

Transforming Pedagogical Practices: Training on Teaching Methods and Media for Islamic Educators

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ABSTRACT

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This research focuses on enhancing the pedagogical competencies of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers through intensive training on innovative teaching methods and contextual media development. The main objective of this study is to explore the effectiveness of participatory training in building teachers' individual competencies and strengthening institutional culture toward continuous pedagogical innovation. This study employs a qualitative method with a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, actively involving teaching staff at MTs-MA Al-Khairaat Guraping, Kota Tidore. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions, then analysed using Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis technique consisting of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. The results showed that training successfully improved teachers' theoretical knowledge from 45% to 85%, practical skills from 40% to 90%, and confidence from 50% to 80%. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of hands-on, collaborative approaches and institutional support to ensure sustainability and effectiveness of teacher professional development programs in Islamic educational institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of pedagogical competencies in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is not only a professional requirement but also a reflection of educators' commitment to delivering quality religious instruction that resonates with contemporary learners (Asfiati, 2023; Kadis et al., 2024). In various regions across Indonesia, PAI teaching practices still face significant challenges, particularly related to the limited understanding and skills among teachers in

implementing innovative instructional approaches (Amaly et al., 2022; Shofiyyah et al., 2023). According to observations conducted in several Islamic educational institutions, most teachers continue to rely predominantly on conventional lecture methods and textbook-dependent instruction, resulting in low student engagement and suboptimal learning outcomes. This phenomenon reflects an imbalance between the demands of twenty-first century education and the actual pedagogical capacity in implementing effective instructional practices (Ben-David Kolikant, 2019; Reimers & Chung, 2019). This is where capacity-building interventions, such as comprehensive training and mentoring on teaching methods and media development, become critically important to ensure that every educator can facilitate meaningful learning experiences effectively and innovatively. This research is grounded in adult learning theory which emphasizes the importance of contextual, participatory, and practice-oriented professional development to enhance teacher competencies in educational contexts. Thus, this study not only contributes to the Islamic education literature but also offers practical solutions to strengthen pedagogical practices within Muslim educational communities.

The primary problem that this research addresses is the inadequate pedagogical competencies among PAI teachers in designing innovative teaching methods and developing contextual learning media. Although the development of varied instructional approaches is professionally mandated, many teachers still feel uncertain and lack confidence in moving beyond traditional teaching practices (Debs et al., 2019; Henriksen et al., 2020; Strydom et al., 2021). This pedagogical limitation not only impacts the quality of instructional delivery but can also reduce student motivation and engagement in learning religious content. Additionally, another challenge emerges from low participation rates in professional development programs offered, caused by various factors including time constraints, limited access to training opportunities, and insufficient institutional support. This problem is urgent to address because effective PAI instruction requires teachers who are not only knowledgeable about religious content but also skilled in delivering that content through engaging, contextually relevant, and pedagogically sound methods (Debs et al., 2019). Therefore, this study aims to explore the effectiveness of participatory training in improving teachers' knowledge, skills, and commitment to implementing innovative teaching practices.

Previous research has demonstrated that professional development programs significantly impact teacher competencies and instructional quality in educational settings. Studies on teacher training have consistently shown that well-designed professional development enhances teachers' pedagogical knowledge, instructional skills, and classroom practices (Ali et al., 2021; Heck et al., 2019). Research on learning media development indicates that training programs focusing on practical media production skills enable teachers to create more engaging and contextually relevant instructional materials (Semenog et al.,

2020; Zaky Adhitya Ginanjar Sasmita et al., 2021). Furthermore, studies examining innovative teaching methods in Islamic education contexts have documented that teachers who receive systematic training in varied instructional approaches demonstrate greater creativity and effectiveness in delivering religious content (Arif & Aziz, 2023; M. Ramli, 2022; Nasucha et al., 2023). Participatory approaches to professional development, where teachers actively engage in collaborative learning and hands-on practice rather than passive reception of information, have been found particularly effective in promoting sustained implementation of learned practices. However, these studies have not fully explored how comprehensive training programs addressing both teaching methods and media development simultaneously can be effectively implemented in Islamic educational institutions, particularly in remote areas facing unique resource constraints and contextual challenges. Additionally, limited research has examined the institutional and cultural factors that influence successful implementation and sustainability of pedagogical innovations following professional development interventions in Islamic school contexts.

