

Teacher Professionalism in *Taare Zameen Par*: A Qualitative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Teacher professionalism is essential to creating humanistic, inclusive, and student-centered learning that recognizes students' diverse characteristics and potential. This study aims to analyze the representation of teacher professionalism in the film *Taare Zameen Par* and its relevance to the principles of Islamic education. The study employed a qualitative descriptive approach, using the film as the primary data source and relevant books and journal articles as secondary sources. Data were collected through indirect observation and documentation by repeatedly observing dialogues, scenes, behaviors, and actions related to teacher professionalism, and were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, classification, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that teacher professionalism in *Taare Zameen Par* is represented through four interconnected competencies: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies. These competencies are reflected in Ram Shankar Nikumbh's ability to understand students' individual needs, develop creative and appropriate learning strategies, communicate effectively with students, teachers, parents, and the community, and demonstrate patience, empathy, responsibility, emotional maturity, and exemplary behavior. From the perspective of Islamic education, these characteristics are consistent with the values of *uswah* (exemplary conduct), *ihsan* (excellence), compassion, responsibility, and respect for human potential.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental process in shaping individuals who possess knowledge, skills, personality, and noble character. Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System defines education as a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment and learning process that enables students to actively develop their potential, including spiritual and

religious capacities, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills needed for themselves, society, the nation, and the state. Thus, education is not merely oriented toward academic achievement but also toward the holistic development of students' potential.

From an Islamic perspective, education holds an important position because it concerns the formation of individuals who are knowledgeable and possess good character. The Qur'an emphasizes that human beings were created in the best form, as stated by Allah SWT in QS. At-Tin [95]: 4:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَن تَقْوِيمٍ

"Indeed, We created humankind in the best form."

This verse indicates that every human being possesses potential and dignity that should be respected. In education, students should therefore not be viewed solely on the basis of academic achievement, reading, writing, numeracy, or other immediately visible abilities. Each student has different characteristics, abilities, interests, learning styles, and developmental rates. Therefore, education should provide opportunities for every student to develop their potential.

The importance of an educational process that recognizes individual differences becomes increasingly relevant when dealing with students who experience learning difficulties. Learning difficulties, including dyslexia, may cause students to encounter obstacles in reading, writing, understanding symbols, following instructions, and completing academic tasks. Research on the film *Taare Zameen Par* shows that the character Ishaan is portrayed as a child with characteristics of dyslexia while simultaneously possessing potential and creativity that cannot be measured solely through conventional academic abilities (Septiani, P., Pratiwi, T., Ulfah, T., 2019).

This condition demonstrates that educational success is strongly influenced by teachers' ability to understand their students. Teachers are not merely transmitters of subject matter but educators who are responsible for recognizing students' characteristics, needs, potential, and learning difficulties. In the context of professionalism, teachers are required to possess pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competencies. Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers stipulates that teachers must possess academic qualifications, competencies, teaching certificates, and the ability to achieve national educational goals. These competencies include pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competencies.

Teacher professionalism is ultimately demonstrated not only through mastery of learning materials but also through the ability to create learning experiences that correspond to students' characteristics. Research on teacher professionalism indicates that pedagogical competence has an important relationship with the quality of the learning process because teachers must be able to understand students, design instruction, implement learning activities, and conduct appropriate assessments (Buana, E. C., Zulwidyaningtyas, E., & Sulisty, 2025). This is consistent with other research emphasizing pedagogical competence and teacher autonomy as important aspects of teacher professional development, particularly in the context of madrasah education (Febrian, M. A., Halimah, S., & Budianti, 2025).

In Islam, professionalism in carrying out one's responsibilities is also associated with trustworthiness and dedication. Allah SWT states in QS. Al-An'am [6]: 135:

قُلْ يَا قَوْمِ اعْمَلُوا عَلَىٰ مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنِّي عَامِلٌ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ تَكُونُ لَهُ عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ

"Say, 'O my people, work according to your position; indeed, I am working. You will soon know who will have the good end in the Hereafter. Indeed, the wrongdoers will not succeed.'"

