

Pedagogical Competence of Non-Muslim Teachers in Teaching Islamic Education at SDN 3 Pundu

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the pedagogical competencies of non-Muslim teachers in teaching Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at SDN 3 Pundu and to identify the challenges and solutions encountered in its implementation. This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The research subjects consisted of 1 non-Muslim teacher as the primary informant, 1 school principal, and 6 students as supporting informants selected through purposive sampling based on their relevance to the research focus. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The data were analyzed using an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, while data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation. The findings revealed that the pedagogical competencies of non-Muslim teachers were categorized as adequate to good, particularly in understanding student characteristics, planning lessons, and implementing interactive learning activities. However, limitations were identified in the mastery of Islamic subject matter and worship practices. The major challenges included limited understanding of Islamic Education content, sensitivity to religious values, and the lack of specialized training. To address these challenges, teachers and schools implemented several strategies, such as collaborating with other teachers, utilizing instructional media, and strengthening institutional support. This study concludes that strong pedagogical competence and adaptive strategies enable Islamic Education instruction to remain effective even when taught by non-Muslim teachers. Therefore, strengthening teacher competencies and policy support is necessary to maintain the quality of learning in contexts with limited educational resources.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a systematic process of developing students' potential through targeted, planned, and sustained learning activities. Education plays a strategic role in improving the quality of human resources and shaping students' character and personality so that they are able to lead meaningful and responsible lives (Abdullah, 2015). In the context of formal education, learning success is largely determined by the quality of teachers as the primary actors in the educational process (Amaliah et al., 2025; Mujtabarrizza & Muslimah, 2025). One of the competencies that most determines the quality of learning is pedagogical competence, namely the teacher's ability to understand student characteristics, design, implement, and evaluate learning effectively (Espihani et al., 2025; Fauzannur & Muslimah, 2024). In practice, pedagogical competence serves not only as a technical ability to teach, but also as an adaptive ability to navigate the various dynamics of learning. This becomes increasingly complex in Islamic Religious Education (IRE), which emphasizes not only cognitive aspects but also affective and psychomotor aspects, such as the

formation of religious character, the internalization of values, and the practice of worship (Yusro et al., 2026; Al-Ghifaari et al., 2025). Islamic education is not only oriented toward the transfer of knowledge but also toward the internalization of Islamic values in daily life through the integrated development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects (A. Abdullah, 2017a). Therefore, PAI teachers are required to possess comprehensive pedagogical competencies so that they are able to integrate knowledge, attitudes, and skills into the learning process. A number of studies over the past decade have shown that pedagogical competence has a significant impact on the quality of instruction and student learning outcomes. Efendi et al. (2024) assert that the pedagogical competence of Islamic Education teachers contributes to the effectiveness of values-based instruction. Another study by Husnul 'Abid et al. (2025) indicates that the development of TPACK-based pedagogical competence can enhance the professionalism of PAI teachers in the digital age. Furthermore, Latifah et al. (2026), through a literature review, conclude that pedagogical competence is a key factor in determining the success of PAI learning that is adaptable to contemporary developments. This aligns with research showing that varied PAI teaching methods, such as discussions, demonstrations, and case studies, can develop critical thinking skills and improve the quality of student learning (A. Abdullah, Saudah, Yuwandi, & Norhidayah, 2026). Other studies have also demonstrated a relationship between pedagogical competence and students' affective aspects. Munawir et al. (2025) found that improving the pedagogical competence of Islamic Education teachers has a positive impact on strengthening students' religious character. Ely (2025) adds that pedagogical competence in Islamic Education instruction must include sensitivity to values and a contextual approach to make learning more meaningful. Meanwhile, Abrianto et al. (2024) emphasize the importance of teachers' ability to manage learning interactions based on religious values. These findings are supported by research by Amanda et al. (2025), which indicates that the consistent practice of religious rituals, such as congregational Dhuha prayer, can foster students' noble character through consistent and structured teacher guidance (Amanda, Abdullah, & Rahimah, 2025). However, most of these studies still proceed from the assumption that Islamic Education (PAI) instruction is conducted by Muslim teachers with a background in Islamic Education. Research conducted by Huda (2017) and Sodikin et al. (2022) does begin to address the aspect of teacher professionalism in the context of diversity, but has not specifically discussed the conditions when non-Muslim teachers teach PAI. This indicates that studies on pedagogical competence in the context of religious pluralism remain very limited.

