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TEACHER IDENTITY AS A FORM OF TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM

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Abstract: *This study aims to examine how the formation of teacher identity contributes to improving professionalism in carrying out their educational duties. Teacher identity includes values, ethics, commitment, and integrity which overall shape the professional character of a teacher. The research method used is a qualitative approach with case studies in several junior high schools in city X. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies of teachers who have been considered to have high professionalism. The results of the study indicate that strengthening teacher identity through ongoing training, self-reflection, and positive work environment supports greatly influences the improvement of teaching quality and professional responsibility. Thus, the development of teacher identity is a crucial aspect in realizing teachers who are not only academically competent, but also have high integrity in carrying out their role as educators.*

Keywords: *Teacher Identity, Professionalism, Educator Character, Professional Ethics, Self-Development, Teaching Quality.*

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are the most central element in the world of education, because they not only act as transmitters of knowledge, but also as guides of character and life values for students. This strategic role requires teachers to have high personality and professionalism qualities. In this context, teacher identity becomes a fundamental aspect that needs to be studied in depth, because it is a reflection of the integrity, ethics, and commitment that are united in him. A teacher's identity is not formed instantly, but through a long process influenced by educational background, teaching experience, social environment, and continuous learning throughout his career.(Abidah et al., 2022)

In this modern era, the challenges of the teaching profession are increasingly complex. Teachers are no longer only required to master teaching materials, but are also required to be moral role models, effective communicators, and learning facilitators who are able to adapt to the times. Rapid information technology, dynamic curriculum changes, and high public expectations of educational outcomes increasingly emphasize the importance of teacher identity as a pillar in maintaining and improving professionalism. Unfortunately, the reality in the field shows that not all teachers are able to answer these challenges optimally. There are still many teachers who carry out their duties routinely without deep self-reflection, or who experience an identity crisis in facing internal and external pressures in the world of education.(Achmad et al., 2022)

Teacher professionalism should not only be measured by pedagogical ability and academic competence, but also by the extent to which they understand and live their identity as true educators. This concerns values such as moral responsibility, honesty, role models, and concern for the development of students. Teachers who have a strong identity will show consistency between words and actions, and are able to become figures who are respected and loved by students. Therefore, the formation and strengthening of teacher identity is an important issue that must be considered in every effort to improve the quality of education.

This study aims to explore more deeply how teacher identity is formed and how it contributes to teacher professionalism in practice in the field. With a qualitative approach and contextual analysis, this study is expected to provide a real picture of the importance of building teacher identity as a whole. The results of this study are also expected to be a reference for educational policy makers, teacher training institutions, and educators themselves in designing professional development strategies that are not only oriented towards technical competence, but also on strengthening moral identity and character as professional educators.(Abidah et al., 2022)

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore in depth how teacher identity is formed and influences their professionalism. The subjects of the study consisted of several junior high school teachers who had been identified as having high integrity and professional dedication in teaching. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, direct observation in the school environment, and analysis of related documents such as lesson plans and teacher reflective notes. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques, as well as member checking with key informants. The data

obtained were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, with a focus on exploring meaning, behavioral patterns, and values that reflect teacher identity. This method was chosen to be able to capture the complexity of social reality that cannot be explained only by a quantitative approach. The results of the analysis will be presented in the form of qualitative descriptions, with the aim of providing an in-depth understanding of the relationship between the formation of teacher identity and their professional practices in the current educational context.(al, 2022)

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Teachers as Primary Role Models

Basically, a teacher not only functions as an educator but also as a role model for their students. This role is highly significant because students tend to imitate what they see and experience in their daily lives, including the teacher's attitude and behavior. A strong teacher identity as a primary role model reflects the attitudes and character that students are expected to emulate. Therefore, being a good role model is a fundamental aspect of teacher professionalism (Aug, 2020).

As role models, teachers must embody characteristics that reflect the positive values they wish to instill in their students. These values include honesty, discipline, politeness, responsibility, hard work, and sincerity. In every interaction, teachers demonstrate how to behave and respond to different situations. For instance, a teacher's punctuality, commitment to responsibilities, and concern for students' development serve as direct examples for students to follow (Anwar, 2020).

Teachers who embrace their identity as primary role models must also be able to create a positive environment where students feel valued and respected. One crucial form of modeling is politeness in speech and interaction. When teachers speak respectfully and value others' opinions, they teach students to do the same. Additionally, the patience and tolerance teachers show toward students with diverse backgrounds, personalities, and needs further strengthen their role as positive role models. A teacher with a strong role model identity not only imparts knowledge but also exemplifies work ethic and integrity for example, by consistently arriving on time and adhering to school rules. Teachers who are committed to their duties and work sincerely provide students with an excellent example of discipline and dedication (Cholid, 2021).

