PROFESSIONALISM OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LEARNING

Munawir [1], Bilqis Soraya Devy [2], Fatikh Candra Wijaya [3]

[1,2,3] *Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya*

Email: munawir@uinsby.ac.id[1], Bilqissorayadevyy@gmail.com[2], fatikh.candraw05@gmail.com[3]

Abstract.   *The author wrote an article with the title "Professionalism of Islamic Education Teachers (PAI) in Improving the Quality of Learning" because he wanted to know how to become a professional teacher, especially Islamic Education Teachers (PAI) in improving the quality of learning, what things a teacher must master in order to carry out his professionalism well, what strategies PAI teachers apply to improve the quality of learning, the challenges faced by PAI teachers in improving their professionalism, and how the solution to overcome all these problems. This research topic is important to raise because it shows that being a teacher is not just being a teacher, but a teacher must have various competencies that must be met so that it can be said to be a professional teacher. Education needs professional teachers to improve the quality of learning and create better learning experiences. Teachers not only have the task of communicating knowledge to students, but also play a role in designing their personality, morality, and skills to meet the needs of the times. This research is a qualitative study using the literature review method, in which data is collected from various journals, articles, books, and other relevant reading sources.*

Keyword: *Profesionalism, Islamic Religious Education, Learning*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a significant role in building the character and morals of students. In the education system in Indonesia, PAI teachers have a role beyond simply delivering Islamic teaching materials, but also being a role model in everyday life. Therefore, the professionalism of PAI teachers is a major factor in improving the quality of learning. This professionalism includes pedagogical competence, knowledge, and mastery of effective learning methods in order to build an interactive and meaningful learning environment for students.

The professionalism of PAI teachers also has a direct impact on student learning motivation. A highly competent educator is more likely to be able to build a learning atmosphere that is inspiring, fun, and related to students' daily experiences. Thus, students are more motivated to learn the teachings of Islam in depth and apply them in their lives.

However, in practice, many problems are experienced by PAI teachers in their efforts to improve their professionalism. One of the main problems is the lack of continuous training that can support the development of their competencies. There are still many PAI teachers who teach with traditional learning methods and do not utilize technology in the learning process, making it less effective in attracting students' interest. In addition, teacher certification, which should be a measure of professionalism, often does not fully reflect optimal teaching quality. There is also a competency gap between young teachers who are more adaptive to technology and senior teachers who have more experience in educating student characters.

To overcome these challenges, a strategy to improve the professionalism of PAI teachers is needed. The government and educational institutions must provide training in accordance with the needs of the times, including technology-based training and more interactive learning methods. With continuously improved professionalism, PAI teachers are expected to provide learning that is not only theoretical, but also able to build a noble personality and character for students, so that the main objectives of Islamic religious education can be achieved optimally.

METHOD

This research is qualitative in a literature study approach. This study examines how PAI teachers can improve the quality of learning professionally, so the author raises a study entitled "Professionalism of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Teachers in Improving Learning". The data in writing this article are sourced from Google Scholar sites in the form of journals, articles, books, and several reading sources published in the last 10 years and relevant to the research problem. The process of analyzing data through reduction and conclusion.

DISCUSSION

1. **Professionalism of Islamic Religious Education Teachers**

   Etymologically, profession comes from the word profession which means a type of work. Professional means someone who has expertise or is an expert in a field. Professionalism refers to the quality of the attitude of individuals in a profession towards their work, as well as the level of knowledge and skills possessed to carry out their duties properly.(Sutiono, 2021) In other words, teacher professionalism refers to the level of specialization of educators in attitudes, knowledge and skills. Professional teachers are individuals who have good education and training as well as extensive experience in their field.

