Optimizing Teacher Working Groups in Improving the Competence of Islamic Religion Teachers in Rantau Selamat, East Aceh

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Abstract:
Teachers play a crucial part in influencing the quality of education, particularly in religious studies, where they convey knowledge and implant moral and ethical principles. To satisfy the ever-changing demands of education, instructors must constantly improve their skills, embrace novel teaching approaches, and adapt to technological advances. This study aims to find out the optimization strategy of the Teachers Working Group (in Indonesia is termed KKG) of Rantau Selamat Sub-district and analyze how the success rate of the Teachers Working Group in improving the competence of Islamic Religion Teachers in Rantau Selamat Sub-district. Through a qualitative approach, primary data were extracted from 8 informants. Data collection techniques were observation and structured interviews. The results showed that the optimization of the teachers' working group strategy in Rantau Selamat was carried out by strengthening the vision and mission of the organization, sharing knowledge and experience between senior and junior teachers, and training learning models such as calligraphy and music in teaching. Optimizing The Teachers Working Group has positively influenced the improvement of teachers' professionalism, pedagogical proficiency, and competencies. The working groups have enhanced instructors' proficiency in learning materials, syllabus development, and instructional methods, optimizing the use of facilities and infrastructure, and leveraging learning resources from Information Communication Technology (ICT). This research implies that the optimization of teachers' working groups is essential for transforming the work culture and enhancing teachers' knowledge, competences, and performance, hence ensuring the continuous improvement of educational quality and learning processes in Aceh.

Keywords:
Education Quality, Teachers Working Group, Islamic Religion Teachers, Pedagogical Competence

Abstrak:
Guru memegang peran krusial dalam memengaruhi kualitas pendidikan, terutama dalam studi keagamaan, di mana mereka tidak hanya menyampaikan pengetahuan tetapi juga menanamkan nilai-nilai moral dan etika. Untuk memenuhi tuntutan pendidikan yang terus berkembang, para pendidik harus senantiasa meningkatkan keterampilan mereka, menerapkan metode pengajaran inovatif, dan beradaptasi

dengan kemajuan teknologi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi strategi optimalisasi Kelompok Kerja Guru (KKG) di Kecamatan Rantau Selamat serta menganalisis tingkat keberhasilan KKG dalam meningkatkan kompetensi Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di wilayah tersebut. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif, data primer dikumpulkan dari 8 informan melalui teknik observasi dan wawancara terstruktur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa optimalisasi strategi Kelompok Kerja Guru di Rantau Selamat dilakukan dengan memperkuat visi dan misi organisasi, mendorong berbagi pengetahuan dan pengalaman antara guru senior dan junior, serta memberikan pelatihan model pembelajaran seperti kaligrafi dan musik dalam pengajaran. Optimalisasi Kelompok Kerja Guru berdampak positif pada peningkatan profesionalisme, kompetensi pedagogik, dan keterampilan guru. Selain itu, kelompok kerja ini telah meningkatkan penguasaan guru terhadap materi pembelajaran, pengembangan silabus, dan metode pengajaran. KKG juga berperan dalam mengoptimalkan pemanfaatan sarana dan prasarana serta sumber belajar berbasis Teknologi Informasi dan Komunikasi (TIK). Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa optimalisasi Kelompok Kerja Guru sangat penting untuk mentransformasi budaya kerja, meningkatkan pengetahuan, kompetensi, dan kinerja guru, sehingga kualitas pendidikan dan proses pembelajaran di Aceh terus mengalami peningkatan secara berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Mutu Pendidikan, Kelompok Kerja Guru (KKG), Guru Agama Islam (PAI), Kompetensi Pedagogik

Introduction

Teacher competence and professionalism are key to advancing education (Mulyasa, 2013). Teachers are required to meet professionalism qualifications, as a prerequisite for advancing the world of education, shaping the character and morals of students, and increasing the contribution of educational institutions in a competitive and dynamic global struggle (Darmadi, 2018). Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays an important role in shaping the character and morals of students in Indonesia, including in areas such as Rantau Selamat, East Aceh. PAI teachers have a vital role in ensuring the delivery of teaching materials so that they can be well received by students and support the formation of noble personalities (Mahyiddin, 2017). However, along with the times, the challenges in improving the quality of religious education, especially in the context of teacher competence, are increasingly complex.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers as the spearhead of character education need to continue to hone their professionalism competencies in teaching and education (Sukatin, 2020). PAI teachers are required to keep up with the times so that their teaching knowledge does not expire so as to enlighten and awaken the potential of students in the digital era (Ajmain et al., 2019). Therefore, the competence of PAI teachers must be continuously improved to realize the goals of national education(Lafendry, 2020).