On the other hand, the reality on the ground shows that not all schools have an adequate supply of Islamic Education teachers. The uneven distribution of teaching staff has forced some schools to adopt alternative policies, including assigning non-Muslim teachers to teach Islamic Education (Shulman, 1986). This situation presents a unique yet problematic phenomenon, as PAI instruction is ideally conducted by teachers with appropriate religious competencies, yet schools must practically ensure students' right to religious education (Fuad, 2018; Pratama, 2025). The issues of limited teaching staff and the need for adaptive instruction are also reflected in Abdullah's (2017) research, which indicates that the implementation of PAI instruction and assessment frequently faces both technical and non-technical challenges related to teacher competence and the availability of learning resources (Sidiq & Muslimah, 2024). This phenomenon creates a gap between normative educational demands and empirical realities in the educational field. On one hand, teacher competency standards emphasize the alignment between professional expertise and religious background in Islamic Education (PAI) instruction. On the other hand, the limited availability of qualified PAI teachers in certain regions has led schools to assign non-Muslim teachers to teach the subject (Banks, 2019). Previous studies have generally examined pedagogical competence within the framework of teachers who share the same religious background as the subject taught, thereby leaving limited understanding of how pedagogical competence operates

within contexts of religious plurality and professional mismatch. Based on this state-of-the-art analysis, the novelty of this study lies not merely in examining non-Muslim teachers who teach Islamic Education, but in extending the theoretical understanding of pedagogical competence as a contextual, adaptive, and value-sensitive construct within pluralistic educational settings. This study contributes to the discourse on pedagogical competence by demonstrating that effective religious instruction is not solely determined by religious identity or disciplinary background, but also by teachers' adaptive pedagogical strategies, professional ethics, and ability to negotiate religious values within classroom interactions. Furthermore, this study broadens the perspective of Islamic education research by positioning pedagogical competence as a dynamic practice shaped by institutional conditions, resource limitations, and intercultural educational realities. Based on the above, the research questions in this study are: (1) what are the pedagogical competencies of non-Muslim teachers in PAI instruction at SDN 3 Pundu, and (2) what challenges and solutions emerge in the implementation of such instruction? To address these questions, this study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the observed phenomenon. The objectives of this study are to analyze the pedagogical competencies of non-Muslim teachers in PAI instruction and to identify the challenges and solutions implemented in teaching practice. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of pedagogical competence studies within the context of educational pluralism and inclusive religious education, while also providing practical implications for schools and policymakers regarding teacher placement, competency development, and instructional support in resource-limited educational contexts.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of non-Muslim teachers' pedagogical competence in teaching Islamic Religious Education within the real-world context of schools. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is capable of exploring meaning, experiences, and learning practices holistically in natural settings (Gafur et al., 2022; Ahmad & Muslimah, 2021). A case study design was used because this study focuses on a specific case, namely non-Muslim teachers who teach PAI, thereby allowing for an in-depth and contextual exploration of the phenomenon in accordance with real-life characteristics (Hafizi & Muslimah, 2021). The study was conducted at SDN 3 Pundu, located in Cempaga Hulu Subdistrict, East Kotawaringin Regency, Central Kalimantan. This school was selected because of its unique characteristic, namely the involvement of non-Muslim teachers in Islamic Education (PAI) instruction due to a shortage of teaching staff. In general, the school environment reflects a heterogeneous educational setting, both socially and culturally, making it relevant for examining the dynamics of religious values-based learning in a pluralistic context. The research subjects were determined using purposive sampling based on their relevance to the research focus (Patton, 2015). The study involved 8 informants consisting of 1 non-Muslim teacher as the primary informant, 1 school principal as a supporting informant, and 6 students as additional informants to obtain comprehensive data regarding the learning process.