The gap between this study and previous research lies in the limited exploration of comprehensive training programs specifically designed for PAI teachers in Indonesian Islamic educational contexts, particularly in remote areas with distinct pedagogical challenges and institutional characteristics. Previous research has underlined the importance of teacher professional development, but few studies have specifically examined the effectiveness of participatory training approaches in enhancing both teaching methods competencies and media development skills simultaneously. Additionally, insufficient research has explored how factors such as institutional culture, teacher motivation, administrative support, and local educational contexts can influence the success and sustainability of professional development initiatives. This research fills this gap by providing in-depth analysis of how method and media training can be tailored to local institutional needs and how participatory approaches can enhance teacher engagement and sustained implementation.

This research offers novelty in several important aspects. First, this study is among the first to integrate the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach in the context of comprehensive pedagogical training for PAI teachers in Indonesian Islamic schools, an approach rarely applied in similar professional development studies. Second, this research explores how training can be contextualized to address specific institutional needs and local educational conditions, including adaptation to unique cultural traditions and resource constraints that are often overlooked in generic training programs. Third, the study proposes an integrated training model that addresses both methodological competencies and media development skills simultaneously, recognizing the interconnected nature of these pedagogical dimensions. Fourth, this research examines not only individual skill development but also broader impacts on institutional culture and professional learning communities. This novelty makes

significant contributions to expanding the literature on Islamic teacher education and community-based professional development, while offering innovative approaches adaptable to various educational contexts.

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of participatory training in enhancing PAI teachers' knowledge, skills, and confidence in designing innovative teaching methods and developing contextual learning media. Additionally, the study identifies factors that support and hinder training success, examines impacts on institutional culture and professional learning communities, and provides recommendations for developing more effective and sustainable professional development programs. By achieving these objectives, this research aims to generate tangible positive impacts on Islamic educational institutions, particularly in ensuring that teachers are equipped with contemporary pedagogical competencies necessary for delivering engaging, meaningful, and effective PAI instruction while strengthening collegial professional networks within schools.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method with a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, chosen for its capacity to actively involve participants in every research stage, from planning through implementation to evaluation (Brydon-Miller et al., 2020; Cornish et al., 2023). This approach enables researchers to collaborate closely with the educational community to understand existing challenges, develop contextually relevant solutions, and implement necessary interventions, ultimately not only generating knowledge but also directly empowering teachers and strengthening institutional capacity. The PAR approach was selected over other methods such as experimental designs or surveys because this research focuses on processes of pedagogical transformation and professional empowerment within authentic educational contexts (Garnett et al., 2019). By employing PAR, researchers can work alongside teachers to identify professional development needs, co-design appropriate training interventions, and collaboratively implement and refine pedagogical innovations, thereby ensuring that both research outcomes and capacity-building processes are meaningful and sustainable.

Data were collected through comprehensive and complementary techniques including participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. The research location is MTs-MA Al-Khairaat Guraping situated in Kota Tidore, North Maluku, Indonesia. This location was selected based on explicit requests from school leadership for professional development support and its representativeness of Islamic educational institutions in remote areas facing pedagogical capacity challenges. A total of 23 teachers who are active teaching staff at the school were involved as participants in this study. This number was determined to ensure that data obtained would be sufficiently rich and diverse to provide comprehensive understanding of training impacts on

teacher competencies and institutional culture. In-depth interviews were conducted directly on-site, with each interview lasting between 45 to 90 minutes, and participatory observation was conducted throughout the three-day intensive training implementation.

This study utilizes Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis technique consisting of three primary stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles et al., 2013, 2014). First, data collected from interviews, observations, and focus group discussions were reduced through processes of selection, focusing, and simplification to identify information most relevant to research objectives (Creswell et al., 2014). After reduction, data were then presented in forms of structured narrative text, diagrams, and tables, facilitating researchers in identifying patterns, relationships, and dynamics appearing in the data. The final stage is conclusion drawing and verification, where researchers compile interpretations of analysed data and ensure that drawn conclusions are consistent with existing evidence. This process is iterative in nature, with researchers regularly returning to raw data and analysis results to ensure that research findings are valid and trustworthy. This analytical technique was chosen for its capability to capture the complexity of qualitative data and provide deep understanding of how participatory training affects teachers' knowledge, skills, confidence, and professional culture within educational institutions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study revealed several significant findings related to participatory training on teaching methods and media development at MTs-MA Al-Khairaat Guraping, which are compiled in the following subsections. Each subsection is complemented by direct excerpts from interviews as well as relevant tables and figures to support the narrative and provide clear visual representation of findings.