Currently, there are still gaps related to the competence of PAI teachers who do not have a deep understanding of effective teaching methods, and have not maximized

the use of educational technology, especially in Rantau Selamat District, East Aceh Regency. These gaps occur due to differences in educational strata and different experiences. In addition, limitations in professional development and low collaboration among PAI teachers are factors that worsen teaching quality (Sodikin et al., 2022). Various efforts are needed to improve teaching quality, such as training and seminars. One approach that can be taken to improve PAI teachers' competence is through the optimization of PAI teachers' working groups (KKG). Various studies show that KKG is one of the strategic platforms to optimize teachers' competencies in order to improve both the system and the methods used in teaching and also improve the quality of education in general (Gani, 2014; Nurhikmah et al., 2022; Pitriana et al., 2020). KKG can also foster the enthusiasm of PAI teachers in improving their abilities and skills, so that teachers can prepare, implement and evaluate the Islamic Religious Education Teaching and Learning Activities (KBM) program (Lubis, 2017).

To maximize the function of KKG as a learning community, teachers need to build a culture of reflective dialogue and active collaboration based on a spirit of togetherness, openness, mutual trust, and care(Affandi et al., 2022). So that the KKG program can contribute to meeting the needs of teachers and the development of science and technology, it also provides a breakthrough in cooperation with the community, in line with improving the quality of school-based education (Islah, 2023). KKG is an important forum for teachers to improve the quality of teaching, develop leadership skills, discuss changes in the curriculum, encourage collaboration among teachers in the school, provide input and constructive feedback and increase knowledge (Fikriya et al., 2024).

KKG PAI can foster new ideas from subordinates through transformative leadership that can provide innovative and creative solutions to existing problems, carefully and rationally (Tri Hidayanti et al., 2024). Sustainability KKG activities have strengthened the independent curriculum program by conducting teacher training in making independent curriculum teaching modules (prototypes), which are carried out regularly (Septiani, 2024). The teachers' working group is a forum that can bring together teachers in one area to share experiences, improve skills, and update knowledge in the field of education.

Previous studies have shown that the effectiveness of the PAI teachers' working groups has a significant impact on teachers' competence in the teaching process. However, there is still a need to study the strategies to optimize the teachers' working groups in order to improve teachers' competencies. This study will add to the discourse on how the strategy of optimizing teachers' working groups in improving the competence of PAI teachers in Rantau Selamat sub-district. And what is the success rate of the teachers' working group in improving the competence of PAI teachers in Rantau Selamat sub-district? This study is important to analyze the optimization strategy of the teachers' working group that can improve the competence of PAI teachers in the digital era. This study also aims to analyze how PAI teachers' challenges in utilizing the teachers' working groups in East Aceh District. The contribution of this

study is to identify the optimization model of teachers' working groups and the challenges faced in developing teachers' working groups so that they can be improved to achieve a better quality of Islamic religious education.

Method

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach with data collection methods through interviews as an instrument that emphasizes holistic emphasis, knowledge-based expansion, processual immediacy, and opportunity for clarification and summarization, and can investigate special or unique responses (Huberman & Milles, 2009). Interviews were conducted with eight informants, namely one PAI supervisor in the Rantau Selamat regional office; one head of the PAI teachers' working group in the Rantau Selamat regional office; one head of the planning and implementation of the teachers' working group program; and five PAI teachers.

The interviews were conducted directly between the researcher and the informants, and each informant's responses were recorded as one of the procedures for obtaining interview data (Creswell, 2014). In-depth guided free interviews by asking questions until finding the necessary answers or information needed. Data were also obtained from participant observation, which involved participating in ongoing activities on improving PAI teachers' competencies through the KKG PAI Korwil Rantau Selamat, East Aceh District.