In the world of education, professional teachers are needed to produce better quality learning. Teachers are not only in charge of communicating knowledge to learners, but also play an important role in designing their personality, morality, and skills to meet the needs of the times. Good education is not only about relying on curriculum and infrastructure, but also on the quality of teachers who are able to teach with effective methods and provide good examples for students. Professional teachers must have various skills to fulfill their duties and responsibilities, especially in teaching PAI. Some of the skills possessed by professional teachers(Eliza dkk., 2022) include: (1) Having a solid foundation of knowledge, broad insight, and continuing to innovate and develop skills to compete and achieve excellence; (2) Having the ability to convey knowledge to students effectively; (3) Understanding the character and personality of students; (4) Having excellent teaching skills and a pleasant humorous attitude.

According to Imam al-Ghazali, being a professional educator, especially an Islamic religious education teacher, must meet the requirements or criteria,(Munawir dkk., 2023) including: educators must have love for their students like their love for their own biological children, educators must be sincere in teaching their students without expecting rewards, educators must be an example or motivator for their students, educators must practice the knowledge they have to their students, educators must teach material that is in accordance with the abilities of their students, educators must be able to instill faith in their students.

2. **Competencies of a Professional Teacher**

As a professional teacher, you must master several competencies in order to carry out your profession properly and responsibly. The competencies that a teacher has include:

a. **Professional Competence**

Professional competence is an element that must exist in an educator. In general, professional competence is the ability for teachers to acquire in-depth and thorough learning materials. The goal is to provide maximum guidance to help learners achieve the competency standards in their education system and national standards.(Budianti dkk., 2022) Within the scope of Islamic religious education, it includes mastering teaching materials about Islam and noble character in a deep and comprehensive manner. This ability of teachers is expected to guide students to become individuals who have faith, have devotion to Allah SWT, and have a solid understanding of Islamic teachings.

b. **Pedagogical Competence**

According to government regulations, teacher pedagogical competence is the ability of educators to process learning. This ability includes an understanding of educational knowledge and fundamentals, understanding the characteristics of students, curriculum development, the process of designing and implementing educational and interactive learning, and utilizing technology in the learning process.(Diana & Rodhiyana, 2023) Pedagogical competence is very important because it is directly related to the main role of the teacher, namely managing the learning process. Teachers with educational capabilities can manage their learning well so that their teaching and learning processes are carried out effectively and achieve the expected goals.

c. **Social Competence**

Social competence is a very important skill for a teacher as an educator. This competency shows the teacher's skills to communicate and interact well and efficiently, such as to students, parents, fellow teachers, and the community.(Husna dkk., 2021) A teacher who has good social competence is able to establish harmonious relationships with the surrounding environment, create a comfortable learning atmosphere, and build trust with students and their parents.

This social competence also includes the teacher's ability to deal with various problems that occur in the work environment with a calm and stable attitude. Teachers who have good social skills can resolve conflicts wisely, are able to adjust to changes and are able to collaborate with various parties to achieve more optimal educational goals.

d. **Personality Competence**

According to the National Education Standards article 28 paragraph (3) point b, competence includes the ability to have a great, stable, mature, wise, and authoritative character, an educator is able to be a role model for students and show noble morals.(Permatasari & Arianto, 2022) Teacher personality plays an important role in the success of the learning process and designing the personality of students. This personality competence is the character and attitude that a teacher must have as a role model for students. A good teacher personality has a big influence in shaping character, because teachers act as role models and role models for students.

3. **Islamic Religious Education Teacher's Strategy in Improving the Quality of Learning**

Strategy is an effort or experiment in realizing an expectation and goal. The strategy in question is a strategy designed in detail for educational purposes or the learning process. Learning strategies can be interpreted as an effort from educators in encouraging students to carry out the learning process, learning strategies are not simple things, because each process requires various

skills to achieve learning objectives. In general, learning that applies the approach method has additional advantages, because with the right approach method students can be more active when the learning process takes place. Thus, this can encourage investigative behavior, support skills in solving problems, and share a pleasant learning experience for students together with educators. A pleasant learning experience has an effect on the material learned to be more easily accepted and stored in the memory of students, due to the direct involvement of students in the learning process.(Anggraeni, 2019)

