

Strategies for Improving the Professionalism of Islamic Education Teachers at University

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Abstract

Keywords:

Education Strategy,
Teacher
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Teaching Methods.

This article aims to explore and improve the professionalism of *Islamic Religious Education* (IRE) teachers at Lambung Mangkurat University (ULM) by implementing interdisciplinary collaboration strategies. The research method involved in-depth interviews with IRE lecturers at ULM, gaining in-depth insights into implementing cross-disciplinary collaboration to improve professionalism. The surprising research results revealed that cross-disciplinary cooperation is essential in enriching IRE teaching methods beyond conventional boundaries. Integrating disciplines such as psychology, technology, and pedagogy allows for adjustments to students' diverse learning styles, shifting the teaching paradigm to be more holistic, adaptive, and responsive to current educational dynamics. In addition to confirming the need for continuous professional development for educators, this study also identified several challenges that must be overcome to strengthen the professionalism of IRE educators, including financial limitations, insufficient social recognition, and rapid technological development. Recommendations from this study include the development of holistic and technology-based continuing training programs and advocacy to increase social recognition and appreciation of the critical role of IRE educators in facing the growing complexities and demands of modern education.

Abstrak

Kata kunci:
Strategi Pendidikan,
Profesionalisme
Guru,
Pendidikan Agama
Islam,
Metode Pengajaran.

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mendalami dan meningkatkan profesionalisme guru Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di Universitas Lambung Mangkurat (ULM) melalui penerapan strategi kolaborasi lintas disiplin. Metode penelitian melibatkan wawancara mendalam dengan dosen PAI di ULM, memperoleh wawasan mendalam mengenai implementasi kolaborasi lintas disiplin untuk meningkatkan profesionalisme. Hasil penelitian mengejutkan mengungkapkan bahwa kolaborasi lintas disiplin memainkan peran penting dalam memperkaya metode pengajaran PAI, melampaui batasan konvensional. Integrasi disiplin ilmu seperti psikologi, teknologi, dan pedagogi memungkinkan penyesuaian terhadap gaya belajar siswa yang beragam, mengubah paradigma pengajaran menjadi lebih holistik, adaptif, dan responsif terhadap dinamika pendidikan saat ini. Selain mengkonfirmasi kebutuhan akan pengembangan profesional berkelanjutan bagi pendidik, penelitian ini juga mengidentifikasi beberapa tantangan yang harus diatasi untuk memperkuat profesionalisme pendidik PAI, termasuk keterbatasan finansial, pengakuan sosial yang kurang memadai, dan perkembangan teknologi yang pesat. Rekomendasi yang dihasilkan dari penelitian ini meliputi pengembangan program pelatihan berkelanjutan yang holistik dan berbasis teknologi, serta advokasi untuk meningkatkan pengakuan dan apresiasi sosial terhadap peran penting pendidik PAI dalam menghadapi kompleksitas dan tuntutan pendidikan modern yang terus berkembang.

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INTRODUCTION

The education sector, especially in the domain of Islamic education, is continually evolving and necessitates a parallel development in teaching methodologies and teacher competency (B, Kardini, Elshifa, Adiawaty, & Wijayanti, 2023; Fatimah, Asy'ari, Sandria, & Nasucha, 2023; Fikriyati, Katoningsih, & Hasan, 2023). There is an identified need to systematically foster the growth of teacher positions, focusing on both structural and functional aspects (Alwi & Mumtahana, 2023; Arifin, Sutama, Aryani, Prayitno, & Waston, 2023; Fuadi, Nasution, & Wijaya, 2023a). The growth and development of teacher professionalism encompass multifaceted dimensions, spanning participants (teachers in various roles) and stages of their professional journey (Wyananda, 2022). Efforts to enhance professionalism involve essential activities, namely procurement, work, and withdrawal activities. It is crucial to conduct this study to holistically understand the dynamics involved in the growth of teacher positions, identify challenges, and propose strategies to elevate professionalism among Islamic education teachers (Tjabolo & Otaya, 2019).

Previous research by Muhayat (2019) emphasizes the significance of efficacious efforts and actions to augment teacher positions effectively. This research categorizes teacher professionalism growth into participant-based (structural and functional teachers) and activity-based (development stages) aspects. The study advocates for strategic steps in fostering growth, encompassing procurement, work, and withdrawal activities. Furthermore, Hakim (2018) underscores the importance of pedagogical competence among Islamic education teachers. The study illuminates strategies employed by educational institutions to enhance teachers' pedagogical competence, emphasizing continuous development, involvement in scholarly activities, and performance evaluation. These research findings substantiate the need to investigate and implement strategic approaches to uplift the professionalism of Islamic education teachers at ULM.

Muhayat (2019) shed light on the procedural intricacies of teacher position growth, delineating essential activities vital for development. Hakim (2018), on the other hand, delved into the pedagogical competence of Islamic education teachers and identified strategies and inhibiting factors. Both studies offer valuable insights into different facets of teacher professionalism. However, there is a gap in research focusing specifically on enhancing the professionalism of Islamic education teachers at ULM, necessitating a specialized study to address this void.

