

Strategy For Strengthening The Quality of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Teachers Through Teacher Working Group (KKG) Activities in Cimanggu District, Cilacap Regency

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Abstract: This study aims to identify strategies to strengthen the professional quality of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, as well as to analyze the supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of the Teacher Working Group (KKG) in Cimanggu District, Cilacap Regency. The research uses a descriptive qualitative approach through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The results show that the strengthening strategy is carried out through program planning, socialization, development of teaching administration, and collaboration. Supporting factors include teacher motivation, discipline, collaboration, school principal support, and facilities. Inhibiting factors include limited ICT mastery, geographical constraints, and multiple workloads of teachers. This study concludes that KKG significantly contributes to improving PAI teacher quality despite several limitations.

Keywords: Strategy, Strengthening The Quality Of PAI, Teachers Through Teacher Working Group (KKG).

Introduction

The improvement of human resource quality is a strategic priority in Indonesia's national development. One key element in this development is the improvement of education quality, especially at the Elementary School (SD) level, which serves as the main foundation in shaping students' character, basic knowledge, and skills. Elementary level education plays an important role in equipping students with value and moral foundations, especially through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2022)

In the modern era characterized by the acceleration of technology and globalization, educational challenges are becoming increasingly complex. PAI teachers are not only required to master religious material but also able to be role models in spiritual and moral values, and possess adequate pedagogical and digital skills. (Mulyasa, 2017) The learning process must be developed

innovatively and contextually, to align with the times and the needs of students. In accordance with Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, a teacher is a professional educator whose main task is to educate, teach, guide, direct, train, assess, and evaluate students at the levels of early childhood education, basic education, and secondary education. (Indonesia) Thus, improving teacher professionalism is an absolute prerequisite to ensure the quality of learning in schools, including in the context of PAI teaching at the elementary level.

However, the challenge of teacher quality in Indonesia is still quite significant. Many schools, especially in the regions, face limitations of teachers who possess optimal pedagogical, professional, and technological competencies. (Daryanto, 2013). PAI teachers are no exception, often facing the challenges of actualizing learning based on the latest curriculum and integrating technology into learning. Education as a process of interaction between teachers, students, and educational goals,

cannot run effectively if one of these components is not optimal. Although technology can assist in material delivery, the role of the teacher as a professional educator remains irreplaceable. (Daryanto, 2013) . Therefore, there needs to be a continuous mechanism that can enhance the capacity of teachers in performing their functions professionally and adaptively to changing times.

One such mechanism is through the Teacher Working Group (KKG) activities, which serves as a forum for professional development for teachers at the Elementary School level. KKG acts as a platform for collaboration, training, discussion, and the exchange of good practices among teachers. In the context of strengthening PAI teacher quality, KKG holds a strategic position in improving the quality of learning and teacher competence through activities such as seminars, workshops, and the development of learning tools. In Cimanggu District, Cilacap Regency, KKG has been running well and is an effective means of supporting the professionalism of PAI teachers. Based on interviews with the Head of KKG Cimanggu District, KKG activities have been organized and able to provide a real contribution to learning materials. However, several issues still exist, including limited geographical access between schools, minimal understanding of the latest curriculum, limited mastery of technology, and limited operational funds.

According to (Masnun, 2021) the improvement of teacher performance does not occur automatically, but is influenced by various internal and external factors. Internal factors include the teacher's ability, skills, personality, perception, and motivation, while external factors include the availability of infrastructure, work environment, and leadership in schools. In this context, the existence of KKG is a strategic means of managing both factors to continuously strengthen teacher professionalism. Based on the explanation above, this research was conducted to deeply study the "Strategy for Strengthening the Quality of PAI Teachers Through KKG Activities in Cimanggu District, Cilacap Regency." This is part of an effort to systematically and continuously improve the quality of Islamic religious education at the Elementary School level.

Materials and Methods

The type of research used is field research (*field research*) which generates descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words that can be observed by others. The researcher aims to explain or describe the strategy for strengthening the quality of PAI teachers through KKG activities. The approach in this research uses a descriptive qualitative approach. This means that figures are not used to collect data in this study, but personal documents such as field notes and interviews. The researcher in this study explains the role of KKG in improving the quality of PAI teachers.

