

# Professional Competence of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Qur'anic Instruction: A Study on Tajwid Mastery in Indonesian Primary Schools

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines tajwid mastery as a central dimension of professional competence among Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in Indonesian primary schools and its implications for the quality of Qur'anic instruction. Employing a mixed-methods design, the research integrates tajwid competence assessment, classroom observation, and semi-structured interviews to capture both instructional practices and contextual factors shaping teachers' performance. The findings indicate substantial variation in teachers' practical tajwid proficiency, with recurrent inconsistencies in phonetic accuracy and corrective feedback during Qur'anic recitation lessons. These limitations are closely associated with gaps in pre-service preparation, limited access to content-focused professional development, and weak institutional support for Qur'anic competence standards. Moreover, teachers' tajwid mastery is shown to influence students' Qur'anic literacy, particularly in terms of accuracy, confidence, and fluency. The study contributes to the literature by foregrounding tajwid mastery as a professional standard rather than a peripheral skill and underscores the need for integrated policy interventions that align teacher education, professional development, and institutional accountability to strengthen Qur'anic instruction at the primary education level.

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## INTRODUCTION

Qur'anic instruction in primary education plays a foundational role in shaping students' religious literacy and early engagement with Islamic teachings. Accurate recitation of the Qur'an, governed by the principles of tajwid, is widely recognized as an essential component of authentic Qur'anic learning (Alwi, 2019; Rahman & Wahyuni, 2021). In Islamic Religious Education (IRE), teachers are expected not only to transmit religious knowledge but also to model correct Qur'anic recitation practices. Consequently, teachers' mastery of tajwid constitutes a critical dimension of their professional competence, particularly at the primary school level where students' initial reading habits and pronunciation patterns are formed (Azra, 2018; Huda, 2020).

Despite its importance, several studies indicate that Qur'anic instruction in Indonesian primary schools often encounters challenges related to instructional quality and teacher competence. Research on Islamic education has consistently highlighted gaps in pedagogical and professional competencies among IRE teachers, especially in practical religious skills such as Qur'anic recitation (Suharsongko, 2023; Zainuddin, 2020). These challenges are frequently associated with limited pre-service training, insufficient in-service professional development, and the marginalization of tajwid mastery within formal teacher evaluation systems (Fauzi & Karim, 2021; Mahfud, 2019).

Empirical studies focusing on tajwid learning have largely concentrated on students' outcomes and instructional media. For instance, experimental and development-based studies demonstrate that digital multimedia, interactive methods, and structured tajwid instruction can significantly improve students' Qur'anic reading accuracy (Mustafidah & Nurhidayah, 2020; Nurliadin, 2022). Similarly, method-based interventions such as An-Nahdliyah and tilawah-centered pedagogies have shown positive effects on learners' tajwid proficiency in non-formal and semi-formal educational contexts (Mubarok, 2019; Anwar, 2021). However, these studies tend to treat teachers as implementers rather than as central analytical subjects whose own competencies shape instructional effectiveness.

Broader research on teacher professional competence emphasizes that subject-matter mastery is inseparable from effective pedagogy and learning outcomes. Studies on Islamic Religious Education teachers underscore that deficiencies in content knowledge directly influence instructional clarity, learner confidence, and the accuracy of religious practices transmitted in classrooms (Hidayat & Rohman, 2020; Ismail, 2022). In the context of Qur'anic instruction, limited tajwid mastery among teachers risks the reproduction of incorrect recitation patterns, potentially affecting students' long-term Qur'anic literacy and religious practice (Rahim, 2018; Latif, 2021).

A review of Scopus-indexed literature reveals a significant research gap concerning the direct examination of tajwid mastery as a component of IRE teachers' professional competence in primary schools. While systematic reviews have mapped Qur'anic learning methods and instructional strategies in Indonesian schools, they consistently report a scarcity of studies that focus explicitly on teachers' Qur'anic competencies, particularly tajwid, as the primary unit of analysis (Sari et al., 2022; Abdullah & Hassan, 2021). Existing research tends to prioritize curriculum design, learning media, or student achievement, leaving teachers' instructional readiness underexplored.

This gap is particularly critical given the strategic position of primary school teachers in shaping foundational religious literacy. The absence of empirical studies that integrate classroom practice, competence assessment, and institutional factors limits the development of evidence-based policies for teacher training and professional development in Qur'anic instruction. Consequently, there is a pressing need for research that systematically investigates tajwid mastery among IRE teachers, identifies its determining factors, and examines its implications for students' learning outcomes (Karim, 2020; Yusuf & Amin, 2022).