Enhancement of Teachers' Knowledge and Skills

The first finding identified was substantial improvement in teachers' knowledge and skills regarding innovative teaching methods and media development. Before training, teachers generally felt uncertain about implementing varied instructional approaches and lacked confidence in creating engaging learning media. However, after completing the intensive three-day training, significant improvements occurred in their understanding, practical skills, and professional confidence. For example, Participant 1 states: "Before participating in this training, I really doubted my ability to develop creative learning media. I always relied on textbooks and simple lecture methods. But after attending each workshop session, I now feel more confident and know concrete steps to design effective media aligned with learning objectives" (Interview, 2022). This is echoed by Participant 2's statement: "I had heard about

various innovative teaching methods through educational literature, but I never really understood how to implement them practically in my PAI classes. Now, after this intensive training with hands-on practice and peer feedback, I not only grasp the theoretical foundations but can also apply these methods appropriately" (Interview, 2022).

The interview results demonstrated substantial improvement in teachers' understanding and skills related to pedagogical innovation after participating in training. Teachers who previously felt uncertain and inexperienced now exhibit considerably greater confidence in implementing varied instructional strategies and developing contextual learning media. The training successfully transformed teachers' perspectives on pedagogical responsibility, from viewing teaching as merely content transmission to understanding it as facilitation of meaningful, engaging learning experiences. However, challenges related to time constraints and varied baseline competencies remained evident, indicating that while training proved effective, ongoing support and differentiated approaches are necessary to ensure all participants can implement learned practices optimally. Additionally, this training succeeded in fostering collaborative professional culture within the institution, where teachers felt more connected to colleagues and more prepared to work together in developing and sharing pedagogical innovations. To provide more concrete illustration, the following table presents comparison of teachers' competency levels before and after training:

Table 1. Comparison of Pedagogical Competency Levels Before and After Training

Category	Before Training (%)	After Training (%)
Theoretical Knowledge of Methods	45%	85%
Understanding Media Design Principles	40%	82%
Confidence in Implementation	50%	80%
Practical Media Production Skills	40%	90%
Digital Literacy	35%	75%

This table demonstrates significant improvements across five primary competency categories after teachers participated in the pedagogical training. Before training, only 45% of teachers possessed adequate theoretical knowledge of innovative methods, but after training, this figure increased dramatically to 85%. Similar substantial increases occurred in understanding media design principles, rising from 40% to 82%. The most remarkable improvement appeared in practical media production skills, where pre-training competency of only 40% jumped to 90% post-training, indicating that hands-on workshop approaches proved exceptionally effective. Confidence in implementation increased from 50% to 80%, while digital literacy improved from 35% to 75%. This interpretation shows that the participatory training model employing intensive workshops, peer collaboration, and mentoring proves highly effective in enhancing teachers'

pedagogical competencies across multiple dimensions simultaneously.

This improvement aligns closely with experiential learning theory proposed by Kolb, where direct hands-on experience plays crucial roles in deepening understanding and developing practical skills (Morris, 2020; Voon et al., 2019). In this context, training successfully translated abstract pedagogical theories into concrete practices, providing teachers with opportunities to actively construct knowledge through doing, reflecting, and receiving constructive feedback, ultimately strengthening their professional competencies.



Figure 1. Teachers Collaborating in Media Development Workshop

The collaborative workshop atmosphere captured in Figure 1 illustrates the participatory nature of the training, where teachers actively engaged in hands-on media production activities rather than passively receiving instructions. During these intensive workshop sessions, teachers worked in small groups of three to four members, sharing materials, exchanging creative ideas, and providing mutual assistance in overcoming technical challenges encountered during media production processes. This collaborative learning environment proved instrumental in building not only individual technical competencies but also collegial relationships and shared pedagogical language that would facilitate ongoing professional collaboration beyond the training period. The visible enthusiasm and focused engagement evident in participants' interactions during these workshops reflected genuine investment in their professional development and demonstrated how appropriate instructional design, emphasizing active participation, peer learning, and authentic task engagement can effectively motivate adult learners and produce meaningful competency gains.