The data collected consisted of field notes in the form of informant statements, observations, and documentation in the form of reports on the activity program of the KKG PAI Korwil Rantau Selamat. Furthermore, the data were arranged, sorted, grouped, and categorized according to the research questions (Creswell, 2014). The organized data made it easier to understand and serve as research findings. Furthermore, it was analyzed by organizing data, breaking down data into units, synthesizing, arranging into patterns, selecting what is important and what will be studied and making conclusions (Hasri, 2005, p. 334). The researcher approached the KKG situation with the assumption that nothing was trivial or unimportant. Every detail recorded was considered to contribute to a better understanding of behavior (Mcmillan, 2008, p. 273).

Checking the validity of the data by extending the presence of the researcher enables an increase in the degree of confidence in the data collected (Moleong, 2010, p. 178). The extension of the researcher's presence in the KKG PAI KORWIL Rantau Selamat environment was also intended to build trust among the members of the KKG PAI Korwil Rantau Selamat as key informants. The validity of this research data also uses triangulation techniques, namely interview data that has been written back to the informant and checking other data sources (Creswell, 2014). To achieve credibility standards, data validation is carried out by asking different sources who are considered to have the capability of the information needed in a snowball manner until the data is considered saturated. Or data validation is carried out with different methods, with the same question material, so that the data is also considered valid.

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Results and Discussion

Optimization of the Rantau Selamat Regional Working Group

The Teacher Working Group (KKG) is an organization formed to assist teachers in improving teacher professionalism. KKG is an adequate alternative means for teachers to improve and advance their competence, especially pedagogical competence (Nurhikmah et al., 2022). KKG consists of several elementary schools that are members of a certain group, where there are parent schools and core schools(Murniati AR et al., 2019). Elementary school Islamic Religious Education teachers who are members of the KKG PAI in the Rantau Selamat regional office consist of several clusters, namely: Cakra Donya, Melati, Panglima Polem, Tunas Muda, Bungong Ie Mawo, and Cicempala Kuneng clusters. Based on data from the Central Bureau of Statistics, Rantau Selamat Regional Office in Figures 2019, in the Rantau Selamat Regional Office there are 15 public primary schools, 231 teachers and 1531 primary school students (BPS, 2019). The KKG PAI elementary school in this regional office has a good strategy in the form of programs developed in two activities, namely routine programs and development programs.

For the routine program, at least it consists of: discussion of learning problems; preparation of syllabus, semester program and Learning Program Plan (RPP); preparation of learning evaluation instruments; discussion of materials and strengthening for the National Examination (Depdiknas RI, 2009). The success of achieving a goal will be successful if the strategy is carried out with a comprehensive plan to achieve the vision, mission, goals and objectives. In the military context, strategy means the art of directing military forces to obtain the ultimate goal set by political policy. The purpose of the strategy is to meet the objectives set by the policy by using the available resources as well as possible (Almubaroq, 2024).

In general, the context of strategy is widely discussed in business companies in order to achieve business goals and targets that are formulated in three strategic formulations (Usman, 2015), namely; First, corporate strategy (grand strategy) which is a specific long-term strategy containing the formulation of the vision, mission and objectives that translate the company's strategic orientation. Second, business level strategy (business strategy) which refers to the main business that is currently being run based on consideration of environmental analysis and industry competition proposed for business development. Third, functional level strategies are actions taken to achieve business goals by developing procedures and techniques to obtain results according to goals and objectives.

In the context of teaching, strategy is defined as a general pattern of teacher-learner action in the manifestation of teaching activities. The general nature of the general pattern describes the kinds and sequences of actions that are intended to be used or demonstrated by teachers and students in various types of teaching events (Buna'i, 2021). In this context, the strategy refers to the vision and mission of the Rantau Selamat teachers' working group and a series of teacher actions in the teachers' working group (KKG) program. That is, in the form of a functional Human Resource

strategy in the form of strategic steps designed by teachers who are members of the Rantau Selamat PAI Working Group in developing the quality of teacher human resources as the main asset of educational institutions in order to achieve educational goals and objectives.

Based on the observations, the first strategy is to establish the vision and mission of the KKG PAI Korwil Rantau Selamat, which is to make PAI teachers professional and improve the competence of PAI teachers. To realize this vision, the chairperson of the KKG makes planning, organizing resources, implementing work programs, supervising and evaluating the implementation of work programs. So that the organizational strategy, in this case the KKG, can balance the resources and intellectuals internal and external to the organization in responding to challenges (Sahyar, 2023).