The primary objective of this research is to formulate and propose effective strategies to elevate the professionalism of Islamic education teachers at ULM. By identifying challenges and implementing targeted strategies, this study aims to enhance teaching quality, improve learning outcomes, and contribute to the overall advancement of Islamic education at the university. The findings of this research are expected to guide policy-makers, educational institutions, and teachers in optimizing efforts to foster a culture of continuous growth and development among Islamic education educators.

This study is grounded in the theoretical foundations of educational and professional development, drawing from Muhayat (2019) framework on the growth and development of teacher positions. The study also incorporates aspects of pedagogical competence as outlined by Hakim (2018) to comprehensively analyze and propose strategies for enhancing the professionalism of Islamic education teachers at ULM. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this research aims to provide a robust framework for strategic interventions in promoting teacher professionalism within the context of Islamic education.

RESEARCH METHOD

The subjects of this qualitative research are Islamic education teachers at Universitas Lambung Mangkurat (ULM). The study aims to investigate and analyze their perspectives, experiences, and challenges in enhancing their professionalism within the academic and educational context. In the process of data analysis, the first critical step is data reduction, wherein the extensive data collected from interviews and observations is distilled into a more manageable and meaningful dataset. Through a careful review of interview transcripts and observational notes, significant statements and recurring ideas related to teacher professionalism are identified and extracted. These condensed data points provide a focused foundation for the subsequent phases of analysis, ensuring that the essence of participants' insights is retained while managing the volume of information.

Once the data is reduced and condensed, the next phase involves data presentation. The condensed dataset is meticulously organized, categorized, and structured based on the identified themes and sub-themes. This categorization allows for a clear and systematic presentation of the data. Visual aids such as tables, charts, and diagrams are employed to enhance the presentation, offering a visual representation of the themes and their corresponding content. This approach aids in presenting a comprehensive and coherent depiction of the findings, making it accessible and easily digestible for readers.

The final stage of data analysis centers on drawing conclusions from the presented data. A thorough examination and comparison of the identified themes enable the synthesis of overarching insights and conclusions concerning teacher professionalism within the Islamic education faculty at ULM. By aligning these conclusions with the research objectives, the study can offer valuable insights into the current state of teacher professionalism, the prevailing challenges, and potential strategies for improvement. The conclusions are substantiated using direct quotes and observational evidence, ensuring a robust and grounded interpretation.

Throughout the entire data analysis process, ethical considerations remain at the forefront. The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants are rigorously upheld, safeguarding their identities and ensuring the ethical handling of sensitive information. The conclusions drawn are reported transparently, presenting an unbiased interpretation of the data and upholding the highest ethical standards in research

reporting. These considerations contribute to the integrity, credibility, and reliability of the research findings, making them a valuable contribution to the field of Islamic education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

A predominant theme highlighted by the participants was the pivotal role of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in fostering teacher professionalism. The teachers expressed the view that engaging in regular CPD activities, such as workshops, seminars, and specialized training, is vital for updating their knowledge, improving teaching methodologies, and staying abreast of the latest advancements in educational practices. One teacher eloquently stated, *“CPD is like nourishment for our teaching souls; it enriches us with new ideas and methodologies, making us better educators.”*

Moreover, they also emphasized that CPD isn't just about acquiring new knowledge but also about implementing it in the classroom environment. Some teachers stressed that gaining fresh insights through CPD makes them more confident and motivated to try new approaches in their teaching. They view CPD as a pathway to improving their skills, enabling them to address challenges in the classroom more effectively.

Some teachers also shared stories of how CPD has helped them overcome specific challenges in their careers, such as incorporating the latest technology into learning or adapting to the diverse needs of students. They stated that CPD provides them with the necessary tools and knowledge to navigate changes in education more effectively.

Collaborative Learning and Peer Support

Collaborative learning and peer support emerged as essential factors that contribute to the cultivation of professionalism among Islamic education teachers. Participants emphasized the benefits of engaging in professional discussions and knowledge-sharing with colleagues. These interactions facilitate the exchange of innovative teaching approaches, classroom management techniques, and effective assessment strategies. A participant remarked, *“Sharing experiences and best practices with our peers fosters a culture of continuous improvement and ultimately enhances our professionalism.”*

The teachers expressed that *“through collaborative learning, they were able to share experiences, successes, and challenges, creating a platform for mutual learning and growth. The diverse perspectives brought forward during these discussions were invaluable, offering new insights and alternative approaches to pedagogy.”* They believed that this dynamic exchange of ideas fostered a culture of continuous improvement, leading to the enhancement of their professionalism.

Moreover, the sense of camaraderie and peer support within these discussions was emphasized as a motivating factor. Being able to lean on colleagues for advice, feedback, and support was seen as a crucial element in navigating the complexities of teaching in Islamic education. This supportive environment encouraged experimentation with new

teaching methodologies and strategies, bolstering the confidence of teachers to explore innovative approaches in their classrooms.

Furthermore, the participants highlighted that these collaborative interactions were not confined to their immediate circles but extended to broader networks, including participation in professional learning communities, workshops, and conferences. These broader engagements provided a platform to access a wealth of experiences and expertise beyond their immediate colleagues, enriching their professional growth.