Responding to this gap, the present study—Professional Competence of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Qur'anic Instruction: A Study on Tajwid Mastery in Indonesian Primary Schools—positions tajwid mastery as a central indicator of professional competence. Unlike previous studies, this research foregrounds teachers as the primary analytical focus, integrating classroom observation, competence assessment, and qualitative inquiry into institutional and professional development contexts. By doing so, the study offers a comprehensive understanding of how teachers' tajwid competence shapes Qur'anic instruction in primary education and provides empirically grounded recommendations for strengthening professional standards in Islamic Religious Education.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Teacher professional competence has long been recognized as a central determinant of instructional quality and learning outcomes. In educational theory, professional competence encompasses a combination of subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical skills, and the ability to apply both effectively in classroom practice (Shulman, 1986; Darling-Hammond, 2017). In the context of religious education, competence extends beyond cognitive mastery to include the accurate transmission of religious practices, values, and skills, positioning teachers as both educators and role models (Hidayat, 2019; Abdullah & Hassan, 2021).

Within Islamic Religious Education (IRE), Qur'anic instruction occupies a foundational position, particularly at the primary school level where students acquire their initial exposure to Qur'anic recitation. Tajwid, as the science governing correct pronunciation and articulation of Qur'anic verses, constitutes a core element of Qur'anic literacy (Rahim, 2018; Latif, 2021). From a theoretical perspective, tajwid mastery represents a form of specialized content knowledge that must be internalized by teachers before it can be effectively transmitted to learners (Shulman, 1986). Without sufficient mastery, the instructional process risks reproducing inaccuracies that may persist throughout students' religious development.

The framework of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) provides a relevant lens for analyzing tajwid competence among IRE teachers. PCK emphasizes the integration of subject knowledge and pedagogical strategies that make content comprehensible to learners (Shulman, 1987; Grossman, 1990). In Qur'anic instruction, this integration requires teachers to not only understand tajwid rules but also to translate them into age-appropriate explanations, demonstrations, and corrective feedback for primary school students (Huda, 2020; Ismail, 2022). Teachers with limited tajwid mastery may struggle to provide accurate modeling and scaffolding, thereby constraining students' learning trajectories.

Professional competence is also shaped by sociocultural and institutional contexts. Sociocultural learning theory posits that knowledge acquisition occurs through guided interaction with more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978). In the classroom, the teacher functions as the primary mediator of Qur'anic knowledge, making the teacher's own competence a critical variable in students' learning experiences (Rahman & Wahyuni, 2021). When teachers lack fluency in tajwid, the quality of mediation is diminished, reducing opportunities for meaningful guided practice and corrective feedback.

From the perspective of teacher professional development theory, competence is not static but evolves through continuous learning and reflective practice (Day, 2017; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Studies on IRE teachers indicate that limited access to targeted professional development programs, particularly those focusing on practical Qur'anic skills, contributes to uneven instructional quality (Fauzi & Karim, 2021; Yusuf & Amin, 2022). Pre-service teacher education programs often emphasize pedagogical theory and curriculum design while allocating insufficient time to intensive tajwid training, creating a gap between formal qualification and instructional readiness (Mahfud, 2019; Zainuddin, 2020).

Empirical research on Qur'anic learning has largely concentrated on instructional methods and student outcomes, such as the use of multimedia tools, digital applications, and innovative pedagogies to enhance tajwid learning (Mustafidah & Nurhidayah, 2020; Nurliadin, 2022). While these studies demonstrate positive impacts on students' performance, they implicitly assume that teachers possess adequate tajwid competence to implement such methods effectively. Theoretical models of instructional effectiveness, however, emphasize that teaching tools and strategies cannot compensate for deficiencies in teachers' subject mastery (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Hattie, 2012).

The concept of religious literacy further strengthens the relevance of tajwid mastery as a professional competency. Religious literacy involves the ability to engage accurately and meaningfully with religious texts and practices within specific contexts (Moore, 2015; Dinham, 2018). In Islamic education, accurate Qur'anic recitation forms the foundation of religious literacy, linking tajwid competence directly to broader educational goals. Teachers who lack proficiency in tajwid may inadvertently weaken students' religious literacy by normalizing incorrect recitation patterns (Rahim, 2018; Karim, 2020).