The implementation of the PAI teachers' working group in the Rantau Selamat regional office is held once a month, namely on the first week of each month, starting at 08.00 a.m. and ending at 2.00 p.m. WIB. Each KKG meeting begins with the delivery of information from the East Aceh District Education Office by the PAI supervisor and the KKG chairperson. With the dissemination of information, it will increase the sense of togetherness, foster enthusiasm and responsibility as an Islamic educator. This is reinforced by previous studies that KKG can foster the enthusiasm of Islamic Religious Education teachers to improve their abilities and skills in preparing, implementing and evaluating the Islamic Religious Education Teaching and Learning Activities (KBM) program (Aisyah, 2023).

In the teachers' working group meetings in Rantau Selamat, teachers discuss issues related to education or Islamic materials, deepen learning materials through literature related to Islamic Education, and discuss various difficulties in learning. The strategy has had an influence on increasing the competence of PAI teachers as expressed by the chairperson of the KKG in Rantau Selamat Regional Office that "KKG has had an influence on increasing insight and increasing the enthusiasm of PAI teachers in Rantau Selamat Regional Office". Based on research by Hidayah and Sugiarto (2015), the KKG forum can provide teachers with space to discuss various issues and topics about their work. Even KKG has been able to improve the quality of mathematics learning, one of the topics discussed is how to teach math according to the curriculum. The learning that is expected to occur is meaningful learning. Any knowledge or skill can be acquired by students only if teachers actively construct the knowledge in their minds through the teachers' working groups.

Tactically, the activities of the KKG PAI Korwil Rantau Selamat in East Aceh District focused on 40 PAI teachers. Of these teachers, 90% have a bachelor's degree, 5% have a master's degree and the remaining 5% still have a diploma. Of the total 40 teachers, 33 teachers or 82.5% are civil servants, and the remaining 7 teachers or 17.5% are honorary. Then from a total of 40 teachers, a total of 32 people or 80% have certified educators, while the remaining 8 people or 20% have not been certified educators. With these differences in teacher qualifications, the gap in teacher knowledge is very

high and the teachers' working groups have been able to minimize this gap. As one teacher who participated in the teachers' working group said:

> "The teachers' working group at the Rantau Selamat regional office has increased the knowledge of more senior teachers who transfer their knowledge and experience to us juniors through their leadership role".

Based on this statement, it shows that the teachers' working groups are able to bridge the gap in teachers' education and experience. This fact is reinforced by the research of Tri Hidayanti, et al (2024) that the teachers' working group can not only transfer knowledge, but also transfer values or ethics, which is an urgent need in order to re-establish the values of empowerment of the primary school teachers' working group.

Junior teachers were strengthened at each KKG meeting by discussing the preparation of the syllabus; preparation of the annual program; preparation of the semester program; preparation of KKM; preparation of lesson plans; and processing of learning outcomes. As a result, the teachers have succeeded in preparing lesson plans well and are increasingly able to carry out learning, are able to use teaching aids and are able to carry out assessments of primary school Islamic education teachers in the Rantau Selamat regional office in East Aceh district. As Peni Yusnita explained that:

> "Through KKG, we can more easily prepare preparations before carrying out the teaching and learning process, which includes lesson plans, syllabus, resources and teaching methods so that the learning process of Islamic religious education in the classroom takes place in accordance with the expectations to be achieved".

Based on this information, it shows that for PAI teachers making lesson plans is an important component in the implementation of learning in the classroom. A teacher who wants to see the learning process go well always prepares a Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) as part of educational administration. The most important role of educational administration is to mobilize human resources and material resources in schools to achieve the goals of educational organizations, so that the happiness of all school residents is realized (Saleh, 2002, p. 61). With the existence of lesson plans, teachers show their professionalism, namely teachers who always strive so that the learning objectives are in accordance with what is expected and one of the causes that can support this is whether the teacher always makes teaching preparations before carrying out the learning process in the classroom.

Behavior in the learning process is a conscious and planned effort of a teacher (Dananjaya, 2017). The success of teachers in managing the learning process can be measured through the readiness of teachers to plan lessons (Fikriya et al., 2024). This is in accordance with the mandate of the National Education System Law article 1 paragraph 1 that "what is meant by education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their own potential" (UU No. 20 Tahun 2003 Tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional, 2003). Therefore, KGG PAI teachers have been able to prepare lesson plans consciously so that the learning process can be directed and can achieve what is expected.