This verse may serve as a foundation for understanding that every responsibility should be carried out seriously and responsibly. For teachers, such dedication is manifested through the ability to plan learning, understand students, select appropriate methods, conduct objective assessments, and provide assistance to students experiencing learning difficulties. Professionalism, therefore, should not merely be understood as an occupational status but must be manifested through concrete actions in the educational process.

In addition to the Qur'an, attention to educators' responsibilities is consistent with the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), narrated by Muslim: *"Indeed, Allah has prescribed excellence in everything."* (HR. Muslim, No. 1955). This hadith provides an important principle that every responsibility should be carried out with *ihsan*, or excellence. In the teaching profession, the principle of *ihsan* can be manifested through teachers' dedication to educating students, patience in responding to individual differences, accuracy in selecting learning strategies, and concern for each child's development.

Such a role of the teacher can be strongly identified in the film *Taare Zameen Par*. Released in 2007, the Indian film tells the story of Ishaan Awasthi, a child experiencing learning difficulties who is later identified as having dyslexia. The film depicts a change in perspective toward the child when a teacher named Ram Shankar Nikumbh attempts to understand Ishaan's difficulties, interests, and potential. Throughout the film, Ishaan's difficulties are not merely interpreted as problems of

discipline or laziness but as conditions requiring understanding and an appropriate educational approach.

Studies of *Taare Zameen Par* indicate that the film has strong relevance to educational issues. Khanna, (2022), for example, explains that the film can be understood as a pedagogical medium that broadens perspectives on the experiences of students with learning difficulties and encourages a more transformative form of education rather than one focused merely on memorization. Meanwhile, Izzati, dkk (2022) identified several character education values in *Taare Zameen Par*, including discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, appreciation of achievement, communication, social concern, responsibility, and self-confidence.

From the teacher's perspective, the film illustrates that educators need to possess noble character in carrying out their responsibilities. Majid, dkk (2024) found that the character of Ram Shankar Nikumbh reflects empathy, acceptance of differences, student empowerment, creativity in teaching, openness, and confidence in every student's potential. Similarly, Suprobo, dkk (2024) demonstrate that the film can be interpreted through the perspective of teachers' noble character and learning approaches that recognize differences in students' abilities.

These aspects are particularly important in inclusive education. Students with different learning needs or characteristics should not receive degrading treatment or be given negative labels. Wahyuni, H. I., & Hendarwati, (2025) found that *Taare Zameen Par* is relevant to a humanistic approach to inclusive education, particularly through efforts to overcome students' lack of self-confidence, understand their personalities and environments, develop empathy, involve families, and identify students' talents.

A student-centered approach can also be seen in the learning strategies employed by the teacher in the film. Research on dyslexia intervention in *Taare Zameen Par* indicates that a multisensory approach can assist students experiencing difficulties in reading and writing (Septiani, dkk 2019). Maisaroh & Arifah (2025) likewise emphasize the importance of adapting instruction to students' learning pace and needs, using visual, auditory, and kinesthetic media, and involving parents in supporting students with dyslexia.

Other studies of the film indicate that Ishaan's difficulties are not limited to the learning process at school but are also related to family, society, and the educational system. Badra & Sheeba (2025) show that children with dyslexia may experience misunderstanding and marginalization when educational systems place excessive emphasis on academic achievement and rigid learning practices. Thus, the problem

portrayed in the film is not merely an individual student issue but also reflects how teachers, parents, and educational institutions respond to differences in children's abilities.

Professional teachers should continuously develop their competencies. Research on teacher professional competence emphasizes that mastery of professional competencies is an important factor in improving educational quality and should be supported by continuous professional development. In addition, the development of teachers' personality competence is associated with integrity, maturity, emotional stability, exemplary conduct, and the quality of teachers' interactions with students. These findings indicate that teacher professionalism cannot be separated from personal character and the ability to establish meaningful educational relationships with students.