Institutional theory also provides insight into how organizational structures influence teacher competence. School policies, assessment mechanisms, and professional standards shape teachers' priorities and practices (Scott, 2014; Bush, 2020). In many primary schools, tajwid mastery is not explicitly evaluated as part of teacher performance appraisal, reducing institutional incentives for teachers to improve this skill (Suharsongko, 2023; Abdullah & Hassan, 2021). This theoretical perspective highlights the importance of aligning institutional frameworks with instructional objectives to ensure sustained competence development.

Integrating these theoretical perspectives, this study conceptualizes tajwid mastery as a critical dimension of IRE teachers' professional competence that is shaped by individual knowledge, pedagogical integration, sociocultural mediation, professional development, and institutional support. By situating tajwid competence within established theories of teacher knowledge, learning, and professional growth, the study

provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing how teachers' Qur'anic expertise influences instructional quality and students' learning outcomes in primary education.

## RESEARCH METHOD

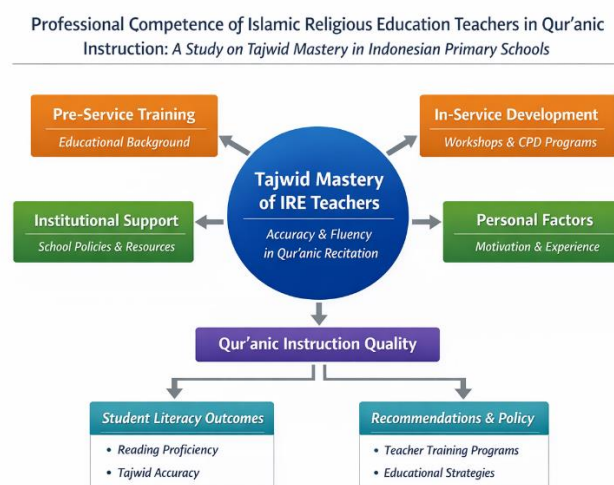
This study employed a mixed-methods research design to obtain a comprehensive understanding of tajwid mastery as a component of professional competence among Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in Indonesian primary schools. A mixed-methods approach was chosen to integrate the strengths of quantitative measurement and qualitative exploration, enabling robust analysis of both competence levels and contextual factors influencing Qur'anic instruction (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The quantitative component involved a tajwid competence assessment administered to IRE teachers, designed to evaluate accuracy in pronunciation, application of tajwid rules, and fluency in Qur'anic recitation. The instrument was adapted from standardized Qur'anic literacy frameworks commonly used in Islamic education research and validated through expert judgment to ensure content validity (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). Descriptive statistics were used to map teachers' competence levels.

The qualitative component consisted of classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with teachers and school administrators. Observations focused on instructional practices, corrective feedback, and modeling of Qur'anic recitation, while interviews explored teachers' educational backgrounds, professional development experiences, and institutional support. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following systematic coding and categorization procedures to identify recurring patterns and explanatory themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were strictly observed to ensure research integrity and trustworthiness (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Professional Competence Of Islamic Religious Education Teachers In Qur'anic Instruction: A Study On Tajwid Mastery In Indonesian Primary Schools



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Tajwid Mastery as a Core Component of**

## **Professional Competence among Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Indonesian Primary Schools**

Sources: *Adapted from and synthesized based on:* Shulman (1986); Grossman (1990); Vygotsky (1978); Darling-Hammond (2017); Hattie (2012); Day (2017); Scott (2014); Moore (2015); Rahim (2018); Latif (2021); Mustafidah and Nurhidayah (2020); Nurliadin (2022); Fauzi and Karim (2021); Suharsongko (2023).

The findings of this study reveal that tajwid mastery constitutes a pivotal yet unevenly developed dimension of professional competence among Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in Indonesian primary schools. Classroom observations and recitation assessments indicate that many teachers possess partial conceptual knowledge of tajwid rules but encounter difficulties in their consistent and accurate application during instruction. This discrepancy between declarative knowledge and procedural competence reflects a broader issue identified in teacher knowledge research, where subject-specific expertise is often insufficiently internalized to support high-quality instruction (Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008). In Qur'anic learning contexts, such gaps are particularly consequential, as teachers function as the primary linguistic and phonetic models for students acquiring foundational recitation skills (Gade, 2004).