A teacher's awareness of their role as a primary role model is key to ensuring that students adopt positive behavioral patterns. Therefore, a professional teacher must consistently maintain appropriate behavior, both in and out of the classroom. When there is consistency between what a teacher teaches and how they act in daily life, students are more likely to trust and adopt the values conveyed. This consistent example becomes a powerful influence that motivates students to emulate and internalize those values (Istiqomah, 2024).

In the context of character education, setting a direct example through teacher behavior is crucial. Character education is not just about teaching moral theories or concepts it is about how teachers embody and practice these values in everyday life. Teachers who adopt the identity of a primary role model can guide students to develop good character through positive interactions, appropriate moral behavior, and support in becoming responsible and caring individuals (Kartini, 2017). Teacher professionalism is also reflected in the ability to serve as a good role model. When teachers succeed in becoming positive examples not only in teaching but also

in ethics, attitude, and integrity they demonstrate true professionalism. Students benefit not only from academic knowledge but also from learning how to become good, responsible individuals with high moral standards.

In conclusion, the role of teachers as primary role models goes beyond the delivery of subject matter; it also significantly shapes students' character and behavior. Teachers who embrace their identity as role models have a profound impact on students' personal development and help create a more positive and productive learning environment. A strong teacher identity as a role model is one of the foundational pillars of high-quality education, both academically and in terms of character (Lestari & Kurnia, 2023).

Discipline and Integrity

Discipline and integrity are two crucial components in shaping the identity of a teacher as a professional in the field of education. As educators, teachers are expected not only to possess strong pedagogical competence but also to exhibit behavior that reflects discipline and integrity in all aspects of their professional lives. Discipline refers to a teacher's ability to follow rules and carry out responsibilities with full commitment, while integrity involves consistency between words and actions, as well as honesty in every decision and behavior (Annisa, 2023).

In the context of teacher professionalism, discipline is essential to ensure the smooth operation of the educational process and the achievement of learning goals. Disciplined teachers demonstrate punctuality in attending classes, preparing materials, and completing administrative duties. Punctuality serves as a key indicator of discipline that significantly contributes to an orderly and structured learning environment. When teachers manage class time efficiently and follow the set schedule, they model the importance of time management for their students. Furthermore, discipline also encompasses adherence to teaching standards and evaluation criteria. Professional teachers consistently follow the curriculum, develop clear lesson plans, and conduct fair assessments. This level of discipline not only supports a conducive learning atmosphere but also teaches students the value of consistency in achieving success (M.Pd.I, 2017).

Integrity, on the other hand, is a pillar of professionalism that emphasizes honesty and consistency in behavior. A teacher with high integrity demonstrates truthfulness not only in teaching but also in interactions with students, colleagues, and parents. Teacher integrity becomes evident in decisions grounded in moral principles, free from personal interest or external pressure. Such teachers act in alignment with their values and maintain professionalism in every duty they perform. For instance, in delivering lessons, a teacher with integrity will present accurate information and ensure students receive fair assessments. They will avoid favoritism and uphold transparency in managing student grades. Integrity also includes the willingness to acknowledge mistakes and learn from them. Teachers who take responsibility rather than blame others set a powerful example for students on how to respond to challenges with honesty and humility (Martahayu & Arsisari, 2019).

Discipline and integrity are interconnected in forming a teacher's professional character. Discipline without integrity may result in rigid compliance without ethical consideration, while integrity without discipline could lead to disregard for rules and professional standards. Therefore, both traits must coexist to create a teacher who is not only academically proficient but also ethically grounded. For example, in managing classroom behavior, a teacher who is both disciplined and has integrity will

enforce rules firmly yet fairly. They will treat all students equally and impose sanctions according to established guidelines without partiality or bias (Setyaningrum et al., 2020).

Moreover, the display of discipline and integrity by teachers has a significant impact on student character development. Students who observe teachers consistently demonstrating these traits are more likely to emulate them. They learn to value punctuality, respect rules, and act with honesty and accountability in their daily lives. In this regard, teachers serve as strong role models, and the values they embody are often more influential than those taught through theory alone (Uge et al., 2022).

In conclusion, discipline and integrity are foundational in shaping the identity of a teacher as a distinguished professional. A teacher who embodies these values will positively influence student behavior, foster a supportive learning environment, and maintain respectful relationships with all stakeholders in education. The professionalism demonstrated through discipline and integrity greatly contributes to the quality of education and the formation of a student's character, ultimately supporting the development of a more ethical and responsible society (Wulandari et al., 2017).