In this context, teachers need to view students as individuals with unique characteristics and potential. A student who experiences difficulties in one area does not necessarily lack abilities in other areas. *Taare Zameen Par* demonstrates how misunderstanding students can prevent their potential from developing, whereas an empathetic and needs-oriented educational approach can help students regain confidence and discover their abilities. A study of learning difficulties in the film also indicates that appropriate learning methods can help children develop reading, writing, and numeracy skills without neglecting their other potentials (Aflahah, dkk 2021).

This is consistent with the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):

"The merciful will be shown mercy by the Most Merciful. Show mercy to those on earth, and the One above the heavens will show mercy to you." (HR. Tirmidhi, No. 1924).

This hadith provides a moral foundation that educational relationships should be built upon compassion and care. Teachers do not need to approve every student's behavior, but they should be able to distinguish between behavior that needs correction and the student's inherent dignity, which must continue to be respected. Firmness can coexist with compassion, while learning can be conducted with discipline without assigning negative labels to students.

Film as an educational medium also has a strategic position in conveying educational messages more concretely. Film presents visual and emotional experiences that allow audiences to observe educational issues through characters, conflicts, actions, and character development. Khanna (2022) emphasizes that *Taare Zameen Par* has pedagogical potential because it can influence how teachers, students, parents, and educational stakeholders perceive learning experiences and differences

in students' abilities. Thus, film can be positioned not merely as entertainment but also as a source of reflection and value-based learning.

Based on the foregoing discussion, *Taare Zameen Par* contains educational values that are highly relevant to the study of teacher professionalism, particularly in understanding and supporting students. Previous studies have primarily examined the film from the perspectives of dyslexia, character education, multisensory learning, inclusive education, and teachers' noble character. Nevertheless, studies that specifically integrate the representation of teacher professionalism in the film with an Islamic educational perspective remain limited. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the values of teacher professionalism represented in *Taare Zameen Par* and their relevance to the principles of Islamic education. This study is expected to contribute theoretically and practically to a broader understanding of professional teachers who not only possess academic and pedagogical competence but also demonstrate exemplary character, empathy, responsibility, patience, creativity, and concern for the diversity of students' potential.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to analyze the values of teacher professionalism represented in the film *Taare Zameen Par*. The object of the study was Aamir Khan's film *Taare Zameen Par*, focusing on the dialogues, scenes, behaviors, and actions of the teacher character Ram Shankar Nikumbh related to teacher professionalism. The primary data source was the film *Taare Zameen Par*, while secondary data were obtained from books, journal articles, and relevant scholarly literature on education, teacher professionalism, Islamic education, and learning difficulties. The research was conducted through three stages: preparation, implementation, and completion. In the preparation stage, the researcher determined the research focus and conducted a literature review. The implementation stage involved repeatedly watching the film, observing relevant dialogues and scenes, and recording the collected data. The completion stage involved classifying, interpreting, and drawing conclusions from the data. Data were collected through indirect observation and documentation, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument assisted by a data-recording sheet. The data were analyzed descriptively through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing by categorizing the findings based on teacher professionalism values, including pedagogical, personal, professional, and social competencies, as well as empathy, responsibility, creativity, exemplary behavior, and the ability to understand students' individual needs.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Teacher Professionalism in the Film *Taare Zameen Par*

The findings indicate that teacher professionalism in the film *Taare Zameen Par* is represented through four competencies: professional, pedagogical, social, and personal competencies. These four competencies are demonstrated through the character of Ram Shankar Nikumbh in designing learning activities, understanding students' characteristics, developing individual potential, establishing communication with various parties, and demonstrating responsibility and exemplary behavior. This finding is consistent with the study by Cahyani, dkk (2026), which demonstrates that pedagogical, personal, professional, and social competencies are interconnected dimensions that support students' learning success. Studies on *Taare Zameen Par* have also shown that the film represents educational practices emphasizing creativity, acceptance of differences, empowerment, and confidence in students' potential (Khanna, 2022; Majid, dkk 2024).