In learning, it is necessary to have a plan and strategy in learning activities so that educators can build a conducive and pleasant learning atmosphere. A conducive and pleasant learning atmosphere makes students more enthusiastic in the learning process, and it will be easier to understand the material to be conveyed. A planned strategy has a very significant role in the teaching and learning process. So that a strategy does not deviate from the target that has been set, a clear description is needed. Information that begins with a stimulus in motivating which makes it willing to share reactions when carrying out a learning activity. The success of students can be measured through the achievement of their learning outcomes which also shows the success of an educator in guiding his students. The greater the needs of learners in learning, the more important the role of an educator in ensuring learning strategies that will be applied in learning activities. Learning strategies can be used as a good influence for students to equip knowledge and develop skills as an efficient and effective learning process should be, so that students can apply it at school and at home.(Fatimah & Sari, 2018)

In the learning strategy, there are components that are very important and related to each other which have a role in the success of a teaching and learning process. These components include approaches, methods, and models. These three things are the components needed in the learning process. No matter how good the module taught by an educator, but if there is no appropriate approach and the method used is less effective, then an educator must be prepared to face the possibility of failure in the educational process. Because with an approach, an educator will be better able to understand each individual learner which will make it easier to determine what learning strategies are appropriate when used in the teaching and learning process.

Islamic Religious Education strategy is a design made by educators to guide, support, and direct students in the learning process in order to achieve student instructional goals (ICT). Through this design, educators are required to explain in detail to students that this teaching and learning activity is bound by the ICT reference. According to the GBPP, teaching Islamic Religion applies

various approaches that are tailored to its characteristics, such as experiential, habituation, emotional, rational, and functional approaches. Some of these approaches have different functions, but will remain sustainable to achieve the goal of believing and practicing these teachings. An educator must familiarize students to act in accordance with the principles in Islamic teachings. Learners are expected to have Islamic values that are able to touch the heart, strengthen the belief that Islam is the absolute truth teaching, and become a useful life guide.(Rohmah, 2016)

In order to improve the quality of learning, educators can apply creative and innovative learning strategies that are expected to design a learning process that is in line with the development of educational theory and advances in information and communication technology in this digital era. This strategy allows students to be actively involved in the learning process and able to develop an independent attitude in learning. In other words, learners develop independence in learning that not only takes place in the classroom, but also outside the classroom. This strategy focuses on making learners enjoy the learning process through various positive influences and a pleasant learning environment, thus increasing their creativity and making learning more effective and participatory. In addition, with creative and innovative strategies, learners are encouraged to independently discover or construct the concepts learned through various methods of interpretation.

The use of creative and innovative learning strategies can provide instructional impacts, such as understanding of certain values, concepts, or problems, the ability to apply concepts or solve problems, and the skills to create something based on that understanding. Steps that reflect the application of creative and innovative learning strategies include orientation, exploration, interpretation, and recreation. as quoted by (Fathimah Raniyah dkk., 2024) among others:

a. At the orientation stage, educators convey and communicate and agree on learning tasks and activities.

b. In the exploration stage, learners explore the problem or concept being studied. This activity can be done using various methods, either independently or in groups, and can take place during class or outside class hours.

c. In the interpretation stage, learners interpret the results of their exploration through analysis, discussion and question and answer sessions.

d. At the re-creation stage, learners are asked to create a work that illustrates their understanding of a concept or problem studied according to their respective creativity. Educators observe learners' attitudes and thinking skills during the evaluation process, both of the learning process

and the final result. The final evaluation is carried out to assess the work that has been produced by students.

4. Challenges in Improving the Professionalism of Islamic Religious Education Teachers

Teacher professionalism is one of the influences on the quality of education, because teachers act as a determining factor in the success or failure of the learning process. So that this affects the future of students. Teacher professionalism and the quality of education are interrelated so that these two aspects cannot be separated, especially in an effort to achieve educational goals. To carry out learning activities optimally, teachers must have professional qualifications that are integrated with the learning process. Therefore, a breakthrough or innovation is needed to improve the professionalism of domestic teachers so that the quality of education is increasingly developed and not underestimated.(Ayu & Sari, t.t.)