Table 1. Research Informants

No	Informant Category	Number of Informants	Role in Research
1	Non-Muslim Teacher	1	Primary informant
2	School Principal	1	Supporting informant
3	Students	6	Additional informants
	Total	8	

Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to directly observe the PAI learning process in the classroom, particularly regarding the

planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning carried out by teachers (Hasanah, 2016). Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth information regarding the experiences, challenges, and strategies used by teachers in teaching PAI (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Meanwhile, documentation was used to complement the data in the form of teaching materials, school records, and evidence of learning activities (Sugiyono, 2019). The research procedures consisted of several stages, namely: (1) preparation stage, including preliminary observations and research permission; (2) determination of informants through purposive sampling; (3) data collection through observation, interviews, and documentation; (4) data analysis using the interactive analysis model; and (5) data validation through source and method triangulation. Data analysis was conducted inductively using the interactive model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and focusing on data relevant to the research theme, which was then presented in a descriptive narrative form to facilitate interpretation and followed by systematic conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation and methodological triangulation by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation to obtain valid and reliable findings (Sugiyono, 2018; Moleong, 2018).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The results of this study are presented based on two main focuses, namely (1) the pedagogical competencies of non-Muslim teachers in PAI instruction and (2) the challenges and solutions in the implementation of instruction. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, then analyzed and categorized based on indicators of pedagogical competencies.

3.1 Pedagogical Competence of Non-Muslim Teachers in PAI Instruction

Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, the pedagogical competence of non-Muslim teachers at SDN 3 Pundu was analyzed using five main indicators: understanding student characteristics, lesson planning, learning implementation, learning evaluation, and student potential development. The categorization of competence was determined based on the consistency and quality of pedagogical practices observed during the learning process. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2 below.

Tabel 2. Results of the Analysis of Non-Muslim Teachers' Pedagogical Competence

No	Pedagogical Competency Indicators	Research Findings	Score Range	Category
1	Understanding student characteristics	The teacher understands differences in students' abilities and attitudes	76-100	Good
2	Lesson planning	Using teaching modules aligned with the curriculum	56-75	Adequate
3	Learning implementation	Interactive teaching through lectures, discussions, and question-answer activities	76-100	Good
4	Learning evaluation	Written tests and attitude observation	56-75	Adequate
5	Student potential development	Providing learning motivation to students	56-75	Adequate

The categorization of pedagogical competence in this study was based on qualitative data interpretation supported by observational indicators and interview findings. The competency categories were adapted into score intervals to strengthen analytical interpretation, namely: 76-100 = Good, 56-75 = Adequate, 40-55 = Fair, and below 40 = Poor. The categorization was determined based on the consistency of pedagogical practices demonstrated by teachers during the learning

process, including lesson planning, classroom interaction, evaluation techniques, and student guidance. These findings are supported by interview results. A non-Muslim teacher stated: *“I try to understand the students’ personalities first, because their abilities vary, so my teaching approach must be adapted accordingly”* (Teacher Interview, 2026). Additionally, regarding lesson planning, the teacher explained: *“I use existing textbooks and modules, then adapt them to the classroom context so students can understand them more easily”* (Teacher Interview, 2026). These findings indicate that communicative and contextual pedagogical approaches can help students better understand the learning material. This aligns with the research by Abdullah which emphasizes that interactive learning activities can enhance students’ communication skills, self-confidence, and engagement in the learning process. During the learning process, students also provided positive feedback: *“The teacher explains things clearly, sometimes using stories too, so it’s easier for us to understand”* (Student Interview, 2026). However, regarding assessment, the teacher acknowledged certain limitations: *“For practices such as prayer, I can only explain the theory; for the actual practice, students are usually assisted or guided”* (Teacher Interview, 2026). These limitations in religious practice indicate that PAI instruction requires not only theoretical mastery but also the ability to demonstrate and foster direct engagement with religious practices. This finding is consistent with Ridhahani who emphasizes that religious education plays an important role in developing spirituality and the application of Islamic values in everyday life.

