaching learning process competence is reflected in the competences in opening a lesson, delivering materials, using media and methods, using communicative language, motivating students, organizing activities, interacting with students communicatively, concluding a lesson, providing feedback, conducting assessment and evaluation, and using time effectively. The competence of assessment and evaluation comprises choosing questions based on the level of difficulty and discriminating power, repairing problems, checking the answers, classifying and processing the results, making interpretation, determining the correlated problems, arranging follow-up programs, identifying the need for follow-up, carrying out follow-up, and analyzing the results of evaluation.

Pedagogical competence takes the biggest portion of all the four competences, i.e. pedagogical, interpersonal, social, and professional competences. The rest of three competences are blended in the realization of teaching learning processes.

Methods

This descriptive study describes coaching materials, procedure, and the enhancement of the teachers' pedagogical competence after the coaching program was administered. Six Junior High School EFL teachers of Central Java, Indonesia (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, and T6) attended ten-week coachee-centered coaching leading to the implementation of student-centered learning. Observation of teaching-learning process, review of the lesson plan, and an interview with the EFL teachers through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were done before coaching was carried out to identify the coachees' pedagogical competence and needs. The same procedure, except FGD was carried out to identify the teachers' pedagogical competence after being coached in EFL learning. Presentation and demonstration of theory and skills were conducted in six weekly meeting which was continued with implementation in twice individual classroom teaching and peer reflection in the following four weeks. Peer reflection was done after each individual teaching. In the first and the fourth teaching the teachers' pedagogical competence before and after the coaching program was compared to identify its enhancement.

Results

The Coaching Materials and Methods

The coaching program implemented was coachee-centered coaching. It was aimed at giving a model of participant-centered activities. The modeling might energize the coachees to bring it into their classroom practice (read: learner-centered learning). The material presentation spent six meetings in six weeks. Each meeting lasted 70 minutes. The table below shows the materials presented and discussed from the first to the ninth meetings together with the methods of delivery:

Table 1. *List of Materials and Methods*

Week	Material	Method
1	Using Songs in EFL Class Learning Principles and Activity-Based Learning	Demonstration Scientific Approach
2	Teaching Vocabulary Scientific Approach Inquiry Learning	Demonstration Problem-Based Learning Task-Based Learning
3	Teaching Grammar Problem-Based Learning Genre-Based Instruction	Demonstration Scientific approach Task-Based Learning
4	Teaching Listening and Speaking Contextual Learning	Lecturing and discussion Lecturing and discussion
5	Teaching Reading and Writing Assessing Attitude, Knowledge, Skill	Lecturing and discussion Inquiry Learning
6	Process Skills (Planning, Implementing, Assessing and Evaluating A Lesson)	Presentation-Practice- Production
7	The Implementation of Materials	Individual Teaching
8	Reflection	Peer Reflection
9	The Implementation of Materials	Individual Teaching
10	Reflection	Peer Reflection

The implementation of participant-centered sessions was represented through the choice of method in every session. Before starting the session, the researcher usually shared or invited the teachers to share some teaching strategies, warmer, or filler in the form of a game or song. Each material was supported with individual or pair worksheet. As the materials were packed based on need analysis of the teachers, they joined almost every session enthusiastically. The big problem of the presentation session was the limitation of time. Two learning hours (2 x 35 minutes) were not enough to discuss every matter.

Peer reflection was administered after every individual teaching through which there had been a kind of peer lesson among the coachees. Hence, significant improvement was made in the following teaching.

The figure describes how each activity is related to another activity. First is determining the coaching materials from the researcher's perspectives based on first teaching (pre-coaching teaching) and from the teachers' perspectives through FGD. The confirmed materials are presented in the agreed specified times and places. To make sure the teachers' understanding, the materials are implemented in the second teaching. Teaching problems are identified and solved through reflection meeting. The improvement of the teachers' pedagogical competence is identified through the third teaching.

If an action research in education were conducted, the coaching program might be continued by re-identifying the teachers' needs if the significant improvement was not made. If the significant improvement had been made but the teachers still expected to continue their professional learning the coaching program might be followed with the mentoring program.

1) The Enhancement of the Teachers' Competence in Planning an English Lesson

Coaching seems to be instrumental to innovate teachers' pedagogical competence.

