

## Enhancing Islamic Education Through PAIS Work Programs: A Case Study in Sleman District's Ministry of Religious Affairs

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Article Info	Abstract
<p><b>Article history:</b> Received: 01/12/2024 Revised: 07/09/2024 Accepted: 07/15/2024</p>	<p><b>Purpose</b> – This study aims to explore the effectiveness of the Islamic Education Program Work (PAIS) in enhancing the professionalism of Islamic Education teachers (PAI) and its impact on the development of Islamic education within Sleman District's Ministry of Religious Affairs. By identifying strengths, limitations, and areas for improvement in these programs, the research seeks to provide valuable insights and recommendations that can guide future strategies and initiatives in the field of Islamic education.</p>
<p><b>Keywords:</b> Ministry of Religious Affairs, PAIS Work Programs, Professional Development, Sleman District.</p>	<p><b>Design/methods</b> – Adopting a qualitative research methodology with a descriptive case study design, this research was set in the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Sleman District. The study employed a variety of data collection methods including observation, semi-structured interviews, and literature review. The primary participant was the head of the PAIS work unit, Mr. Sangaji, S.H.I. Data analysis involved data reduction, data display, and data verification phases to ensure the validity and accuracy of the findings.</p> <p><b>Findings</b> – The research revealed that PAIS work programs significantly contribute to the professional development of PAI teachers and the overall quality of Islamic education. These programs support strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and the incorporation of technology in education, thus creating a dynamic and effective educational environment. However, challenges such as limited funding, competency and commitment standardization, and optimal parental support were identified.</p> <p><b>Research implications/limitations</b> – The implications of this research extend beyond Sleman District, providing insights into the potential of targeted educational programs to enhance Islamic education quality. However, the study is limited by its focus on a single institution and the specific cultural and administrative context of Indonesia, which may influence the generalizability of the findings.</p> <p><b>Practical implications</b> – This study underscores the importance of strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and technological integration in Islamic education. Addressing the identified challenges can aid in overcoming barriers to effective education and contribute to fostering a knowledgeable and ethical society.</p> <p><b>Originality/value</b> – This research offers a unique examination of the impact of digital transformation within the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, particularly through the lens of PAIS work programs in the Ministry of Religious Affairs. It contributes to the broader understanding of digital transformation in education, highlighting the intersection of technology, education, and culture in a religious educational setting.</p>
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## Introduction

The increasing globalization of contemporary society has placed a premium on the competitive abilities of children in all aspects of life, necessitating heightened levels of activity, creativity, and competitive capability to not fall behind in the ongoing global competition. This scenario underscores the importance of comprehensive knowledge acquisition, including religious education, to prepare for future global challenges. The professional competence of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers plays a crucial role in guiding and imparting religious knowledge to students, aiming to produce individuals with sound reasoning and moral character. The significance of PAI teachers is legally supported by national education policies, which mandate religious education in schools, highlighting the equality of PAI teachers with their counterparts teaching other subjects.

Extensive literature, including works by scholars such as Drits-Esser dkk. (2017) and Magpily & Mercado (2017), has explored the competencies required by teachers in various educational contexts. These studies have provided insights into the necessary skills and knowledge bases teachers must develop to effectively contribute to their students' learning. However, the specific context of Islamic education in Indonesia, particularly within the framework of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Sleman District, has received less attention. This gap in the literature points to a need for targeted research on the professional development programs designed for PAI teachers and their impact on the quality of Islamic education.

The professional development of PAI teachers is supported by various governmental and non-governmental initiatives, as highlighted by the efforts of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. These programs aim to enhance teachers' professional skills and competencies, ensuring they can meet the educational needs of their students effectively. Yet, the effectiveness and impact of these programs on the actual teaching practices and educational outcomes within the Islamic education sector remain to be comprehensively evaluated.

Despite the recognition of the importance of professional development for PAI teachers, there exists a notable gap in understanding the specific contributions of these programs to improving Islamic education in Sleman District. Previous research has often focused on broader educational contexts or different subject areas, leaving a lacuna in our understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities within Islamic education. Furthermore, the existing literature has not fully explored the roles and contributions of the PAI work programs in supporting teacher development and enhancing educational quality.