In essence, the prevailing sentiment among the participants was that collaborative learning and peer support are integral components that nurture a culture of continuous learning and improvement among Islamic education teachers. They viewed these interactions as essential pillars that not only enhance their professionalism but also contribute significantly to the quality of education provided to their students.

Adaptability and Pedagogical Flexibility

The teachers underscored the importance of adaptability and pedagogical flexibility in the pursuit of professionalism. They acknowledged the necessity of customizing teaching approaches to accommodate diverse learning styles and abilities present among students. Being flexible in pedagogical methods and strategies was viewed as a hallmark of professionalism, showcasing a teacher's dedication to meeting the individual needs of learners. A participant emphasized, *“Adjusting our teaching to suit our students' unique learning styles demonstrates our professionalism and commitment to their growth.”*

They highlighted the necessity of being adaptable, agile, and responsive in their pedagogical approaches to effectively engage and support every student. The teachers recognized that flexibility in their teaching strategies was not just a skill but a cornerstone of professionalism, demonstrating their commitment to fostering an inclusive learning environment.

In discussing adaptability, the teachers shared experiences where they had to modify their lesson plans or teaching techniques on the fly to address the unique needs of individual students. They acknowledged that this adaptability demanded continuous reflection on their teaching practices and a willingness to experiment with new approaches that better suited their students.

Furthermore, the participants stressed the significance of being proactive in identifying diverse learning styles and adapting instructional methodologies accordingly. They found that employing various teaching techniques, such as visual aids, interactive activities, collaborative projects, or differentiated instruction, allowed them to better cater to the specific needs of their students.

In addition to tailoring lessons, they highlighted the importance of being adaptable in their assessment methods, recognizing that diverse learners might excel through different evaluation formats. Adjusting assessments to align with students' strengths and preferences was seen as an integral part of demonstrating professionalism and fostering a conducive learning atmosphere.

The teachers also emphasized the role of ongoing professional development in enhancing their adaptability. They acknowledged that staying updated with new teaching strategies, technologies, and educational theories was crucial for continually evolving their pedagogical approaches.

Challenges Impeding Professional Growth

Participants candidly discussed the challenges they encounter in their efforts to enhance professionalism. Time constraints emerged as a pervasive challenge, inhibiting their ability to dedicate ample time to CPD activities and reflective practices. Moreover, limited institutional support and inadequate availability of resources were identified as barriers, restricting their professional growth and potential. These challenges underscore the need for institutional interventions and support mechanisms to facilitate professional development effectively.

The struggle to strike a balance between fulfilling their teaching responsibilities and allocating time for personal and professional development was a recurring theme. They lamented the limited time available outside regular teaching hours, often leaving them exhausted and with minimal energy to dedicate to CPD endeavors. Some teachers highlighted that this challenge sometimes led to a compromise, where they had to prioritize immediate classroom needs over their own professional growth.

Moreover, participants unanimously voiced concerns about the lack of institutional support and resources allocated to facilitate their professional development. They emphasized the necessity of administrative backing, such as funding for workshops, access to relevant learning materials, and encouragement from school leadership, to effectively engage in CPD activities. The absence of these resources was seen as a hindrance that restricted their potential for growth and learning.

Institutional barriers, including rigid policies or bureaucratic hurdles, were also cited as impediments to their professional advancement. Some teachers expressed frustration at the lack of flexibility within institutional frameworks, which limited their autonomy to explore innovative teaching methods or participate in specialized training programs.

Addressing these challenges, the participants underscored the crucial need for institutional interventions and support mechanisms to enable effective professional development. They highlighted the necessity for schools or educational authorities to prioritize and allocate dedicated time and resources explicitly aimed at fostering teacher growth. Moreover, they emphasized the importance of a supportive organizational culture that values and encourages continuous learning among educators.

The teachers expressed optimism that with institutional support, collaborative efforts, and a shared commitment to professional development, these challenges could be overcome. They stressed the importance of fostering a conducive environment that empowers teachers to engage in ongoing learning, thus enhancing their professionalism and, ultimately, benefiting the quality of education imparted to students.

Recommendations for Enhancing Professionalism

The participants provided insightful recommendations to address the identified challenges and further enhance professionalism among Islamic education teachers. They emphasized the significance of increased institutional support, particularly in terms of facilitating dedicated time for professional development activities. Additionally, offering incentives and recognition for active participation in CPD initiatives was suggested to motivate teachers to invest in their professional growth. A participant articulated, *“Institutional policies that encourage and support our professional growth are paramount. They would create an environment conducive to our continuous development.”*

Moreover, the participants highlighted the effectiveness of incentives and recognition as powerful motivational tools. They proposed that institutions consider offering incentives, such as financial support for attending workshops or conferences, professional growth opportunities, or career advancement prospects for active participation in CPD initiatives. Recognition for teachers who exhibit excellence in implementing innovative teaching methodologies or showcasing exceptional professional growth was also suggested as a means to motivate and reward their efforts.

Another key recommendation centered around the formulation and implementation of institutional policies that explicitly prioritize and support teachers' professional growth. Participants emphasized the pivotal role of these policies in fostering an environment conducive to continuous development. They stressed that supportive policies would not only encourage teachers to actively engage in CPD activities but also signal the institution's commitment to nurturing a culture of ongoing learning and growth.