Effective coaching facilitates teachers to work more properly. The coaching program which had been done could strengthen almost all aspects of the teachers' pedagogical competence. The score falls into 5 categories, i.e. excellent ($8 \geq$), good (7-8), fair (6-7), bad (5-6), and very bad (≤ 5).

The average score of the teachers' competence in planning an English lesson before and after being coached in EFL learning improves 1.073 points from 5.646 (bad) to 6.719 (fair). The detailed quantitative data below show the difference of the mean score of the teachers' competence in planning before and after being coached in ELF learning.

Table 2 *The Score of the Teachers' Competence in Planning an English Lesson before and after being Coached in EFL Learning*

Aspect	Before Coaching	After Coaching
Formulating Objectives and/or Indicators	8.217	9.283
Preparing Materials	3.367	7.383
Planning the Activities	8.100	9.583
Determining Learning Sources, Media	4.450	7.533

Designing Assessment and Evaluation Instrument	6.117	5.424
Allocating Time	6.333	5.333
Remedial and Enrichment Program	.000	0.833
Overall Arrangement	8.583	8.833
Mean	5.646	6.719

Among the eight aspects of planning, designing assessment and evaluation instrument and allocating time are two aspects with decreasing scores. The former decreases from 6.117 to 5.424 or 0.693 points, the later reduces from 6.333 to 5.333 or 1.000 points. The researcher will only highlight the two aspects.

Four of eleven indicators of designing assessment and evaluation instrument get no improvement (check the shadowed cell of table 3).

Table 3 *The Score of each Indicator of Designing Assessment and Evaluation Instruments*

Indicators of Designing Assessment and Evaluation Instruments	Before Coaching	After Coaching
1. Assessment techniques are appropriate with indicators	9166	9166
2. Assessment instruments are appropriate with indicators	7000	7500
3. Designing instruments for assessing attitudes	5.500	3.333
4. Designing instruments for assessing knowledge	5.000	6.667
5. Providing instruments for assessing skills	8.333	8.333
6. Preparing appropriate scoring rubric for assessing attitude	7.500	3.333
7. Preparing appropriate scoring rubric for assessing knowledge	5.000	.000
8. Preparing appropriate scoring rubric for assessing skill	3.750	4.166
9. The instruments for assessing knowledge comprise LOTS	6.667	8.333
10. The instruments for assessing knowledge comprise HOTS	5.333	3.333
11. There are clear instructions	5.833	8.333

The decrease of the scores might be due to the lack of time to prepare a complete written lesson plan before teaching. When the researcher asked them the reasons for not completing the lesson plans, they said that they were busy doing some other school work, i.e. completing the school data, preparing national exam for the ninth-year students. If their previous teachings were always based on lesson plans, they would not have consumed a significant amount of time to prepare lesson plans for the next teachings. They would only have modified the used ones.

Regarding designing instruments for assessing attitudes all the teachers designed the instrument. In term of preparing appropriate scoring rubric for assessing attitude, T1 prepared a rubric for assessing respect, care, self-confidence, T4 prepared it for assessing responsibility and team work but with inappropriate indicator, T5 provided it for assessing seriousness, responsibility, care, team work, and love, which were too many focused characters. All of them used so frequent, frequent, sometimes, ever, and never or always, frequent, sometimes, and never as indicators. They are not indicators but score criteria. They do not show the students' performance indicating the assessed attitudes.

Dealing with putting questions measuring High Order Thinking skill (HOTs) in assessing knowledge T1 and T4 were the only teachers who covered HOTs questions in their assessment. T1 had his students write a post card telling their holiday to their old friends after reading a text about someone's holiday to Bogor. T4 got his students to conclude the reasons for bold typing and underlining parts of a song.

Surprisingly, in the lesson plan designed after the coaching program, no teacher prepared an appropriate scoring rubric for assessing knowledge. Scoring rubric for assessing knowledge is the simplest rubric since usually the aspect assessed is the accuracy of students' answer, either based on text or based on the corresponding meaning or definition. If the questions are considerably difficult to answer teachers may score 2 for the correct answer and score 1 for the wrong answer. If the questions are easy, the score is 1 for the correct answer and 0 for the wrong answer. The common maximum score is 10. Teachers are suggested to inform the rubric to the students doing an assignment.