The influence of pre-service training emerged as a significant factor shaping teachers' tajwid competence. Data from interviews suggest that teacher education programs tend to prioritize pedagogical theory and curriculum compliance over intensive, practice-oriented Qur'anic recitation training. This finding resonates with international studies on teacher preparation that highlight structural imbalances between theoretical coursework and content-specific mastery, especially in faith-based education programs (Tatto et al., 2012). In Islamic education, where instructional accuracy carries theological implications, limited pre-service exposure to systematic tajwid practice constrains teachers' readiness to deliver authentic Qur'anic instruction (Berglund, 2017).

Institutional support within schools was found to play a decisive role in sustaining or inhibiting the development of tajwid mastery. Schools that lacked explicit policies, instructional supervision, or assessment mechanisms related to Qur'anic recitation tended to normalize minimal instructional standards. This aligns with institutional theory, which posits that organizational priorities shape professional behavior and competence development through formal and informal norms (Scott, 2014). In the absence of institutional accountability, teachers reported low motivation to engage in self-directed tajwid improvement, despite acknowledging its pedagogical importance (Bush & Glover, 2014).

In-service professional development opportunities were unevenly distributed and often insufficiently targeted. While some teachers reported participation in general pedagogical workshops, few had access to continuous professional development programs focused specifically on tajwid or Qur'anic phonology. This finding reflects broader critiques of teacher professional development systems, which frequently emphasize generic instructional skills at the expense of subject-specific competence (Desimone & Garet, 2015). Research on effective professional learning underscores that sustained, content-focused training is essential for improving instructional quality, particularly in specialized domains such as religious education (Timperley et al., 2007).

Personal factors, including teaching experience, self-efficacy, and religious engagement, also influenced teachers' tajwid mastery. Teachers with longer teaching experience did not necessarily demonstrate higher recitation accuracy, suggesting that experience alone does not guarantee competence development. This supports empirical evidence indicating that professional growth depends more on reflective practice and targeted learning than on tenure (Avalos, 2011). Conversely, teachers who reported regular personal engagement with Qur'anic recitation outside classroom contexts tended to exhibit greater fluency and confidence, echoing sociocultural perspectives on learning as a product of sustained practice within meaningful communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The quality of Qur'anic instruction observed in classrooms closely mirrored teachers' levels of tajwid mastery. Teachers with limited recitation accuracy often relied on collective reading strategies without providing individualized correction, thereby reducing opportunities for formative feedback. Such instructional patterns align with findings in literacy education that link teacher competence to the depth and responsiveness of instructional interactions (Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012). In Qur'anic instruction, the absence of precise corrective feedback risks reinforcing inaccurate recitation patterns, potentially undermining students' long-term Qur'anic literacy (Nelson, 2006).

Student literacy outcomes observed in this study further underscore the instructional implications of teacher tajwid competence. Students taught by teachers with stronger tajwid mastery demonstrated greater confidence and accuracy in recitation tasks, while those instructed by less proficient teachers exhibited hesitation and persistent phonetic errors. This pattern reflects established research linking teacher content expertise to student achievement across subject areas (Hill, Rowan, & Ball, 2005). In religious education, where oral transmission plays a central role, the fidelity of teacher modeling becomes a decisive determinant of learning outcomes (Wareesiri, 2018).

The findings highlight the urgent need for policy-oriented interventions that reposition tajwid mastery as a formal component of professional standards for IRE teachers. Current evaluation systems rarely assess Qur'anic recitation competence, creating a misalignment between curricular objectives and professional accountability. Comparative studies in teacher policy demonstrate that aligning assessment, training, and instructional expectations is essential for sustainable competence development (Schleicher, 2018). Without such alignment, efforts to improve Qur'anic instruction risk remaining fragmented and ineffective.

### **Discussion on Professional Competence Of Islamic Religious Education Teachers In Qur'anic Instruction: A Study On Tajwid Mastery In Indonesian Primary Schools**

The findings of this study provide empirical support for the centrality of tajwid mastery as a core dimension of professional competence among Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in Indonesian primary schools. Consistent with theories of teacher knowledge, the results demonstrate that limited subject-specific mastery particularly in procedural and phonetic aspects of Qur'anic recitation directly constrains instructional quality (Shulman, 1986; Ball et al., 2008). In Qur'anic instruction, where accuracy and oral modeling are indispensable, deficiencies in tajwid competence undermine the pedagogical function of the teacher as a linguistic and religious authority.