The research time was from February to April 2025. The location of this research was in Cimanggu District, Cilacap Regency. The subjects of this study were the Head of KKG, KKG Management, PAI Supervisor, and the Head of the Regional Coordinator (Korwil) of Cimanggu District, Cilacap Regency. The object of this research is the strategy for strengthening the quality of PAI teachers through KKG activities in Cimanggu District, Cilacap Regency. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis techniques included: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. (Miles, 2014)

Results and Discussion

Strengthening the quality of PAI teachers is a necessity in efforts to improve the overall quality of Islamic religious education. This improvement has a positive impact not only on academic achievement, but also on the formation of students' character. In this regard, KKG PAI is a strategic platform for teachers to collaborate, share experiences, and improve their professionalism in facing increasingly complex educational challenges.

The Teacher Working Group (KKG) PAI in Cimanggu District implements a number of strategies, including the organization of webinars and training (mentoring PAI teachers). The objectives of these activities include: 1) improving teacher competence, 2) encouraging collaboration and exchange of experiences, 3) adapting to technological developments, 4) improving the

quality of learning, 5) preparation for facing educational challenges. These activities present speakers from various backgrounds, such as supervisors, mobilizing teachers (*guru penggerak*), and other professional educators. Some of the training conducted includes: Differentiated Instruction (*Diferensiasi Pembelajaran*), MTQ (*Musabaqah Tilawatil Quran*), MAPSI Calligraphy, MHQ (*Musabaqah Hifzhil Quran*), ICT, and Sports Training. KKG PAI has a very significant role in developing the professionalism of PAI teachers. By prioritizing collaboration, training, and evaluation, KKG PAI not only improves the quality of teaching but also forms a mutually supportive professional community. This is very important in efforts to strengthen and improve the quality of religious education in Indonesia. Collaboration in KKG PAI means working together and sharing among PAI teachers to improve professional competence, the quality of learning, and the development of PAI innovations.

KKG PAI Cimanggu District also actively implements an annual monitoring and evaluation system involving the head of KKG, supervisors, and regional coordinators (Korwil). The goal of this activity is to review the development of teacher professionalism, provide feedback for improvement, and design continuous development programs. Evaluation is carried out comprehensively from technical, academic, and administrative aspects.

In addition, there are several forms of routine activities carried out by KKG PAI Cimanggu District, Cilacap Regency:

1. Routine meetings once every 1 month: KKG holds routine meetings that begin with religious activities such as *Khotmil Qur'an*, discussions about learning problems specifically in the PAI field, and professional teacher development training.
2. Training and Workshop: training to increase the creativity, skills, and ability of teachers in compiling learning tools such as preparing Learning Objectives (TP), Learning Objective Pathways (ATP), teaching modules, and question blueprints (*kisi-kisi soal*).
3. FGD (Forum Group Discussion): group discussion or guidance to solve learning

problems and increase the effectiveness of PAI teacher instruction.

These activities have made a real contribution to improving the pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competencies of PAI teachers. This is reflected in the improvement of the quality of the learning process, understanding of students, and the development of a more relevant curriculum. Furthermore, the implementation of certification and Teacher Professional Education (PPG) programs followed by the majority of PAI teachers in Cimanggu District is an indicator of KKG's success in supporting teacher professional development. This success is also reinforced by student achievements in the MAPSI event, where in 2024, 3 students won at the Regency level and 2 of them proceeded to the Provincial level in Kudus.

The mentoring and monitoring program between teachers is also an important approach in KKG. Senior teachers actively provide guidance to junior teachers, and support the implementation of routine meetings and thematic training by presenting expert speakers.

The strengthening of PAI teacher quality is also inseparable from the teacher's ability to design and implement an effective learning process. This includes the comprehensive planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning activities. PAI teachers are required not only to master the material but also to foster the ethics and character of students according to Islamic values. PAI teachers in Cimanggu District have carried out their functions and responsibilities in accordance with applicable regulations. The level of teacher professionalism has also experienced a significant increase since actively participating in KKG activities.

a. Collaboration in KKG as a PAI Teacher Quality Strengthening Strategy

KKG Cimanggu District uses the main strategy to create a collaborative space among PAI teachers. This is done through routine meetings, group discussions (FGD), and other community-based activities. According to Dua Four, this strategy is consistent with the idea of Professional Learning Communities (PLC), which is a community where teachers actively act as learners. By working

together, teachers can share good practices, discuss learning problems, and create innovations in teaching. Hargreaves (2007) asserts that professional collaboration within the teacher community can increase motivation, sense of belonging, and professional achievement. KKG becomes a place where teacher professionalism can be actualized, which has a direct impact on the quality of learning.