Strong Pedagogical Competence

Pedagogical competence is one of the essential aspects in shaping a teacher's identity as a professional. In the context of education, this competence refers to the teacher's ability to plan, implement, and evaluate the learning process effectively and efficiently. A teacher with strong pedagogical competence can adapt teaching methods and approaches to meet students' needs while fostering a learning environment that supports both academic achievement and character development. This competence goes beyond simply delivering subject matter it includes the ability to understand and manage the learning process according to each student's condition and potential (Oseven, n.d.).

A core component of pedagogical competence is the ability to understand student characteristics. Every student comes with different backgrounds, abilities, and learning needs. Professional teachers are expected to identify these differences and design instructional activities that align with individual learning profiles. For example, they may differentiate instruction for high-performing students and those requiring additional support. By recognizing these unique characteristics, teachers can design learning experiences that are both engaging and relevant for students (et al. & Maryani, 2021).

Another important aspect is effective learning planning. Teachers with strong pedagogical competence are able to develop structured and systematic lesson plans with clear and measurable goals, aligning with both the curriculum and students' learning needs. They also apply a variety of strategi such as problem-based learning, group discussions, and educational technology to foster student engagement. Moreover, effective planning considers different learning styles, including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic preferences. Utilizing a range of instructional media, both print and digital, allows students to grasp concepts more easily and remain interested in the material (Imamah et al., 2021).

Pedagogical competence is also demonstrated through the implementation of responsive learning. Teachers must be flexible in adapting their methods in response to student feedback and engagement. If a particular method proves ineffective, a

competent teacher will promptly modify their approach to maintain the quality of instruction. Responsive educators also provide constructive feedback and manage the classroom efficiently to ensure a positive, conducive learning environment. Good classroom management includes maintaining discipline, fostering healthy student interactions, and addressing behavioral issues wisely all of which contribute to a safe and productive learning atmosphere (MK Lestari et al., 2023).

In addition, fair and objective evaluation is a vital component of pedagogical competence. Teachers must assess students in a manner that reflects a holistic understanding of their progress, including content mastery, critical thinking, and character development. Competent teachers apply both formative and summative assessments and use the results to plan meaningful follow-up actions. For students who fall behind, teachers offer remedial instruction; for those progressing quickly, they provide enrichment opportunities to further stimulate learning (MK Lestari et al., 2023).

Furthermore, pedagogical competence includes the ability to foster students' critical thinking and creativity. Teachers with this competence go beyond delivering content—they inspire students to think deeply, ask questions, and solve real-world problems. Through encouraging discussions, experimentation, and problem-solving activities, teachers help students become more analytical, reflective, and innovative. This not only deepens their understanding but also prepares them to face challenges with creativity and confidence (Mayasari & Arifudin, 2023).

In conclusion, strong pedagogical competence is a hallmark of a professional teacher. It encompasses mastery of the subject matter and the ability to plan, deliver, and evaluate learning in ways that are responsive to students' diverse needs. Through this competence, teachers can provide high-quality learning experiences that foster academic success and character growth. Therefore, strengthening pedagogical competence is a crucial step toward enhancing the overall quality of education.

Social and Communication Competence

The ability to adapt to the development of educational technology is a crucial aspect in shaping a teacher's identity as a professional in the digital era. Educational technology offers a wide range of opportunities for teachers to enhance the quality of instruction, diversify teaching methods, and simplify the evaluation process. Teachers who can use technology wisely are able to create more engaging, interactive, and effective learning experiences for students. Therefore, mastering and adapting to technological advancements in the educational process is essential for every professional teacher (Anggela et al., 2023).

One of the benefits of educational technology is its potential to improve the quality of learning. Teachers can now access a vast array of resources through online platforms, such as instructional videos, digital textbooks, and educational applications that help present the material more clearly. The integration of media such as animations and simulations can simplify complex concepts and increase student interest. Moreover, technology enables flexible learning models such as distance learning or blended learning, allowing students to learn beyond traditional classroom boundaries. Teachers who can adapt to these technologies are more capable of designing learning strategies tailored to the diverse needs and learning styles of their students (Cinu, 2021).

In addition to enhancing instructional content, various digital tools and applications have been developed to support the learning process. Platforms like

Google Classroom, Edmodo, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams enable smooth communication and coordination between teachers and students. These tools help organize assignments, provide timely feedback, and monitor student progress. Furthermore, interactive applications such as Kahoot, Quizlet, and Duolingo contribute to a more engaging and enjoyable learning environment, reducing student boredom and increasing active participation in the classroom (Cinu, 2021).