Additionally, participants suggested the establishment of mentorship programs or peer learning networks within schools. These programs would facilitate knowledge-sharing, mentorship opportunities, and collaborative problem-solving among teachers. The aim was to create a supportive community where educators could learn from each other's experiences and expertise, further fostering their professional growth.

Lastly, they emphasized the importance of leveraging technology to facilitate CPD. Participants recommended the development of online platforms or digital resources that offer flexible learning opportunities, allowing teachers to engage in professional development activities at their convenience.

Table 1. Summary of Research Findings on Teacher Professionalism in Islamic Education

Themes	Findings
CPD	Teachers view CPD as vital for knowledge update and improved teaching. It's likened to "nourishment" for educators.
Collaboration & Support	Peer discussions and sharing best practices enhance professionalism and promote innovative teaching approaches.
Adaptability & Flexibility	Being adaptable in teaching methods showcases professionalism and commitment to diverse student needs.

Challenges	Time constraints, limited support, and resources hinder CPD engagement, impeding professional growth.
Recommendations	Increased institutional support, dedicated CPD time, incentives, and policies promoting growth are essential.

Discussion

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Lifelong learning and skill enhancement, particularly through Continuous Professional Development (CPD), constitute fundamental pillars for educators, especially within the intricate domain of Islamic education. The unanimous emphasis placed by the participants on CPD underscores the realization that learning is a perpetual journey that extends beyond formal education. It signifies a commitment to continuous growth and adaptation to the ever-evolving educational landscape. In the realm of Islamic education, staying informed about the latest advancements, pedagogical approaches, and technological integrations is imperative for educators to effectively guide and nurture the next generation of learners (Appleyard & Appleyard, 2014; Fuadi, Nasution, & Wijaya, 2023b).

Engaging in regular CPD activities is akin to a professional pledge, demonstrating an unwavering dedication to refining pedagogical skills and embracing emerging trends. The participants exhibited a proactive approach, recognizing that complacency is the antithesis of progress. They voiced their desire to continually enhance their teaching methodologies, ensuring alignment with contemporary educational paradigms. This proactive stance illuminates a keen awareness that teaching is not a static practice; rather, it necessitates dynamic evolution to cater to the ever-changing needs and expectations of students (Solikah & Jannah, 2020).

Moreover, CPD empowers educators to confront the multifaceted challenges posed by the modern educational landscape. By honing their skills and expanding their knowledge base, teachers can navigate these challenges with confidence and competence (Stewart & Jansky, 2022). It equips them with the tools to address diverse learning styles, employ innovative teaching strategies, and effectively employ modern technologies in their instructional approaches. In essence, CPD cultivates a growth mindset among educators, instilling a commitment to adaptability, lifelong learning, and a perpetual quest for excellence (Marjuah, Kamaruddin, Sidik, & Yusra, 2023).

Furthermore, the transformative potential of CPD extends beyond individual educators; it positively impacts the educational ecosystem as a whole. A cadre of educators continuously engaging in CPD translates to an educational environment that is vibrant, progressive, and responsive to societal changes. It fosters a community of educators dedicated to educational enhancement, knowledge dissemination, and the holistic development of students. The resulting synergy significantly contributes to the elevation of educational standards, ultimately benefiting the broader society by nurturing informed, empowered, and socially responsible citizens.

Professional Relevance and Competence: Another vital aspect highlighted by the participants was the role of CPD in maintaining professional relevance and competence. They discussed how participating in CPD activities enables them to align their teaching practices with contemporary educational standards and requirements. This, in turn, contributes to their professional competence and credibility within the academic community. A participant stated, "CPD assures our competence as educators, reassuring our students and peers that we are committed to providing the best education possible."

The resonance among the participants regarding the pivotal role of CPD in maintaining professional relevance and competence underscores a conscientious effort to bridge the gap between traditional pedagogical approaches and the evolving demands of modern education. It reflects an acute awareness of the ever-evolving educational landscape and the need for educators to continuously evolve to meet the expectations of a dynamic and diverse student body. The participant's acknowledgment of CPD as a means to align teaching practices with contemporary educational standards underscores its criticality in ensuring that education remains meaningful, relevant, and impactful (Mansir & Karim, 2020).

Moreover, the participants recognized that their professional competence directly impacts the learning experience of their students. By actively engaging in CPD activities, they demonstrate a commitment to enhancing their teaching methodologies and content delivery, which, in turn, translates into a higher quality educational experience for their students. This aspect is fundamental, as it amplifies the ripple effect of CPD beyond the teacher to reach the very core of the educational process, ultimately benefitting the learners and fostering a culture of excellence (Amzat, 2022; Anderson et al., 2022).

The assurance of competence through CPD reverberates not only within the classroom but throughout the academic community. As educators enhance their skills and adapt to modern teaching methodologies, they contribute to the advancement of their field. Their credibility within the academic community is heightened, and they become role models for their peers, inspiring a collective drive toward continuous improvement (Mäkinen, Linden, Annala, & Wiseman, 2018). This validation of competence through professional development creates a positive feedback loop, fostering a culture of growth, collaboration, and ultimately, an elevation of educational standards.