Four teachers designed assessment for attitude, knowledge, and skill (T1, T3, T4, T5). T2 only planned to assess skill and T6 only prepared an assessment instrument to assess knowledge. Basically, when a teacher assesses skill, he also automatically assess knowledge, which is the prerequisite to perform the assessed skill. But the task scaffolding is unclear if the teacher does not design cognitive assessment implicitly.

Pertaining to time allocation, T4 and T5 did not plan their time, T2 had proportional time allocation, T1, T3, T6 should have 10 minutes for opening activities instead of having 5 minutes.

2) The Enhancement of the Teachers' Competence in Implementing an English Lesson

The improvement of the teachers' competence in implementing an English lesson is shown by the mean score of the competence after the program, which reaches 7.129 (good). Before being coached the mean score of the competence is 3.976 (very bad) or it improves 3.153 points.

The scores of all the aspects of implementing competence improve after the coaching program. The most dramatic improvement happens to the aspect of opening a lesson, which increases 4.734 points from 2.683 to 7.417. There are eight activities in the opening stage, i.e. (1) motivating and making students ready to learn, (2) explaining the learning goals, (3) explaining how the presented material is related to the previous one, (4) informing the coverage of the materials, (5) explaining the techniques and the stages of learning, (6) informing the scope of assessment, (7) informing the technique of assessment, and (8) getting information about the level

of students' understanding of the lesson. All the teachers performed at least six activities or indicators except T5 who performed four indicators only. The score improvement of all aspects of implementing competence is covered in table 4.

Table 4 *The Score of the Teachers' Competence in Implementing an English Lesson before and after being Coached in EFL Learning*

Competence	Aspect	Before Coaching	After Coaching
Implementing	Opening a Lesson	2.683	7.417
	Organizing the Activities	6.050	8.850
	Using Media	5.467	8.600
	Using Communicative Language	5.317	5.767
	Motivating Student	5.833	9.567
	Using Time Effectively	4.167	9.333
	Closing a Lesson	2.292	7.500
Mean		3.976	7.129

Using communicative language gains the least improvement, with only 0.450 points from 5.17 to 5.767. There are some points to ponder in using a language as a medium of instruction. They are (1) using a comprehensible language, (2) using correct word choice, grammar, (3) using appropriate language, and (4) using correct pronunciation, stress, and intonation. Improving the teachers' language performance needs time, commitment, and consistence in regular learning and practice.

Another aspect needs to be highlighted is using time effectively. This aspect decreases 1.000 point in the planning stage but increases 5.166 points from 4.167 to 9.333 in implementing stage. T1, T2, T3, T4 managed their time effectively. Meanwhile, T1 did not have enough time for reflection and T2 did not cover communicating stage. Overall, the teachers' time management in implementing stage is better than in the planning stage. This is to say that continues practise makes teachers equip themselves with automatic controlling/managing skills. One of the skills is managing time.

Organizing the activities also reaches considerable enhancement from 6.050 to 8.850 or 2.800 points. Table 5 provides the score of each indicator of organizing the activities.

Table 5 *The Score of each indicator of organizing the activities*

Indicators of Organizing the Activities	Before Coaching	After Coaching
1. Activities are systematically implemented and facilitate the achievement of learning goals	6.333	10.000
2. Activities are learner-centered	6.555	10.000
3. Activities facilitate the learning of knowledge	7.833	8.333
4. Activities facilitate the learning of a skill	4.000	7.500
5. Activities develop students' collaboration skill	6.666	9.166
6. Activities develop students' critical thinking skill	3.833	5.833
7. Activities develop students' creativity	5.333	9.166
8. Activities develop students' spiritual attitude	5.000	5.000
9. Activities develop students' social attitude	5.000	10.000
10. Teacher uses concrete examples and illustration	5.000	10.000
11. Teacher models good behavior	10.000	10.000
12. Teacher implements varied kinds of activities and/or interaction patterns	6.166	10.000
13. The teacher plays a variety of roles	7.000	10.000