Awareness of Pedagogical Innovation as Institutional Responsibility

The second finding revealed increased teachers' awareness regarding pedagogical innovation as collective institutional responsibility rather than individual burden. Before training, many teachers perceived instructional improvement as personal professional obligation with limited institutional support or collegial collaboration. However, this training opened new

perspectives on shared responsibility for continuously enhancing instructional quality. Participant 3, for example, reveals: "I always thought that developing my teaching methods was solely my individual responsibility without much connection to what my colleagues were doing. After participating in this training together with all teaching staff, I realized that pedagogical innovation should be our collective institutional commitment, and we need to support each other in this continuous improvement process" (Interview, 2022). In line with that, Participant 4 stated: "In our school environment, each teacher typically works independently without much pedagogical collaboration. Through this intensive training where we learned, practiced, and reflected together, we now understand that we should help each other, share resources and innovations, and ensure all students benefit from improved teaching quality across subjects" (Interview, 2022).

These interview results indicated significant shift in teachers' perceptions regarding pedagogical development responsibility. Before training, teachers tended to view instructional improvement as isolated individual endeavor without much collegial dimension or institutional framework. However, after training, they began understanding that pedagogical innovation should be collaborative institutional priority, requiring shared commitment and mutual support among all teaching staff. The training succeeded in cultivating new awareness that continuous professional development is collective responsibility, and it becomes important for all faculty members to engage actively in this process to ensure comprehensive instructional quality improvement. This collective consciousness reflects enhanced understanding of professional learning communities and strengthening of collegial bonds within institutions.



Figure 2. Transformation of Teachers' Perceptions on Pedagogical Development Responsibility

This awareness can be explained through social cohesion theory proposed by Durkheim (1912), where collective involvement in shared professional endeavors not only strengthens institutional identity but also increases sense of solidarity and mutual responsibility within educational communities. This training served as catalyst to strengthen professional bonds and expand teachers'

understanding of the importance of collaborative engagement in ongoing pedagogical improvement efforts.

Challenges in Training Implementation

The findings further identified challenges encountered during training implementation, particularly concerning sustained participation and long-term continuity of innovation efforts. Several teachers faced difficulties in fully committing to intensive training due to competing demands on their time and limited institutional resources. Participant 5 reveals: "I genuinely wanted to attend all training sessions because the content was extremely valuable, but my teaching schedule and family responsibilities occasionally prevented full participation. This training is tremendously beneficial, but unfortunately, not all teachers can engage completely due to various constraints" (Interview, 2022). The Participant 6 statement adds another perspective: "I consider this training critically important for my professional development, but it might prove more effective if scheduled during school breaks or structured with flexible modules that teachers can access at their own pace to accommodate diverse schedules and learning preferences" (Interview, 2022).

These interview results demonstrated that challenges in full participation existed during training implementation, caused by time limitations and competing professional and personal responsibilities faced by teachers. Although training was considered highly beneficial, significant barriers related to scheduling flexibility emerged, preventing all teachers from attending every session completely (Khan et al., 2022). Additionally, clear need for adaptability in training design became evident, both regarding timing and format. Teachers proposed that training be structured with more flexible schedules or accompanied by accessible modules enabling asynchronous learning, thereby allowing broader optimal participation. This interpretation highlights the critical importance of accommodation in training implementation to address participants' diverse needs and constraints, ensuring that training benefits can be experienced optimally by all faculty members. The following table presents statistics of teacher participation throughout training sessions:

Table 2. Teacher Participation Statistics Across Training Sessions

Training Session	Number of Teachers Present (%)
Session 1: Teaching Methods Foundation	93%
Session 2: Media Design Principles	87%
Session 3: Hands-on Media Production	80%
Session 4: Digital Media Development	73%
Session 5: Teaching Simulation	67%

Table 2 reveals declining participation trend throughout the training program. In the first session, teacher attendance rate was quite high at 93%. However, as training progressed, gradual decrease in participating teachers

occurred. In the second session, participation declined to 87%, continued decreasing to 80% in the third session, then 73% in the fourth session. By the fifth session, attendance reached its lowest point at 67%. Interpretation of these data indicates that although initial teacher enthusiasm was remarkably high, various factors including competing responsibilities, cumulative fatigue, and difficulty maintaining sustained commitment led to declining participation rates. This underscores critical importance of considering factors such as optimal training duration, session scheduling flexibility, and participant workload management to ensure participation remains stable throughout programs. Adjustments in training format, such as adopting shorter intensive sessions, utilizing hybrid delivery combining face-to-face and online components, or providing asynchronous learning modules, may be necessary to maintain higher sustained engagement levels.