The insights shared by the participants underscore the pivotal role of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in nurturing a growth mindset and stimulating innovation within the realm of education. Participants acknowledged CPD as a platform that not only enriches their pedagogical skills but also cultivates an environment conducive to continuous improvement and creativity. Engaging in diverse CPD experiences encourages educators to explore new perspectives, experiment with innovative teaching strategies, and integrate modern technologies into their pedagogy (Illah, Mansur, Hidayatullah, Sariman, & Seena, 2022).

The theme of fostering a growth mindset and innovation through CPD is a powerful testament to the transformative potential of ongoing professional

development. A growth mindset, rooted in the belief that abilities and intelligence can be developed over time, is fundamental to resilience and adaptability. CPD serves as a catalyst, fostering this growth mindset by presenting educators with opportunities to acquire new skills, learn from experiences, and continually evolve. It instills a sense of possibility and the conviction that skills can be honed, fueling motivation and dedication.

Moreover, the encouragement of innovation through CPD heralds a paradigm shift in educational practices. It empowers educators to transcend conventional methodologies and embrace creative approaches tailored to the unique needs and learning styles of students. The participants recognized that to truly prepare students for a rapidly evolving world, educators must innovate within the classroom. CPD provides the knowledge and inspiration necessary to introduce novel ideas, experiment with teaching techniques, and leverage modern tools and technologies to enhance the learning experience.

Furthermore, this culture of innovation has a profound ripple effect on the educational ecosystem. As educators embrace innovation, they inspire their students to think critically, problem-solve creatively, and adapt to change confidently. By modeling innovation and a growth mindset, educators set an example that transcends the classroom, influencing the broader educational community. The result is an ecosystem that celebrates continuous learning, embraces change, and evolves to meet the demands of the 21st century (O'Sullivan, 2020).

In summary, the participants' recognition of CPD as a catalyst for fostering a growth mindset and promoting innovation illuminates its transformative power. CPD not only enhances individual skills but also fosters a collective attitude of openness to change and a commitment to continuous improvement (M. A. Bakar, Umroh, & Hameed, 2023). This paradigm shift towards growth and innovation reverberates throughout the educational landscape, laying the foundation for a future-ready educational system that equips learners with the skills and mindset needed to thrive in an ever-changing world.

Collaborative Learning and Peer Support

The participants' acknowledgment of collaborative learning as a pivotal platform for knowledge sharing and the exchange of best practices underscores the collective wisdom embedded within a community of educators. Through collaboration, educators create a dynamic environment wherein experiences and successful teaching methodologies become communal assets. Engaging with peers in a collaborative setting facilitates the sharing of diverse perspectives, innovative strategies, and effective practices. This exchange offers a wealth of ideas that can be tailored and implemented in one's own teaching context.

The essence of collaborative learning lies in the idea that no educator operates in isolation; there exists a rich tapestry of experiences from which to draw inspiration and insights. As educators contribute their unique perspectives and approaches, a vibrant ecosystem of knowledge emerges. This collective learning experience transcends

individual boundaries, broadening horizons and encouraging a continuous quest for improvement. It serves as a reminder that growth is a collaborative endeavor, influenced by the amalgamation of ideas and experiences from various stakeholders (R. Hakim, Ritonga, & Susanti, 2020).

Moreover, this collaborative synergy often leads to the discovery of innovative approaches that might not have been conceived in solitude. The interplay of minds fosters creativity, enabling the development and refinement of teaching strategies that resonate with the diverse needs of learners. As educators integrate these innovative approaches into their teaching repertoire, they contribute to a cycle of continuous improvement that ultimately benefits the educational ecosystem as a whole.

The participant's testimony regarding how collaborative sessions broadened their perspectives and enriched their teaching with valuable strategies resonates with this collaborative ethos. It encapsulates the essence of knowledge sharing and the symbiotic relationship between individual growth and collective enrichment. The ripple effect of these collaborations extends beyond the participants themselves, positively influencing their students, colleagues, and, ultimately, the quality of education.

The participants' emphasis on mentorship and guidance within the academic community illuminates a crucial element in the professional growth of educators, especially for those embarking on their teaching careers. More experienced teachers not only possess a wealth of knowledge but also express a genuine willingness to impart their wisdom and support to novice educators. This willingness to mentor and guide creates a nurturing environment that facilitates the transition into the teaching profession and significantly contributes to the professional development of less-experienced teachers.

The mentorship dynamic is akin to a torch being passed from one generation to the next. Experienced educators, through their mentorship role, illuminate the path for novice educators, offering valuable insights, strategies, and perspectives garnered from their years of experience (Alwi & Mumtahana, 2023). This transfer of knowledge is not a mere one-way street; it is a symbiotic relationship wherein both mentors and mentees mutually benefit. Novice educators gain from the expertise and experience of their mentors, while mentors, in turn, are invigorated by the fresh perspectives and enthusiasm brought forth by those new to the profession (Fuadi et al., 2023a).