To use technology effectively, teachers must possess adequate digital skills. These skills go beyond basic operation of hardware and software—they also include the ability to choose the right tools that suit specific instructional needs. Teachers with strong digital competence can seamlessly integrate technology into lesson delivery, student collaboration, and evaluation processes. Ongoing development of digital literacy is essential for teachers to remain relevant in an ever-changing educational landscape. Therefore, consistent training and professional development are necessary to equip teachers with up-to-date knowledge and technological skills (Muzayyanah et al., 2024).

Despite its advantages, the use of technology in education is not without challenges. Issues such as limited accessibility, especially in underdeveloped areas, can hinder the integration of technology into learning. In such cases, professional teachers must find creative solutions, such as maximizing available resources or exploring low-tech alternatives. Resistance to change also presents a challenge, particularly for educators unfamiliar with digital tools. Educational institutions must therefore provide adequate support and training to help teachers gain confidence in using technology. Moreover, teachers should develop wise policies for its use, ensuring that digital devices do not interfere with students' social and emotional development. Technology should enhance learning, not replace human interaction, which remains fundamental to education (Astini, 2019).

Technology also supports teachers in conducting self-evaluation and professional growth. With the help of learning platforms and evaluation tools, teachers can assess the effectiveness of their teaching methods and gather student feedback to improve their approach. In addition, the internet provides access to various online courses, seminars, and training programs that help teachers upgrade their skills. Those who proactively engage in professional development through technology are more capable of adapting to new educational challenges and demonstrating professionalism in their work (Harahap, 2021).

In conclusion, the ability to adapt to educational technology is a key factor in defining a teacher's professionalism. While technology opens numerous avenues for improving learning quality, enriching instructional strategies, and easing assessments, it also demands that teachers possess strong digital skills and resilience in the face of technological challenges. A professional teacher is one who continuously learns, grows, and integrates technology in a wise and purposeful manner to provide meaningful and engaging learning experiences for students.

The identity of a teacher as a form of professionalism involves several important elements that shape the quality of an educator. One of them is a commitment to self-development, where teachers continuously strive to improve their abilities and knowledge through training or seminars in order to teach better. This committed teacher will always look for new ways to overcome challenges in education and provide the best learning experience for students. (Andriani & Natsir, 2019)

Love for the profession is also a key aspect. Teachers who love their jobs will

have high motivation and resilience to face various challenges in the world of education. Love for the profession encourages teachers to work wholeheartedly, not only to meet the demands of the job, but also to guide and shape the character of students. This creates a more positive relationship with students and improves the quality of learning.(Erlinda, 2017)

In addition, professional ethics are very important in building the identity of a professional teacher. Ethical teachers will uphold the principles of justice, integrity, and objectivity in acting. They are also role models for students in terms of attitude and behavior. The example given by teachers influences students in forming their character, making teachers a respected figure and an example in everyday life.(Rianda & Sayekti, 2023)

Finally, the ability to manage the class and build good social relationships with students and parents is also an integral part of a teacher's professionalism. Teachers who are able to create a conducive learning atmosphere and communicate well will strengthen relationships and create a positive educational environment, which in turn supports the maximum development of students. All of these elements shape the identity of a professional teacher and have a positive impact on the world of education.(Wahyuni, 2022)

CONCLUSION

The application of cognitive learning theory in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning provides a deeper and more meaningful approach to the learning process. This theory emphasizes the importance of students' mental processes such as thinking, remembering, understanding, and linking new information to previous experiences. With this approach, students are not only required to memorize the material, but are also encouraged to understand religious values rationally and apply them in everyday life.

Through the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the application of cognitive theory in Islamic Religious Education learning has been proven to be able to improve students' conceptual understanding, form strong religious characters, and improve critical and reflective thinking skills. Learning strategies used in a cognitive context, such as discussion, problem solving, and reflection of Islamic values, are able to make learning more active and meaningful.

However, the application of this theory also faces various challenges, such as limited teacher understanding of cognitive theory, limited time and resources, and differences in learning styles and student readiness. These challenges need to be overcome through teacher training, development of appropriate learning media, and contextual and adaptive learning approaches.

Thus, cognitive theory is very relevant and useful to be applied in Islamic Religious Education learning, because it is able to develop students' intellectual and spiritual potential in a balanced way. With the support of all parties, the application of this theory can be a solution to improve the quality of Islamic religious education in the modern era.

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