b. Implementation of Training and Workshops in Improving Pedagogical Competence

KKG PAI Cimanggu District often holds training and workshops on how teachers can improve their ability to create teaching tools such as Learning Objectives (TP), Learning Objective Pathways (ATP), teaching modules, and question blueprints (*kisi-kisi soal*). According to Day and Sachs (2004), Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is an important component in increasing teachers' professional capacity. This activity is a tangible implementation of this program. This training is very relevant when implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, as it requires teachers to create learning plans that are flexible, adaptive, and focused on student needs.

c. Utilization of Technology Through Webinars and Learning Digitalization Programs

KKG PAI Cimanggu also uses information technology to hold webinars involving supervisors and speakers from the Mobilizing Teacher Program (PGP). By conducting these webinars, teachers can improve their ability to use technology in learning to meet the demands of 21st-century learning. Within the TPACK framework (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge), (Mishra, 2006) state that to achieve effective learning, mastery of technology and mastery of pedagogy must be combined. KKG uses webinars as a strategic tool to achieve this integration.

d. Supporting Factors and Challenges in Implementing KKG Activities

Factors supporting the success of KKG include the cohesion and solidarity of the KKG team, as well as full support from supervisors and regional coordinators, and programs that align with the needs of educators. However, there are several

issues that can be identified implicitly, such as the gap in technology mastery among teachers, and various reasons for teachers' active participation. According to Fullan educational innovation is highly dependent on the development of capacity and environmental support. Therefore, the way to overcome these obstacles is by conducting intensive training.

e. Implications of the KKG Strategy on Strengthening PAI Education Quality

Overall, KKG PAI Cimanggu District has helped improve the quality of PAI education in Elementary Schools. KKG can encourage teachers to become professional educators who are responsive to the challenges of the times through structured and continuous activities. This is in line with the school-based teacher development approach. The KKG program makes schools a center for effective, contextual teacher development that directly impacts the improvement of student learning outcomes.

Based on the interview with the Head of KKG Cimanggu District, the functions of KKG PAI from the perspective of teachers in Cimanggu District, Cilacap Regency, include: (1) as a place for discussion and problem-solving for teachers experiencing difficulties in learning activities, especially PAI, (2) as a platform for activities for teachers connected in one cluster who want to increase their professionalism together, as well as increase insight and knowledge, (3) as a place for disseminating information about educational renewal, especially those related to efforts to improve learning outcomes, (4) as a vehicle for exchanging opinions with one another where those who know more can inform or tell those who know less, (5) as a means to help teachers find new things or new ways in the teaching and learning process and dealing with students in class, (6) as a place to enhance *silaturahmi* (friendship/kinship) among teachers in schools, especially in Cimanggu District, Cilacap Regency.

Similarly, the formation of KKG PAI also has certain objectives, including:

1. Improving teacher ability in the field of general knowledge. This means that through KKG PAI, activities that increase teacher knowledge about information, social issues and events, advances,

and new discoveries related to learning can increase, which can be achieved through discussions, seminars, or training at KKG PAI.

2. Improving teacher knowledge in compiling learning administration. Besides the task of teaching, teachers must also compile and prepare their class administration completeness, create class lists, grade lists, compile assessment formats, compile grade files, and other work. The techniques and methods for creating this administration may not be understood by the teacher at their school, while through KKG PAI, these things can be resolved completely.
3. Increasing teacher confidence and self-esteem. With the increase in knowledge and experience gained through KKG PAI, this ability will automatically increase the teacher's self-confidence in carrying out learning.

In general, KKG PAI can provide the following benefits: As a place for discussion and solutions for teachers experiencing difficulties in learning, there are certainly many types and models of problems faced by teachers during the learning process in the classroom. Handling each problem will be different in finding a solution, it is possible that not all teachers have the same experience as senior teachers, who may have more approaches and methods to solve problems, especially teaching and learning problems. Thus, new teachers or other teachers who have problems considered difficult can solve them through KKG by discussing the problem and utilizing various experiences with other teachers.

Conclusions

The strategies for strengthening the quality of PAI teachers through KKG activities in Cimanggu District, Cilacap Regency are: holding webinars, programs/training, providing motivation, developing teaching tools, evaluation, and media utilization.

Supporting factors in the implementation of this strategy include teacher motivation and work spirit, discipline, collaboration among members, teaching competence and experience, teacher personality, school principal support, availability of facilities

and infrastructure, as well as cooperation with external parties such as Korwil and BAZNAS.

Factors hindering implementation are: the location of activities is quite far for some teachers and many PAI teachers hold dual positions as school operators, school principals, or administrative system managers such as Dapodik and Simda. This causes limitations in time and energy to participate optimally in professional development activities.

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