Moreover, mentorship in teaching is deeply personalized, addressing the unique needs and challenges that novice educators face. Seasoned mentors provide tailored guidance, assisting novice teachers in refining their teaching methodologies, classroom management skills, and approaches to student engagement. This personalized guidance equips novice educators with the necessary tools to navigate the complexities of teaching effectively and ensures that they grow not only as educators but also as confident and competent professionals (Forcher et al., 2022).

The participant's testimony, affirming the crucial role of a mentor in their professional growth, reflects the transformative impact of mentorship. Mentors serve as pillars of support, providing encouragement during challenging times and celebrating

the successes and milestones of their mentees. The sense of reassurance and guidance offered by mentors enhances the professional self-esteem of novice educators, enabling them to progress with confidence and make a meaningful difference in the lives of their students.

The participants' recognition of the benefits of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) signifies an awareness of the transformative power of collaborative structures within the educational landscape. These communities, often formed around common subjects or areas of interest, serve as structured platforms that facilitate collaborative learning and peer support among educators. The essence of PLCs lies in their ability to nurture a culture of continuous growth, enabling educators to engage in focused discussions, joint lesson planning, and collaborative research projects.

Within PLCs, educators come together, transcending departmental or disciplinary boundaries, to engage in meaningful dialogues and exchanges of ideas. These interactions enrich their understanding of various subjects and pedagogical approaches. The collaborative environment within PLCs encourages educators to pool their collective expertise, providing fresh perspectives and innovative strategies to address educational challenges. This interdisciplinary collaboration amplifies the potential for enhancing teaching methodologies and, consequently, the overall quality of education provided within the university (Fuadi et al., 2023a).

A fundamental aspect of PLCs is the sense of accountability they instill within educators. As participants engage in collective endeavors aimed at improving teaching practices, they hold themselves and each other accountable for the collective objectives. This culture of mutual accountability encourages educators to consistently strive for excellence in their teaching, aligning their efforts with the broader goals and vision of the educational institution (Dina & Mustafida, 2021).

The participant's reflection on the impact of PLCs, particularly in encouraging interdisciplinary collaborations and enhancing teaching methodologies, reinforces the potency of this collaborative model. It underscores the value of creating spaces where educators can come together to share knowledge, seek collective solutions, and enrich their professional practices.

In conclusion, the acknowledgment of the benefits of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) highlights the importance of fostering collaborative environments within educational institutions. PLCs encapsulate the essence of collective growth, providing a structured mechanism for educators to share expertise, cultivate interdisciplinary collaborations, and elevate teaching standards. By investing in and expanding the reach of PLCs, educational institutions can harness the immense potential of collaborative learning, ultimately enhancing the educational experience for both educators and learners.

Adaptability and Pedagogical Flexibility

The participants' emphasis on customizing teaching approaches to cater to diverse learning styles is a cornerstone of effective pedagogy. In a dynamic classroom setting, students possess varying learning styles, including visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and reading/writing preferences. Acknowledging and accommodating these individual differences are critical for creating an inclusive and conducive learning environment.

Tailoring instructional methods based on the unique needs of each learner reflects a student-centric approach to education. It requires educators to be observant, flexible, and responsive to the cues and feedback provided by their students. By doing so, educators can craft lessons that resonate with students, making the learning experience more engaging and comprehensible. For visual learners, incorporating diagrams, charts, or videos may enhance understanding, while auditory learners may benefit from verbal explanations or discussions. Hands-on activities and interactive experiences can be particularly effective for kinesthetic learners (Che Noh, Kasan, Yusak, & Yusuf, 2019).

The acknowledgment that a one-size-fits-all approach is inadequate in a diverse classroom is a fundamental shift in educational philosophy. It challenges traditional teaching models that assume uniformity in student learning styles and capacities. Understanding that each student has a unique cognitive pace, intellectual ability, and set of interests compels educators to diversify their pedagogical toolkit.

Furthermore, this adaptability in teaching methods not only addresses diverse learning styles but also supports students with varying cognitive abilities. Students may have different levels of comprehension, memory retention, or problem-solving skills. Adapting teaching techniques to these cognitive differences allows educators to scaffold learning appropriately, providing additional guidance and resources for students who may require extra support.

Creating a conducive and inclusive learning environment through customization encourages active participation and engagement from all students. It fosters a sense of belonging and affirms that their individual learning needs are valued and accommodated. Ultimately, the adoption of tailored teaching approaches enhances the overall effectiveness of education, promoting a culture of empathy, understanding, and excellence in teaching and learning (A. A. A. Bakar & Hamzah, 2019).

The participants' recognition of the value of integrating innovative teaching strategies underscores the ever-evolving nature of education and the need to keep pace with advancements. In the contemporary educational landscape, being receptive to change and proactively incorporating modern methodologies are seen as essential components of effective teaching. The participants emphasized the necessity of staying updated with the latest advancements in education and aligning teaching techniques with evolving student dynamics.

Incorporating innovative teaching strategies is not merely a superficial update; rather, it represents a fundamental shift in the way education is perceived and delivered. It embraces a student-centric approach, focusing on active engagement, critical thinking, problem-solving, and real-world applications. Modern technologies, interactive

platforms, and active learning methods provide opportunities for students to participate actively in their learning journey, transforming them from passive recipients of information to active constructors of knowledge (Amiruddin, Nurdin, & Ali, 2021).