3.2 Challenges in Teaching Islamic Education by Non-Muslim Teachers

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, this study identified several challenges experienced by non-Muslim teachers in conducting Islamic Education instruction at SDN 3 Pundu. These challenges were related to the mastery of Islamic subject matter, worship practices, sensitivity in delivering religious values, and the availability of professional training. The findings are summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Challenges in Teaching Islamic Education

No	Types of Challenges	Description of Findings
1	Limited subject-matter mastery	Difficulties in understanding Islamic teaching materials
2	Worship practices	Inability to directly demonstrate worship practices
3	Value sensitivity	The need for caution in delivering religious materials
4	Lack of training	Absence of specialized training related to PAI instruction

The data showed that teachers experienced difficulties in understanding several Islamic Education topics because they did not have an academic background in Islamic studies. This condition was expressed by the teacher during the interview: *“I don’t have a background in Islamic Education, so for certain topics I have to study them first before teaching”* (Teacher Interview, 2026). In addition, the teacher also faced limitations in demonstrating worship practices directly during classroom instruction. The following interview excerpt illustrates this condition: *“For worship practices like prayer, I can’t demonstrate them directly, so I can only explain them based on books or videos”* (Teacher Interview, 2026). Based on classroom observations, the teacher tended to use supporting media such as textbooks and instructional videos when explaining practical religious materials. The learning process was still carried out interactively, although several practical components of worship were delivered theoretically. The principal also confirmed the limitations in teacher availability at the school: *“There are indeed limitations among PAI teachers, so we assign the available teachers to ensure that learning continues”* (Principal Interview, 2026). The interview and observation data indicate that the challenges faced in implementing Islamic Education instruction include limitations in religious content mastery, constraints in worship practice demonstrations, carefulness in conveying religious values, and the absence of specialized pedagogical training related to Islamic Education instruction.

3.3 Solutions Implemented in Teaching

Based on interview, observation, and documentation data, this study identified several strategies implemented by teachers and the school to address challenges in Islamic Education instruction. The implementation level of each solution was categorized based on the consistency and frequency of its application during the learning process. The categorization used the following score intervals: 76-100 = Good, 56-75 = Adequate, 40-55 = Fair, and below 40 = Poor. The scores were determined from observation findings, interview consistency, and supporting documentation related to instructional practices. The findings regarding the implemented solutions are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Solutions Implemented in Islamic Education Instruction

No	Solutions	Description of Implementation	Score Range	Category
1	Collaboration	Discussing learning materials with other teachers	76–100	Good
2	Learning media	Using videos, textbooks, and online resources as supporting media	76–100	Good
3	School support	Providing flexible teaching policies and instructional support	56–75	Adequate
4	Professional approach	Maintaining tolerance and professionalism during instruction	76–100	Good

Interview data showed that teachers attempted to overcome limitations in mastering Islamic subject matter by seeking additional references and consulting with colleagues. The teacher stated: *“I usually look for additional references online or discuss with other teachers so that the material I present is more accurate”* (Teacher Interview, 2026). Observation data indicated that collaboration activities were conducted informally with fellow teachers, particularly when preparing learning materials related to worship practices and Islamic concepts. Teachers also relied on supporting instructional media during classroom instruction. Classroom observations further showed that teachers frequently used instructional videos, textbooks, and visual learning materials when explaining worship procedures and Islamic historical topics. Students appeared more attentive during media-based instructional sessions. The school principal explained the institutional support provided by the school: *“We support this by providing flexibility and encouraging the use of learning media so that the material can be conveyed effectively”* (Principal Interview, 2026). Student interview data also confirmed the use of instructional media during learning activities. One student stated: *“Sometimes we watch videos about prayer or stories of the prophets, so we understand better”* (Student Interview, 2026). Observation results additionally showed that teachers maintained a careful and professional approach during instruction. Teachers tended to rely on textbook-based explanations and avoided subjective interpretations of religious issues during classroom interactions.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that pedagogical competence in Islamic Education (PAI) instruction cannot be understood solely as mastery of religious content, but also as the ability to create adaptive, student-centered, and context-sensitive learning environments. The ability of non-Muslim teachers to maintain interactive classroom instruction despite limitations in religious background indicates that pedagogical competence operates as a professional and contextual capacity rather than merely a disciplinary attribute. This supports the theoretical perspective proposed by Mulyasa (2013) and Safitri et al. (2025), which emphasize that pedagogical competence fundamentally concerns teachers’ ability to manage learning processes effectively through classroom interaction, communication, planning, and instructional adaptation. This finding is also consistent with Lee S. Shulman’s concept of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), which