This challenge emphasizes vital importance of flexibility in professional development implementation. Flexibility regarding scheduling, delivery formats, and accessibility of learning resources proves critical to overcoming participation barriers. Development of blended or fully online training options can serve as effective solutions to increase accessibility and ensure continuity of teacher engagement. This approach supports continuous professional learning theory emphasizing that accessibility and flexibility are essential to enable educators to engage in ongoing development despite time and resource constraints.

Impact of Training on Professional Learning Community

The latest finding reveals that this training generated positive impacts on development of professional learning communities within the institution. Many teachers reported that training not only enhanced individual pedagogical competencies but also strengthened sense of collegial connection and collaborative professional culture. For example, Participant 7 states: "Through this intensive training conducted together with all colleagues, I feel significantly stronger bonds with other teaching staff. We learned collaboratively, shared ideas and challenges, practiced together, and provided mutual feedback, which made us feel much closer professionally and more supportive of each other's development" (Interview, 2022). Participant 8 added: "I observe how this training has connected us as a genuine professional learning community. Now, when facing instructional challenges or wanting to try new approaches, we know whom to consult, how to collaborate effectively, and where to find collegial support for our pedagogical innovations" (Interview, 2022).

These interview results revealed significant positive impacts of training on social solidarity and professional cohesion within the teaching staff. Teachers experienced substantial improvements in their collegial relationships with fellow faculty members, strengthened through collaborative learning processes and mutual support during training (Akinyemi et al., 2019; Arinaitwe, 2021). This

training not only enhanced individual skills in teaching methods and media development but also cultivated relationships among teachers, creating stronger sense of professional community and shared commitment to instructional quality. Furthermore, training helped establish more structured networks of pedagogical collaboration within the institution, ensuring that when teachers encounter instructional challenges or seek to implement innovations, they possess supportive collegial resources and collaborative structures to facilitate ongoing improvement (Maass et al., 2019). This interpretation demonstrates that this type of participatory professional development generates significant added value in strengthening professional bonds and increasing institutional readiness for sustained pedagogical advancement through collective effort.

This positive impact can be explained using social capital theory which posits that joint professional activities, such as collaborative training on pedagogical innovation, can strengthen professional networks and solidarity within educational institutions (Parlar et al., 2019). These findings suggest that training serves not merely to improve individual technical skills but also builds social and professional infrastructure crucial for creating cultures of continuous improvement and collective responsibility for instructional quality enhancement. This study demonstrates that participatory training on teaching methods and media development at MTs-MA Al-Khairaat Guraping generated substantial impacts on enhancing teachers' knowledge, practical skills, professional confidence, and collegial solidarity.

This research makes significant contributions to understanding and developing effective strategies for teacher professional development in Islamic educational contexts, particularly regarding pedagogical innovation in PAI instruction. Through in-depth qualitative approach employing participatory methods, this research demonstrates not only increases in individual knowledge and skills but also reveals how collaborative training can strengthen professional learning communities and transform institutional cultures toward continuous improvement. Additionally, the study highlights critical importance of flexibility, contextualization, and ongoing support in training design to address participation challenges and ensure sustainability, offering practical insights valuable for professional development program designers, educational administrators, and policymakers seeking to enhance instructional quality in Islamic educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that participatory training on teaching methods and media at MTs-MA Al-Khairaat Guraping effectively enhanced teachers' pedagogical competencies and fostered a collaborative professional culture. The training improved teachers' theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and confidence, while also promoting collective responsibility and solidarity for pedagogical innovation. Key lessons highlight the importance of hands-on,

practice-oriented development that encourages collaborative knowledge-building, tangible product development, and peer feedback. The study enriches the understanding of participatory approaches in teacher professional development, showing how they build individual competencies and strengthen professional learning communities.

This research contributes new perspectives on how participatory training models can address pedagogical capacity challenges in Islamic educational institutions, especially in resource-constrained settings. The study's limitations include its focus on a single institution, which may not reflect variations in other Islamic educational settings, and it does not address long-term sustainability or impacts on student outcomes. Further research should expand on this by exploring diverse professional development models, examining long-term impacts, and investigating scalable approaches for improving instructional quality across Islamic educational institutions.

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