The motivation of teachers formed from KKG PAI activities shows enthusiasm and sincerity, considering that the wages of honorary PAI teachers are still very low below the regional minimum wage, but the KKG has provided encouragement to strive and train and guide students. KKG has provided motivation by PAI supervisors and all KKG members, so that these honorary teachers can guide their students, carry out their duties and responsibilities optimally. Teacher motivation and creativity will have a significant positive impact on student learning outcomes (Badrus, 2018; Herawati et al., 2019). Through KKG, teachers can conduct material deepening activities through various literature related to PAI, according to Siti Aisyah, material deepening activities really help her in developing material in the curriculum, considering that she is a completely new teacher and feels in dire need of guidance. As stated by Iin Parlina as an honorarium teacher that

> "KKG Rantau Selamat cluster has encouraged the creativity of teachers who previously had not mastered learning innovations in PAI materials and felt insecure, slowly gained confidence and grew creativity through activities that focus on improving the competence of PAI teachers in this KKG PAI Korwil Rantau Selamat."

Based on this statement, it shows that KKG PAI has facilitated the skills of teachers to innovate in preparing lessons by making learning tools. This is in accordance with what was expressed by Koko Susilo as the chairperson of the Rantau Selamat regional working group that the working group has assisted the professional development of PAI teachers and independently provided supporting facilities as much as possible. Teachers are motivated and greatly helped by the learning tools training. Teacher creativity grew through the optimization of the teachers' working group which was enthusiastically followed by PAI teachers in the Rantau Selamat regional office. KKG not only encourages senior PAI teachers to master technology but also encourages the capacity of junior teachers in teaching as stated by Inda Liani, "that the KKG activity program is very useful for him who is a senior teacher, especially related to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) training as a learning tool." The existence of ICT in the field of learning has contributed to minimizing cheating in examinations and presenting quality student graduates by applying information technology in learning appropriately and responsibly (Adz Dzaky et al., 2020)).

In the KKG activities, teaching practice is also carried out for 15 minutes by picket officers every month, using learning models that make students active and fun. After the teaching practice activities, corrections are then made to the performance in teaching practice by examining educational theories, learning models so that it can refresh the knowledge of the teachers who have been obtained when studying higher education related to contemporary learning theories and learning models. According to Dananjaya (2017) teachers are required to be creative to find and create various kinds of effective media that contain various kinds of messages.

Another strategy carried out by KKG Rantau Selamat in optimizing the competence of Islamic Religious Education teachers is calligraphy training. KKG PAI Korwil Rantau Selamat has invited private tutors at the East Aceh Regency level to

provide calligraphy material to Islamic Religious Education teachers so that each teacher can pass on their knowledge to their respective students. This activity has been proven to increase the ranking of the Regency-level competition in the calligraphy competition, from the 2018/2019 school year not getting a ranking, in the 2019/2020 school year getting 2nd place at the Regency level. Making calligraphy a medium for Islamic Religious Education learning has strengthened Islamic religious education and the development of student talents in the arts and the development of Islamic Religious Education learning motivation (Zulkarnain et al., 2023).

Finally, the KKG PAI strategy is to facilitate teachers to learn the art of rebana music, led by Mrs. Asiah who is a senior Islamic Religious Education teacher at SD Negeri 2 Rantau Selamat. This activity is considered very good to be implemented, considering the senior teachers who are active in rebana activities. So that with this activity, more and more younger teachers have mastered the tambourine and can teach it to their students, so that the Rantau Selamat Regional Coordinator is more enthusiastic about his tambourine art achievements. Based on research Putri et al, (2022) music is one of the very important PAI learning media that can provide peace of mind for its listeners and remind everyone to remember Allah SWT.

Impact Analysis of KKG Activities of the Rantau Selamat Regional

This section will discuss the impact of the Rantau Selamat regional working group activities on PAI teachers' competencies. According to Government Regulation No. 19/2005, there are four competencies: pedagogical competence, personality competence, social competence, and professional competence (Pemerintah Republik Indonesia, 2005). First, pedagogical competence is the ability to educate which includes: understanding students, understanding the curriculum, preparing planning, implementation, evaluation, remedial, enrichment and reporting and motivating students to apply their knowledge.