3.2. Professional Competence of the Teacher

Professional competence in the film is demonstrated through Nikumbh's ability to master and creatively develop learning materials. At 1:12:04, Nikumbh uses music, movement, and games in art lessons, enabling students to participate actively in the learning process. At 1:49:20, he uses stories of figures such as Albert Einstein and Leonardo da Vinci as sources of motivation to demonstrate that every individual possesses different potentials. Furthermore, at 1:54:21, learning takes place in an open environment, where students are encouraged to explore nature and produce creative work. These findings demonstrate that teacher professionalism is not merely related to mastery of subject matter but also to the ability to transform learning materials into creative and meaningful learning experiences. Khanna (2022) found that *Taare Zameen Par* highlights the importance of pedagogical approaches that develop creativity while recognizing differences in students' abilities and aspirations. Thus, Nikumbh's actions demonstrate that professional teachers need to connect learning materials with students' real-life experiences so that learning does not merely involve the transmission of information.

3.3. Social Competence of the Teacher

Social competence is represented through Nikumbh's ability to communicate with students, fellow teachers, parents, and members of the community. At 1:23:10, Nikumbh maintains calm communication when his teaching methods are criticized by other teachers. Rather than responding emotionally, he maintains professional relationships with his colleagues. At 1:19:40, Nikumbh demonstrates a communicative approach toward his students by attempting to understand Ishaan without forcing

him to speak. Meanwhile, at 1:36:30, he visits Ishaan's family to obtain information about the student's condition and establish cooperation with his parents. This finding demonstrates that teachers' social competence is manifested through communication, empathy, collaboration, and respect for others. Research on teacher character in *Taare Zameen Par* also shows that Nikumbh is portrayed as a teacher who demonstrates empathy, openness, acceptance of differences, and confidence in students' abilities (Majid, dkk 2024). Social competence is therefore an essential component of professionalism because teachers do not work individually but operate within a social environment involving students, parents, colleagues, and the wider community.

3.4. Pedagogical Competence of the Teacher

Pedagogical competence is one of the most prominent findings in the film. At 1:17:29, Nikumbh provides students with opportunities to express their imagination through drawing activities. When Ishaan is unable to begin the assignment, Nikumbh does not immediately punish him but attempts to understand the underlying cause of his behavior. At 1:26:40, he examines Ishaan's books and identifies recurring patterns in his reading and writing difficulties. Subsequently, at 1:59:21, Nikumbh explains Ishaan's condition to the school principal and seeks permission to provide him with individual assistance. This support is implemented at 2:03:06 through individualized learning using various media and activities, including sand, games, pictures, numbers, reading exercises, and writing practices. This strategy demonstrates Nikumbh's efforts to adapt the learning process to the individual characteristics and needs of his student. This finding is consistent with Suprobo, dkk (2024), who identify *Taare Zameen Par* as an important representation of the need for educational practices that recognize student differences and provide a supportive learning environment. Similarly, Khanna (2022) positions the film as an important example in discussions of pedagogy, creativity, and educational responses to students experiencing learning difficulties.

Nikumbh's pedagogical competence also demonstrates a student-centered learning principle. He does not treat Ishaan in the same manner as other students but seeks learning strategies that correspond to his particular characteristics. This approach illustrates that teachers need to understand students individually before determining appropriate learning strategies. Therefore, pedagogical professionalism is not limited to the ability to deliver subject matter but also includes the ability to identify learning difficulties, select appropriate methods, provide guidance, and monitor students' development.

3.5. Personal Competence of the Teacher

Personal competence is demonstrated through patience, responsibility, concern for others, emotional self-control, and the ability to serve as a role model for students. At 1:23:10, Nikumbh accepts criticism from other teachers without responding with anger. At 1:28:15 and 1:34:48, he demonstrates concern for others through acts of assistance and sharing. At 1:29:13, he shows deep concern for Ishaan after recognizing the emotional pressure experienced by the student. At 1:46:31, Nikumbh demonstrates emotional self-control by channeling his emotions into positive activities. Subsequently, at 2:00:28, he demonstrates responsibility by requesting permission from the school principal to provide additional guidance to Ishaan.