Teacher professionalism is needed for the advancement of a nation's education, because the professionalism of teachers reflects expertise in the field of education, which is only owned by individuals who have been prepared and trained by a particular institution, especially to support the advancement of education in Indonesia. Teachers certainly have a very important role, especially in the ideals of realizing educational progress. Teachers who have a professional attitude show that a teacher with this attitude has a mentality that is able to motivate himself as a form of professionalism in learning. As for the professionalism, namely the teacher has the ability to carry out an effective learning activity in an effort to develop an education. Among them is the ability to plan a lesson in advance before carrying out learning activities.(Rosnaeni, 2021)

A teacher can be said to be a professional teacher when mastering 4 basic competency components, as cited in (Susanto, 2020), namely; having an understanding of the learning process and human behavior, mastering and understanding the field of study being taught, being appropriate towards oneself, school, colleagues, and the field of study being pursued, and having skills in teaching methods. For this reason, a teacher is required to have professional competence, because a teacher is an educator who is proficient in carrying out his duties so that he deserves to be called a competent and professional teacher.

One of the challenges for teachers in the digital era is the ability to adapt to the rapid and ever-changing technological developments. Teachers not only need to have skills in technology, but also how they can integrate the technology into learning activities appropriately. In addition, teachers are also expected to be more innovative in designing learning strategies that utilize

technology more effectively and have the ability and expertise in designing interactive learning, encouraging critical thinking skills in problem solving, and developing students' creativity through the use of technology. In addition, in order to develop professionalism, teachers often experience difficulties with limited training and professional development that is less relevant to the development of education in the digital era. Lack of access to workshops, seminars and certification in pedagogy and technology means that many teachers still use conventional strategies that are less attractive to students in the digital era. Since not all schools or educational institutions have programs to improve teachers' skills in adopting innovative learning strategies, teachers find it difficult to adjust to this digital era.(Ismail, t.t.)

Based on the description above which discusses the challenges faced in order to improve the professionalism of PAI teachers especially in this digital era, an effective solution is needed to solve problems related to improving the quality of PAI teacher professionalism. If various problems can be solved properly, then indirectly the quality of learning will improve, students will understand the teachings of Islam more deeply, and have better morals by emulating their teachers. Through competent teachers, students are likely to become academically intelligent and have a strong character based on Islamic values, which has an impact on the formation of a generation that is more knowledgeable, moral, and will be ready to face life, which in turn will contribute to the progress of education and society as a whole.

CONCLUSION

This research is about the Professionalism of PAI Teachers in an effort to improve the quality of the learning process. Professional teachers have competence in their fields, are able to master teaching materials, and are able to apply effective learning methods. In addition, a professional teacher plays an important role in shaping the character and morals of students to be in line with the times.

A professional PAI teacher must be able to master four main components, namely professional, pedagogical, social, and personality competencies. To improve the quality of learning, PAI teachers need to implement innovative and creative learning strategies. However, there are challenges faced by PAI teachers in improving professionalism, especially in today's digital era. Teachers need to adapt to technology, develop digital-based learning strategies, and overcome limited access to training and professional development. A suitable solution is to attend trainings,

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utilize technology to the maximum, and create innovative learning strategies that are relevant to the needs of students.

From this research, new points of thought were developed including (1) The professionalism of PAI teachers not only includes academic competence, but also includes moral and social aspects that shape the character of students. (2) In the digital era, mastery of technology is an important part of teacher professionalism to improve the quality of learning. (3) Innovative and creative learning strategies can increase the effectiveness of Islamic religious education learning. (4) The main challenges in improving the professionalism of Islamic religious education teachers are the lack of relevant training and limited access to professional development.

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