KKG Rantau Selamat has shown the results of strengthening the pedagogical competence of PAI teachers in managing learning so that it makes it easier for students to receive knowledge or lessons delivered, as well as higher student enthusiasm so that interest in taking Islamic religious education lessons will be more enthusiastic. As the results of the interview with Hamidah revealed as follows:

> "With the KKG, PAI teachers get better pedagogical competence, which can instill knowledge, understanding and appreciation of religion to students. During the KKG, we are trained and required to be able to carry out the learning process well, starting from the initial activities to the core and closing activities, which we must maximize properly".

Based on this information, it shows that teachers' working groups have been able to influence the improvement of teachers' pedagogical competence, namely educating and guiding students according to their stage of development. Pedagogical competence plays an important role in improving the quality of learning in today's digital era (Diana & Rodhiyana, 2023). KKG korwil Rantau Selamat equips teachers' competencies in managing learning which includes understanding students, designing

the implementation of learning, evaluating learning outcomes, and developing students to actualize their various potentials. Furthermore, informant Siti Aisyah revealed that:

> "Before carrying out the learning process, I first look at the curriculum, compile syllabi, make annual programs, semester programs, lesson plans and assessment processing. In learning, I do not only use one method in teaching but vary according to the material to be taught, such as the subjects that I teach religious practices related to ubudiyah issues such as prayer, ablution, fasting, zakat, and sacrifice so that in learning I go directly to the application not just giving theory.

Based on the data above, it shows that the teachers' working groups in the Rantau Selamat regional office in East Aceh district have implemented the learning process and achieved the expected learning objectives. Teachers participating in the teachers' working group have played an active role in learning, such as providing motivation to make the lesson interesting for students, and teachers are expected to be able to connect learning material with factual events that are happening and if learning is not possible in the classroom, then the teacher wants to invite students to study in the mosque or in the school area in accordance with the learning objectives and students are interested in participating in the lesson. This is reinforced by research by Pitriana, et al (2020) that the teachers' working groups have facilitated teachers in carrying out learning in the classroom, which can be seen in the improvement of teacher performance in terms of completing classroom administration and implementing classroom learning.

Second, the teachers' working group has strengthened the professional competence of teachers as Islamic religious educators. It has improved teachers' abilities as professional teachers who master the characteristics of teaching materials and the characteristics of different learners. Learning styles are important because they are an expression of individual uniqueness that is relevant to education. Individual differences must be respected because they are an expression of personality uniqueness (Joyce et al., 2004; Wahidah, 2019). Therefore, teachers are required to understand the characteristics of teaching materials including concepts, principles, theories contained in teaching materials. So that it can be applied to students including the potential, attitudes, interests, noble morals, and personalities of various students.

Mastery of the characteristics of teaching materials and learners is needed to determine learning methods and strategies (Al-Attas, 1987; Nata, 2018). PAI teachers who participate in the teachers' working group in Rantau Selamat regional office in East Aceh district have received training in utilizing educational media designed to facilitate teaching and learning activities, so that teachers or educators have skills in using educational media as a professional competence. This was emphasized by Nazaruddin as follows:

> "In today's era, which is the era of technology-based media, media is designed to be used in improving education. Thus, as educational personnel, ideally understand the kinds of media, how to use them, when to use them, the advantages and disadvantages of media. This is actually what needs to

be considered and also improved, because the majority of subject matter in today's learning requires media as a technology base. Through KKG we have been able to use more technology-based learning media."

Based on the above statement, it shows that Islamic religious education teachers have been able to utilize technology as a learning medium which is a necessity in the digital era. Communication information technology media is a tool or complement used by Islamic religious education teachers in order to communicate with students in the millennial era (Nata, 2018). In connection with the use of learning media using LCD projectors that can be used in the learning process as one of the supports in carrying out effective and innovative learning. Fundamentally, teacher professional development can only be successful if its influence can encourage a new / innovative creation attitude (Risdiany, 2021). The innovation of Islamic education institutions in Aceh has shown the ability to maintain the characteristics of Islamic education and be able to adapt to various innovations according to the times (Basri et al., 2024).

Optimizing KKG activities has strengthened the ICT capabilities of teachers as Hamidah explained that:

Teachers who participate in KKG can train to utilize technology in the learning process as a medium and learning resource used in explaining subject matter. This stimulates the thinking power of students because they can see what the teacher is explaining and will help students' memory, students can observe in detail the learning objects explained by the teacher, in this way the learning results will be maximized and will give a special impression on students.