The integration of modern technologies in teaching facilitates personalized and differentiated instruction, catering to the unique learning styles and preferences of students. Educational platforms, online resources, multimedia presentations, and interactive software allow educators to create dynamic and interactive lessons that captivate students' attention and enhance their understanding. The interactive nature of these tools not only increases engagement but also encourages collaboration and peer learning, fostering a sense of community within the classroom.

Furthermore, the adaptability to adopt and implement new strategies is regarded as a proactive response to the changing landscape of education. The rapid advancements in technology and shifts in societal expectations necessitate an agile and flexible approach. Educators must be willing to experiment, iterate, and refine their teaching methodologies to meet the diverse needs and preferences of 21st-century learners. By doing so, they ensure that education remains relevant, effective, and capable of preparing students for an ever-changing world (Ilyasin & Zamroni, 2017).

The participants' advocacy for a responsive curriculum design reflects an awareness of the dynamic nature of education and the imperative to align academic content with the evolving needs of society. In a rapidly changing world, where advancements in technology, shifts in societal paradigms, and emerging global challenges are the norm, a rigid and inflexible curriculum can quickly become outdated and ineffective. The participants emphasized the necessity of an adaptable and flexible approach in curriculum design and delivery to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness.

A responsive curriculum is one that can swiftly and effectively adapt to incorporate contemporary issues, technological advancements, and societal developments. This adaptability is crucial for several reasons. First and foremost, it ensures that students are exposed to the most current and pertinent knowledge and skills, preparing them to navigate the complexities of the modern world competently. By integrating emerging trends, cutting-edge technologies, and pressing societal concerns into the curriculum, educators equip students with the tools they need to thrive in an ever-changing landscape (Ikhwan & Yuniana, 2022).

Moreover, a responsive curriculum design promotes critical thinking and a deeper understanding of the subject matter. When students engage with real-time issues and recent developments, they learn to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information critically. This process cultivates their ability to think critically and make informed decisions, skills that are vital for their personal and professional growth.

The ability to modify and update the curriculum in a timely manner also fosters a sense of relevance and enthusiasm among both educators and students. Educators feel empowered to deliver content that resonates with current events and societal concerns, making the learning experience more meaningful and engaging. Similarly, students are

more likely to be motivated and passionate about learning when they perceive the curriculum to be relevant to their lives and the world around them (Lafrarchi, 2020).

In conclusion, the participants' advocacy for a responsive curriculum design underscores the necessity of aligning education with the swiftly evolving global landscape. A curriculum that is adaptive and flexible enables students to stay informed about contemporary issues, harness modern technologies, and engage with the world in a meaningful way (Susilawati, Yaqin, Wahidmurni, & Putri, 2023). By promoting critical thinking, enhancing relevance, and encouraging enthusiasm for learning, a responsive curriculum equips students to face the challenges and opportunities of the present and the future with confidence and competence.

Challenges Impeding Professional Growth

The participants shed light on several challenges that act as impediments to the professional growth of educators in the domain of Islamic education at Universitas Lambung Mangkurat (ULM). These challenges, ranging from institutional constraints to societal perceptions, collectively contribute to the complexity of fostering an environment conducive to continuous development and enhancement within the teaching profession.

One of the primary challenges highlighted by the participants is the institutional structure and policies within the academic domain. Educational institutions often grapple with bureaucratic hurdles and rigid administrative systems that hinder timely decision-making and the implementation of innovative ideas. A bureaucratic culture may stifle the autonomy and creativity of educators, limiting their ability to adapt and experiment with new pedagogical approaches or integrate modern technologies effectively. This can impede the pace of professional growth and dampen the enthusiasm of educators to innovate and evolve (Haidar, Hasanah, & Ma`arif, 2023).

Additionally, financial constraints emerge as a significant obstacle to professional growth. The availability of resources for training, workshops, conferences, and continuous education programs can be limited, especially in resource-constrained academic settings. Insufficient financial support may hinder educators' ability to access high-quality training and development opportunities that are essential for enhancing their skills and knowledge. Moreover, inadequate compensation and job insecurity can demotivate educators, impacting their commitment to professional development (Gunawan, Musthafa, & Wahyudin, 2022; Thamrin, Ghasya, & Pranata, 2023).

Societal perceptions and expectations also pose challenges to the professional growth of educators. In some societies, there might be a lack of recognition and appreciation for the teaching profession. This societal undervaluation may lead to a diminished sense of professional identity and a decreased motivation to invest in continuous development. Additionally, societal expectations regarding traditional teaching methods and resistance to change can deter educators from adopting innovative pedagogies, hindering their progress and growth (Tabroni, Maryani, & Sari, 2022).

Furthermore, the ever-evolving landscape of education presents a challenge in itself. Technological advancements and shifts in educational paradigms require educators to continuously update their skills and teaching methods. Keeping up with these changes demands a considerable amount of time and effort, and the pace of change can sometimes be overwhelming for educators, particularly those who have been in the profession for a considerable period (Nurkhasanah, Barnoto, Hasan, & Ashari, 2023).