emphasizes that effective teaching requires not only mastery of subject matter but also the capacity to transform knowledge into forms that are understandable and meaningful for students (Shulman, 1987). The findings further indicate that the effectiveness of classroom interaction was closely related to teachers' adaptive strategies in responding to students' learning needs. This finding is consistent with Tang et al. (2021), who argue that pedagogical competence is reflected in teachers' ability to facilitate meaningful learning experiences through interaction and contextual learning management. In this study, the effectiveness of learning interactions can be explained by the teachers' use of communicative and participatory approaches that enabled students to remain engaged during the learning process. This also supports the findings of Alamsyah et al. (2024), which demonstrate that adaptive and interactive learning approaches contribute significantly to student participation and classroom engagement. In addition, the integration of adaptive instructional approaches aligns with the framework proposed by Punya Mishra and Matthew J. Koehler (2006), who explain that effective teaching in contemporary classrooms requires the integration of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge (TPACK) to support meaningful and contextually relevant learning experiences. However, the findings also reveal limitations in the areas of worship practices and mastery of religious content. These limitations indicate that Islamic Education possesses characteristics distinct from general subjects because it requires the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. In this context, pedagogical competence alone is insufficient without adequate understanding of religious substance and practice. This finding strengthens the argument proposed by Abrianto et al. (2024), who state that pedagogical competence in Islamic Education must include both instructional skills and mastery of religious values and content. Similarly, Ely (2025) emphasizes that Islamic Education instruction requires value sensitivity and the integration of religious understanding to ensure that value internalization can occur effectively within the learning process. This perspective is relevant to James A. Banks's theory of multicultural education, which highlights the importance of cultural and value sensitivity in creating inclusive educational practices within diverse learning environments (Banks, 2019).

Compared with previous studies, this research demonstrates different dynamics within the implementation of Islamic Education instruction. Research conducted by Munawir et al. (2025) and Al-Ghifaari et al. (2025) concluded that pedagogical competence contributes significantly to strengthening students' religious character. However, those studies were conducted in contexts where teachers possessed formal educational backgrounds in Islamic Education. In contrast, this study shows that instructional effectiveness may still emerge in situations where teachers lack religious specialization, provided that adaptive pedagogical practices and professional responsibility are maintained. These findings suggest that contextual conditions within schools influence the form and implementation of pedagogical competence in practice. In line with this, Linda Darling-Hammond (2017) argues that teacher effectiveness is strongly influenced by professional preparation, contextual adaptation, and institutional support systems that enable teachers to respond effectively to classroom diversity and instructional challenges. The findings also indicate that adaptive instructional strategies emerged as a response to institutional limitations, particularly the shortage of Islamic Education teachers. The use of supplementary instructional resources, collaboration among teachers, and reliance on structured learning materials reflect adaptive mechanisms developed to maintain instructional continuity. This finding is in line with Husnul 'Abid et al. (2025), who argue that pedagogical competence can be strengthened through collaborative and technology-supported learning practices. Likewise, Abdullah and Ahmad (2026) found that digital learning applications can support students' understanding of Islamic instructional materials more systematically and practically. In this context, technology and collaborative learning function not merely as technical tools, but as compensatory mechanisms that enable learning continuity within conditions of limited human resources. These findings further support