KKG has made a significant contribution to strengthening teacher competence in learning, namely the ability to utilize teaching aids in learning as one of the determining components of learning effectiveness, teaching aids turn abstract teaching material into concrete and realistic (Nurmalisa et al., 2024). In the process of selecting effective and efficient educational media, the content and instructional objectives must be in accordance with the characteristics of certain media as stated by Hamidah Hasibuan in the results of interviews with researchers:

"Through the teachers' working group, teachers are trained to use learning media to answer the demands of making the right selection, considerations such as what media is the most practical, whether the media to be used is relevant to the subject matter, whether the media is in accordance with the capacity, situation and conditions of the students, the extent to which the achievement of students must be in accordance with the specified objectives, whether the value of the learning material is commensurate with the price of the media and so on. In the KKG, teachers have been able to select educational media that are effective and efficient, the content and instructional objectives are in accordance with the characteristics of the media."

Based on this data, it can be understood that teachers have been able to select educational media for learning purposes by paying attention to its accuracy according to learning objectives. Teachers get support for the content of teaching materials, ease

of obtaining media, teacher skills in applying and utilizing media according to the level of thinking of students. According to Rusman (2010) by utilizing information technology the speed of learning is no longer limited by place and time so that learning activities can be easily carried out by students anytime and anywhere. This is reinforced by previous studies that the positive impact of ICT is more innovative learning, increasing student understanding, facilitating learning without time and space restrictions, enriching learning resources, facilitating online-based learning (Subagio & Limbong, 2023).

ICT media can positively become a learning medium and can be utilized properly among students. However, if excessive use and utilization will have a negative impact on users (Munti & Syaifuddin, 2020). Therefore, it is important to maintain Islamic values in the use of ICT in education, which is done by developing ICT platforms that are in accordance with Islamic principles, as well as educating students about the responsible use of ICT in accordance with Islamic values (Fauzi & Arifin, 2023).

KKG Korwil Rantau Selamat has also contributed to improving teachers' skills in conducting evaluations, which are very useful for seeing changes in the level of knowledge, proficiency in skills and changes in students' attitudes, as Hamidah Hasibuan explained:

> "One form of evaluation that I do is by giving oral questions in class: that is, before starting learning, the teacher first gives oral questions to students in the form of understanding the material that has been explained."

Based on this statement, it can be understood that the teachers' working groups have influenced teachers' ability to evaluate learning better. According to Muhaimin (2005) in religious education, what is assessed is not only the cognitive ability such as memorizing short letters, memorizing the pillars of prayer and so on, but whether the prayers are diligent or not, so teachers need to understand the evaluation model with ethical reference, namely norm reference evaluation, benchmark reference, and personality evaluation. In general, teachers still use the norm model evaluation and benchmark model evaluation as conveyed by Siti Aisyah in the interview she revealed that:

> "I use a class-based assessment model in conducting evaluations such as test models in the form of descriptions, multiple choice, then during discussions, I also see and conduct assessments through the activeness of students. In addition, it is also through assignments, in the curriculum the value of the assignment is the same as the value of the test or test, so that if there are students whose test scores are bad, but the value of the assignment is good, it will really help students.

The information indicates that the evaluation carried out by PAI teachers after attending the KKG is getting better. this can be seen based on the Student Worksheet which shows students' understanding of the material that has been taught. The teacher's ability to assess students is increasingly creative, for example, students are taught to find information in magazines, newspapers, the internet, television and radio

related to examples of praiseworthy morals and despicable morals, then students are instructed to retell the results of the reading that has been obtained by exploring the wisdom. This activity in the theory of learning models is known as student activity-oriented learning where students are directed to find their own through contextual direct experience, namely by exploring and elaborating on their learning experiences (Rusman, 2010, p. 382).

In carrying out learning evaluation to determine the level of students' ability to understand the subject matter that has been given in general by PAI teachers in the Rantau Selamat Regional Office by conducting oral and written tests periodically and continuously. The assessment or evaluation carried out is not only focused on the cognitive domain but also focused on affective (children's attitudes) and psychomotor assessments. The teacher acts as a communicator who communicates material in verbal and non-verbal forms. The communicated message is packaged so that it is easy for students to understand, learn, digest and apply (Wahidah & Ridha, 2020). Learners communicate with teachers outside the classroom when they have difficulty understanding the material by meeting and asking about the teacher's condition, which shows the emotional closeness between teachers and learners.