In addressing these challenges, academic institutions and policymakers need to prioritize the creation of an enabling environment for educators. This includes streamlining administrative processes, providing adequate financial support and incentives for professional development, and promoting a culture that values and supports continuous learning and growth (Kowalski, 1995). Collaboration between institutions, government bodies, and educational stakeholders is crucial to develop comprehensive strategies that address these challenges effectively. By overcoming these impediments, educators can realize their full potential, resulting in an enhanced educational experience for students and a positive transformation in the field of Islamic education.

Recommendations for Enhancing Professionalism

Based on the insights gathered from the participants regarding the challenges impeding professional growth, several comprehensive recommendations can be formulated to enhance professionalism among educators in the field of Islamic education at Universitas Lambung Mangkurat (ULM). These recommendations encompass multifaceted approaches, addressing institutional, societal, and individual aspects to create a conducive environment for continuous professional development and growth.

Firstly, instituting a robust and flexible professional development program within the academic institution is essential. This program should encompass a variety of opportunities such as workshops, seminars, conferences, and online courses to cater to diverse learning preferences and schedules. Collaboration with industry experts and educational specialists for training sessions can further enrich the professional development experience. Additionally, offering incentives, recognition, and career advancement opportunities tied to participation in these programs would motivate educators to engage proactively in continuous learning.

Secondly, establishing a mentoring and peer support system can significantly contribute to enhancing professionalism. Pairing experienced educators with newcomers or those seeking guidance creates a structured mechanism for knowledge transfer and skill development. Mentors can provide insights, offer constructive feedback, and assist in setting achievable professional goals. Peer support groups can also serve as forums for collaborative problem-solving, idea exchange, and emotional support, fostering a culture of solidarity and growth.

Furthermore, promoting a research-oriented culture within the institution is vital for fostering professionalism. Encouraging educators to engage in research projects, publish academic papers, and participate in scholarly activities not only contributes to their professional growth but also elevates the institution's academic standing.

Providing grants, research resources, and mentorship in research methodologies would stimulate educators to actively participate in research initiatives relevant to Islamic education and contemporary educational trends.

To address financial constraints, advocating for increased budget allocations specifically earmarked for professional development is crucial. Institutions and policymakers should prioritize funding for educators' participation in training programs, research endeavors, and academic conferences. Additionally, collaboration with industry and philanthropic organizations for sponsorship opportunities and grants can alleviate the financial burden on educators, facilitating their access to valuable professional development experiences.

Incorporating technological integration into pedagogical approaches is another key recommendation. Providing educators with training on leveraging educational technologies for enhanced teaching and learning experiences is essential. Educational institutions should invest in state-of-the-art infrastructure and platforms that facilitate interactive learning, virtual classrooms, and collaboration, enabling educators to modernize their teaching methodologies and stay aligned with the digital era (Zamri, Hamzah, & Surat, 2020).

Lastly, advocating for the importance of the teaching profession at a societal level is critical. Promoting a cultural shift that recognizes and respects educators as valuable contributors to society can positively impact the professional identity of educators. Celebrating educators' achievements, highlighting the importance of their role, and involving them in decision-making processes related to education can engender a sense of pride and professionalism within the teaching community.

In conclusion, a comprehensive approach that involves institutional support, societal recognition, and individual commitment is necessary to enhance professionalism among educators in Islamic education at ULM. By investing in professional development programs, fostering a research-oriented environment, providing financial support, and promoting a culture that values educators, the teaching profession can evolve into a dynamic and respected domain, ultimately benefiting both educators and the broader educational ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

The research conducted has unearthed a particularly surprising finding - the crucial role of cross-disciplinary collaboration in enhancing the professionalism of Islamic education teachers at Lambung Mangkurat University. Prior to this research, the magnitude of the impact that collaboration across different academic domains could have on Islamic education was not fully recognized. The interdisciplinary approach, involving collaboration with fields such as psychology, technology, and pedagogy, was found to enrich the teaching methodologies, allowing educators to tailor their approaches to the diverse learning styles and needs of students in the realm of Islamic education. In terms of scholarly contributions, this study not only confirms the importance of continuous professional development for educators but also advocates for

a more comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach. It challenges the conventional understanding of professional growth by highlighting the need for educators to engage in a broader spectrum of knowledge beyond the confines of Islamic studies. By incorporating insights and methodologies from various fields, educators can craft a more holistic and effective teaching approach. This perspective urges educational institutions and policymakers to reconsider the professional development strategies for Islamic education teachers and encourage a more interdisciplinary approach to teacher training and growth.

However, it's essential to acknowledge the limitations of this research. The study was conducted within a specific context - Lambung Mangkurat University- and may not fully represent the diverse contexts that Islamic education teachers may encounter in different universities or educational settings. The sample size, although carefully selected and analyzed, is relatively limited, primarily focusing on one institution. Additionally, the study primarily emphasized collaboration at the university level; further research is needed to explore how this interdisciplinary approach could be scaled and applied in various educational contexts. A more extensive and diverse sample, encompassing different educational levels and institutions, would be beneficial in obtaining a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the impact of interdisciplinary collaboration on the professionalism of Islamic education teachers. This would provide a stronger foundation for policymaking and the formulation of more precise and effective educational strategies.

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