Two indicators make the most significant enhancement, from 5.000 to 10.000 or 5.000 points. They are: (1) teacher uses concrete examples and illustration, (2) activities develop students' social attitude. Regarding the use of concrete examples and illustration, T1 used the song 'My Uncle Came' to model text. The song was translated from an Indonesian song *Paman Datang* 'My Uncle Came', which was familiar in the students' ears. T2 provided some concrete advertisements to visualize advertisement text more clearly. T3 described a student in the class to model descriptive text, T4 exposed profession through a song, T4 and T5 described themselves and one of their students to give examples of describing professions. Concrete examples facilitate students' understanding since they concretize a concept, bring the concept closed to students. Besides, students may also be brought to real-life activities. Some of them can be used to enhance students' awareness of honesty when they create a genre (Mustikasari, 2013, p. 143).

The twelfth indicator, teacher implements varied kinds of activities and/or interaction pattern, enhances 3.834 points, from 6.166 to 10.000. Varied activities are commonly represented through varied kinds of interaction pattern, i.e. from (1) Teacher-Students (T – Ss), (2) Teacher-Student-Teacher (T – S – T), (3) Teacher-Student-Student (T – S – S), (4) Student-Teacher (S – T), Student-Student (S – S), and Student-Students (S – Ss) pattern. By building interaction in different ways students develop their social attitude. Varied interaction facilitates students to collaborate in different ways. '... recognition between being weak or strong in teaching lies behind the way teacher interacts with the student.' (Cole & Chan as cited in Setiananingrum & Saleh, 2016, p. 12) Through varied kinds of interaction teachers prioritize the process of learning.

3) The Enhancement of the Teachers' Competence in Assessing and Evaluating an English Lesson

Coaching in EFL learning also enhanced the teachers' competence in assessing and evaluating competence mainly in implementing stage. It is proven by the mean score of the competence which reaches 8.113 (excellent) from 4.571 (very bad). The score of the competence improves 3.542 points.

Similar to allocating time which decreases in the planning stage but increases in implementing stage, the score of assessment and evaluation also decreases in the planning stage but increases in implementing stage. There was a kind of hidden plan of the teachers' which were not put in the lesson plans. The difference of score of the teachers' competence in assessing and evaluating an English lesson before and after coaching is showed through table 6.

Table 6 *The Score of the Teachers' Competence in Assessing and Evaluating an English Lesson before and after being coached in EFL learning*

Competence	Aspect	Before Coaching	After Coaching
assessing and evaluating	Assessing Attitudes, Knowledge, and Skills	3.017	4.667
	Classifying and Processing the Result	5.833	10.000
	Making Interpretation, Determining the Correlated Problems	6.667	10.000
	Identifying the Needs for Follow up	2.767	7.783
Mean		4.571	8.113

Among the four aspects of assessing and evaluating competence, the aspect of identifying the needs for follow up reaches the biggest improvement. It improves 5.016 points from 2.767 to 7.783. The teachers had been aware of the importance of giving remedial or enrichment. All the teachers provided remedial learning only. After being confirmed, they told the same reason for not giving enrichment learning. It was time to give one to one service through correcting and giving feedbacks to the students' work gradually until the minimum standard was reached. One third of the students in each class commonly needed remedial learning. The teachers prioritized remedial program to facilitate the participants to catch up with those who had met the standardized score.

Assessing attitudes, knowledge, and skills gain the least improvement. It is 1.650 from 3.017 to 4.667. The problem mostly the teachers had was using an appropriate rubric for assessing attitudes. They still did not use appropriate indicators. They used such criteria as always, sometimes, seldom, hardly ever, and never only. Without employing clear indicators, assessment will be subjective. It is very dependent on what is in the assessor's mind at the time of assessment.

Conclusion

Coachee-centered coaching maximizes the coachees' participation and activeness in the coaching program. Hence, more time is given to the coachees to learn by doing, which in turn enhances the skill of implementing the coaching materials. The coaching program is proven to enhance the teachers' pedagogic competence.

Experiencing in taking the benefit of involving in the model of coaching, the coachees inspire to implement learner-centered learning. The learning model is also expected to improve the effectiveness and the efficiency of learning which is proven through the attainment of standardized learning outcomes.

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