These findings demonstrate that teachers' personal competence is an important element in developing students' trust. Teachers do not merely function as transmitters of knowledge but also serve as figures who provide examples through their attitudes and behavior. This finding is supported by Majid, dkk (2024), who found that the teacher character in *Taare Zameen Par* is represented through empathy, acceptance, creativity, openness, and confidence in students' potential. Another study also indicates that personal competence is associated with teachers' professional competence, demonstrating that professionalism cannot be separated from the educator's personal qualities (Asmawi, dkk, 2026).

The value of exemplary behavior also has a foundation in Islamic education. Allah SWT states in QS. Al-Ahzab [33]: 21:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

"Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example for whoever has hope in Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah often." (QS. Al-Ahzab [33]: 21).

This verse reinforces the finding that teachers have an exemplary function in education. Teachers' personalities can serve as concrete examples for students in developing attitudes, behavior, responsibility, care, and respect for others. In the context of the film, Nikumbh does not merely teach knowledge but also demonstrates educational values through his actions.

3.6. Integration of the Four Competencies in Teacher Professionalism

The findings demonstrate that the four teacher competencies in *Taare Zameen Par* do not function independently but complement one another. Professional competence is demonstrated through Nikumbh's ability to develop learning materials creatively; pedagogical competence is reflected in his ability to understand and address Ishaan's learning needs; social competence is demonstrated through communication with students, teachers, and parents; while personal competence is

reflected through patience, care, responsibility, and exemplary behavior. Cahyani, dkk (2026) similarly identify these four competencies as important aspects supporting students' learning processes and outcomes. Furthermore, Putra, dkk, (2026) demonstrate that social and personal competencies are associated with teachers' professional competence, indicating that teacher professionalism is an integrative construct.

From the perspective of Islamic education, this integration indicates that an ideal teacher is not merely a *teacher* who transfers knowledge but also a *murabbi* who guides students' development and an *uswah* who provides exemplary behavior. Nikumbh's professionalism in the film is evident in his ability to combine teaching skills with concern for students' psychological conditions and potential. Therefore, Ishaan's learning progress is not solely the result of particular teaching methods but also of the positive relationship established between the teacher and the student.

3.7. Discussion and Implications of the Findings

The findings demonstrate that teacher professionalism in *Taare Zameen Par* is strongly associated with the concepts of humanistic, inclusive, and student-centered education. Nikumbh does not perceive Ishaan's learning difficulties as a reason to marginalize him but rather as a condition requiring a different educational approach. This attitude is consistent with Suprobo, dkk (2024), who emphasize acceptance of student diversity and the importance of a supportive educational environment. Furthermore, Khanna (2022) demonstrates that the film can be understood as an illustration of the importance of transforming educational perspectives from approaches focused primarily on information reproduction toward education that develops creativity and individual potential.

Thus, the findings address the research objective by demonstrating that teacher professionalism in *Taare Zameen Par* is represented through the integration of professional, pedagogical, social, and personal competencies. This representation indicates that professional teachers need not only knowledge and teaching skills but also the ability to understand students, establish effective communication, develop creativity, provide appropriate assistance, and serve as positive role models. The implication of these findings for education is the need to strengthen teachers' competencies comprehensively so that learning processes do not focus solely on academic achievement but also provide opportunities for the development of students' creativity, self-confidence, character, and individual potential.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the film *Taare Zameen Par* represents teacher professionalism through the integration of four main competencies: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies, as demonstrated through the character of Ram Shankar Nikumbh. Nikumbh's professionalism is reflected not only in his ability to master and creatively develop learning materials but also in his ability to understand students' individual characteristics and needs, establish effective communication with students, fellow teachers, parents, and the community, and demonstrate patience, care, responsibility, and exemplary behavior. The findings indicate that educational success is determined not only by mastery of subject matter but also by teachers' ability to create learning environments that are humanistic, inclusive, creative, and oriented toward developing students' potential. Thus, *Taare Zameen Par* illustrates that teacher professionalism is a comprehensive and interconnected set of competencies that contributes significantly to the success of the educational process. Future research could expand this study by comparing representations of teacher professionalism across several educational films or examining teacher professionalism from an Islamic education perspective, particularly in relation to exemplary behavior, compassion, and respect for students' individual differences.

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