The prominence of pre-service training as a determining factor aligns with international research on teacher education, which emphasizes that insufficient depth in content preparation often leads to fragile instructional practices (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Tatto et al., 2012). In the context of Islamic education, this issue is exacerbated by the dual expectation that teachers serve as both pedagogical facilitators and exemplars of religious practice. The findings suggest that current pre-service programs may inadequately balance pedagogical theory with sustained, practice-oriented Qur'anic training, resulting in graduates who are formally qualified but operationally underprepared for authentic Qur'anic instruction (Berglund, 2017).

Institutional support emerged as a critical contextual variable shaping teachers' engagement with tajwid competence. Schools that lacked explicit policies or evaluative mechanisms related to Qur'anic recitation tended to reproduce minimal instructional standards. This finding is consistent with institutional theory, which posits that organizational norms and accountability structures strongly influence professional behavior (Scott, 2014). Without institutional recognition of tajwid mastery as a professional requirement, teachers' motivation to improve this competence remains largely intrinsic and unevenly distributed (Bush & Glover, 2014).

The limited availability of targeted in-service professional development further reinforces this structural challenge. While general pedagogical training is necessary, research consistently shows that effective professional development must be content-specific, sustained, and closely aligned with instructional practice to generate meaningful change (Desimone & Garet, 2015; Timperley et al., 2007). The absence of continuous tajwid-focused professional learning opportunities suggests a systemic oversight in teacher development policy, particularly in relation to the unique epistemic demands of Qur'anic instruction.

Personal factors such as self-efficacy, reflective practice, and engagement with Qur'anic recitation outside formal teaching contexts also played a significant role. The finding that teaching experience alone does not guarantee higher competence supports existing research indicating that professional growth is contingent on deliberate practice rather than tenure (Avalos, 2011). From a sociocultural perspective, teachers who actively participate in Qur'anic recitation communities are more likely to internalize accurate tajwid practices, highlighting the importance of situated learning and identity formation in professional competence development (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The observed relationship between teachers' tajwid mastery and students' Qur'anic literacy outcomes reinforces a robust body of literature linking teacher content knowledge to student achievement (Hill et al., 2005; Hattie, 2012). In primary education, where learners are particularly sensitive to modeling effects, inaccuracies in teacher recitation risk becoming fossilized in students' reading practices. This finding underscores the ethical and pedagogical responsibility of IRE teachers to ensure instructional fidelity in Qur'anic transmission (Gade, 2004).

From the perspective of religious literacy, the implications extend beyond technical accuracy. Religious literacy involves the capacity to engage meaningfully and correctly with sacred texts within specific traditions (Moore, 2015). Inaccurate Qur'anic recitation compromises not only linguistic competence but also students' confidence and relationship with the Qur'an, potentially affecting long-term religious engagement. Thus,

tajwid mastery should be understood as integral to the broader aims of Islamic education rather than as a peripheral technical skill (Dinham, 2018).

Policy implications arising from this study point to the need for a more coherent alignment between curriculum standards, teacher education, professional development, and evaluation systems. Comparative education research demonstrates that systems achieving sustained instructional improvement are those that integrate competence standards with supportive professional learning structures (Schleicher, 2018). In the Indonesian context, incorporating tajwid mastery into formal teacher competency frameworks and appraisal mechanisms could provide both incentive and direction for systematic improvement.

Study contributes to the literature by foregrounding tajwid mastery as a professional competence that mediates the relationship between teacher preparation, instructional practice, and student learning outcomes in Qur'anic education. By situating the findings within established theories of teacher knowledge, institutional practice, and religious literacy, the discussion highlights the need to reconceptualize Qur'anic instruction as a domain requiring rigorous professional standards comparable to other core academic subjects.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that tajwid mastery is a fundamental yet underdeveloped component of professional competence among Islamic Religious Education teachers in Indonesian primary schools. The findings demonstrate that limitations in teachers' tajwid proficiency significantly affect the quality of Qur'anic instruction and, consequently, students' Qur'anic literacy outcomes. Variations in competence are shaped by interconnected factors, including inadequate pre-service preparation, limited access to content-focused in-service professional development, insufficient institutional support, and differing levels of personal engagement with Qur'anic recitation. The study highlights that teaching experience alone does not ensure competence growth; rather, sustained practice, reflective learning, and structured professional support are critical. These results underscore the need to reposition tajwid mastery as an essential professional standard within Islamic Religious Education. Strengthening alignment between teacher education, school policy, and professional development systems is imperative to ensure accurate, authentic, and effective Qur'anic instruction at the primary education level.

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