the TPACK framework proposed by Punya Mishra and Matthew J. Koehler (2006), particularly regarding the importance of integrating pedagogy, content, and technology to address instructional challenges in contemporary educational contexts. Another important finding of this study concerns the issue of professionalism in religious education. Normative perspectives in Islamic Education generally position religious identity as a primary requirement for instructional legitimacy (Muchith, 2016). However, the findings of this study indicate that instructional professionalism may also be reflected through ethical responsibility, adaptive teaching practices, and commitment to students' learning needs. This finding supports Abdullah's (2017b) perspective that teacher professionalism is not solely determined by personal identity, but also by the ability to carry out educational responsibilities ethically, professionally, and responsibly. This perspective resonates with Linda Darling-Hammond (2006), who emphasizes that teacher professionalism involves continuous adaptation, reflective practice, and responsiveness to students' educational needs.

Therefore, this study broadens the discourse on Islamic Education by demonstrating that educational professionalism may operate within pluralistic and resource-limited educational contexts. Theoretically, this study reinforces the understanding that pedagogical competence is contextual, adaptive, and relational. The findings expand pedagogical competence studies by demonstrating that competence is shaped not only by disciplinary expertise, but also by institutional realities, educational plurality, and teachers' adaptive capacities in responding to classroom challenges. This perspective aligns with Riany et al. (2023), who emphasize that pedagogical competence in religious education must integrate instructional ability with sensitivity toward values and social context. Furthermore, the findings strengthen Lee S. Shulman's (1987) argument that pedagogical effectiveness depends on the integration between instructional understanding, contextual adaptation, and meaningful transformation of knowledge within classroom practice. Practically, the findings imply that schools and policymakers need to strengthen institutional support systems for teachers assigned outside their academic specialization. Special training, collaborative mentoring, and instructional support systems are important to improve teachers' understanding of religious materials and instructional practices. In addition, policies regarding the equitable distribution of Islamic Education teachers need to be strengthened to minimize disparities in educational quality. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of Islamic Education instruction is influenced not only by individual teacher competence, but also by institutional capacity in supporting adaptive and inclusive learning practices within pluralistic educational settings. This recommendation is relevant to James A. Banks's (2015) view that inclusive educational systems require institutional policies that support equity, diversity, and culturally responsive teaching practices.

4. CONCLUSION

The pedagogical competence of non-Muslim teachers in teaching Islamic Education at SDN 3 Pundu falls within the adequate to good category. Teachers demonstrated the ability to understand student characteristics, manage classroom interaction, implement learning activities interactively, and conduct learning evaluations. However, limitations were identified in the mastery of religious content and worship practices due to the teachers' non-Islamic educational background. To address these limitations, teachers implemented adaptive strategies such as utilizing instructional media, collaborating with fellow teachers, and seeking institutional support from the school administration. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of Islamic Education instruction is influenced not only by teachers' religious background, but also by pedagogical competence, professionalism, adaptability, and institutional support in the learning process. The findings of this study have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this study

contri butes to the development of pedagogical competence studies by emphasizing that pedagogical competence is contextual and adaptive within pluralistic educational settings. This study also broadens the discourse on Islamic Education by demonstrating that instructional effectiveness may still be achieved through professional and student-centered pedagogical practices despite limitations in religious specialization. Practically, the findings imply the importance of strengthening institutional support systems, including professional mentoring, teacher collaboration, instructional media utilization, and policy support for schools experiencing shortages of Islamic Education teachers. This study has several limitations. First, the study was conducted in only one school context, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings. Second, the number of informants was relatively limited and focused primarily on teachers, students, and the school principal within one institution. Third, the study emphasized pedagogical competence and did not deeply examine students' learning outcomes or long-term impacts on religious understanding and character formation. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve broader educational contexts and a larger number of participants in order to obtain more comprehensive findings regarding the implementation of Islamic Education by teachers with different educational or religious backgrounds. Future studies may also examine the relationship between teachers' pedagogical competence and students' religious learning outcomes, character development, and attitudes toward religious tolerance. In addition, comparative studies between schools with adequate Islamic Education teachers and schools experiencing teacher shortages would provide a deeper understanding of instructional effectiveness within diverse educational contexts.

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