The teachers' working group has also strengthened the social competence of Islamic religious education teachers, which can be observed from the relationships among elementary school teachers in the Rantau Selamat regional office in East Aceh district. Teachers at the school try to create good relationships with colleagues, both relationships related to family relationships and those related to official duties such as teaching activities. For example, Islamic religious education teachers often exchange ideas with other teachers if there are materials or sentences that are not understood or sometimes teachers ask other teachers for opinions when teachers have difficulty in managing the learning process. Social competence as a form of teacher skills and abilities in interacting and the community environment that students will look up to whose job is to foster and guide students towards applicable norms. With social competence, there will be good interactions between students and teachers and can create comfort, a sense of calm, and high motivation, for students and teachers in the teaching and learning process so that it can improve student learning achievement and even in developing students' talents (Mazrur et al., 2022; Wahidah, 2021). Relationships among elementary school teachers in the Rantau Selamat Regional Office are harmonious, both relationships related to official duties and family relationships.

PAI teachers in Rantau Selamat Regional Office have demonstrated social competence because they always maintain good communication with students and teachers when they meet in an activity, are able to solve problems faced by students, and try to establish active and effective communication with their parents. Based on field observations, it shows that teachers at the school always create a good relationship pattern, both those related to the family and those related to tasks such as learning activities in the classroom. This is reflected in the intimacy that exists between teachers and students. The teacher is a person who is used as a place to ask something,

either related to the subject matter, or something outside the subject matter. This kind of activity requires all teachers to be actively involved and able to communicate well with others, be flexible in socializing, have open-mindedness, and the ability to socialize with others.

This study reinforces the findings of a previous study that the teachers' working group has had a positive impact on Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers, strengthening their professional competence in solving problems that arise in the field in accordance with their field of study with various types of activities ranging from discussion of learning programs, classroom management to teacher credit calculations (performance appraisal) (Islah, 2023). With the KKG program, teachers can improve teaching quality, develop leadership skills, discuss changes in the curriculum, encourage collaboration among teachers in the school, provide input and constructive feedback and increase knowledge (Fikriya et al., 2024). KKG has contributed to fostering the enthusiasm of Islamic Religious Education teachers to improve their abilities and skills in preparing, implementing and evaluating the Islamic Religious Education Teaching and Learning Activities (KBM) program (Aisyah, 2023). KKG needs to be strengthened to finalize teachers' competencies on an ongoing basis to maintain and improve the quality of education.

Conclusion

The optimization of teachers' working groups has encouraged the professional competence of primary school Islamic Religious Education teachers in the Rantau Selamat regional office in East Aceh district. The improvement of Islamic Religious Education teachers' competencies developed through the Teachers' Working Group in the Rantau Selamat Regional Office has been going well, namely the deepening of learning materials through PAI-related literature; discussions on issues related to education and Islam; discussion of various difficulties in learning and training on the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a model in learning; training on the preparation of lesson plans and syllabus; training on evaluation instruments and processing of evaluation results. Calligraphy training and utilization of music as a medium for Islamic Religious Education learning.

Although the competencies developed are mostly professional and pedagogical competencies, the development of personality and social competency programs has increased, such as conducting dialogues and discussions with personality experts or conducting personality development workshops and seminars and being able to organize social services, visits to places where social development is organized. Optimizing the Rantau Selamat teachers' working group has had a positive impact on teachers' mastery of the material, structure, concepts and scientific mindset that support religious education subjects, mastery of competency standards and basic competencies and creative development of learning materials.

In general, the work program of KKG PAI SD has improved the professional competence of teachers in the Rantau Selamat regional office, namely: Improving Academic Qualifications; Improving Teacher Motivation and Self-Confidence;

Improving Teacher Professional Competence; Improving Teacher Pedagogical Competence; and Improving Islamic Art Skills. The implication of the results of this study is that KKG PAI, as a forum for developing teacher competence, should continue to improve the quality of its programs and activities so as to produce the desired output. Programs to improve personality and social competence are expected to be developed again, considering that these competencies are very important in the learning process. Teachers as parties who have a very important role in the success of learning activities in order to remain enthusiastic and motivate themselves, to be able to continue to develop their competence, and always make innovations in learning for the achievement of quality education.

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