This study aims to bridge this gap by focusing on the role of PAI work programs in the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Sleman District, analyzing their impact on the professional development of PAI teachers and the overall quality of Islamic education. By examining the strengths, limitations, and areas for improvement within these programs, this research seeks to provide valuable insights and recommendations for future strategies and initiatives in Islamic education. Through this analysis, the study endeavors to contribute to the broader goal of fostering a well-prepared, ethical, and knowledgeable society, underpinned by the effective professional development of PAI teachers.

## Methods

This study employed a qualitative research methodology with a descriptive case study design, focusing on the Islamic Education Program Work (PAI) within the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Sleman District. The primary investigator served as the main instrument for both data collection and analysis, engaging deeply with the processes and outcomes associated with PAI work programs. The research setting was the Ministry of Religious Affairs Sleman District office, with Mr. Sangaji, S.H.I., head of the PAI work unit, serving as the principal participant. This choice was strategic, aiming to secure detailed insights into the functionality and contributions of PAI work programs towards enhancing the professional development of PAI teachers and the overall quality of Islamic education offered (Rijali, 2019).

Data collection was achieved through observation, semi-structured interviews, and literature review. Observations provided direct insights into the public information system service processes of the PAI section, while the semi-structured interviews, designed beforehand, allowed for adaptability in questioning based on field situations to ensure comprehensive data collection. The literature review supplemented the argumentation, providing a theoretical backdrop relevant to the study's focus (Sa'adah dkk., 2022). Data analysis encompassed data reduction, data display, and data verification phases. Data reduction aimed to simplify and organize collected data, highlighting essential themes, patterns, and relationships. Data display enhanced the understanding and interpretation of data, and data verification ensured the validity and accuracy of the findings, incorporating re-examination of data sources, comparison with prior studies, and confirmation with informants or participants, aligning the research findings with the predefined research objectives (Rijali, 2019; Sa'adah dkk., 2022).

## Results

### **1. Core Functions and Responsibilities of the Islamic Education Section**

The Islamic Education Section (Seksi PAIS) is tasked with providing services, technical guidance, development, and management of data and information in the field of Islamic education and Islamic religious education. It offers services, technical guidance, data and information management, as well as planning and reporting in the field of Islamic education for early childhood education, primary education or special primary education, junior high education or special junior high education, senior high education or special senior high education, and vocational high education. According to the Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation Number 18 of 2020, the core functions and responsibilities of the Islamic Education Section (Seksi PAIS) include the preparation of technical policy formulation and planning in the field of Islamic education, the implementation of services, guidance, and development in the field of Islamic Education for Early Childhood Education (PAUD) Kindergartens (TK), Primary Schools/Special Primary Schools (SD/SDLB), Junior High Schools/Special Junior High Schools (SMP/SMPLB), Senior High Schools/Special Senior High Schools/Vocational High Schools (SMA/SMALB/SMK), management of the Islamic education information system, and conducting evaluations and preparing reports in the field of Islamic education.

### **2. Islamic Education Section Work Programs at the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Sleman District**

The work programs of the Islamic Education Section (Seksi PAIS) at the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Sleman District encompass several key initiatives. First, the development of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in public schools at the primary (SD), junior high (SMP), and senior high/vocational (SMA/SMK) levels ensures that religious teachers comprehend their roles and responsibilities as PAI teachers in public schools. This is achieved through organizing training and workshops to acquaint PAI teachers with their duties and conducting regular meetings or periodic development sessions to provide guidance and directives for their tasks. Second, the annual updating of teacher data maintains the freshness and accuracy of information, crucial for informed decision-making. This process involves gradual updates and the provision of systems or mechanisms that facilitate teachers in regularly updating their personal information.

Third, the development of the PAI curriculum for SD, SMP, and SMA/SMK aims to implement the Merdeka Curriculum, replacing the 2013 Curriculum. This development is particularly targeted at pilot schools adopting the new curriculum and involves organizing specific curriculum development programs for these schools and offering guidance and support to PAI teachers in designing and implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Fourth, Technical Guidance (BIMTEK) training on the PAI Curriculum prepares every teacher to deliver instructional materials to students in an understandable manner, aligned with educational goals. This importance is underscored by the necessity for teaching and instructional methods to comply with the current curriculum, entailing the provision of training

or BIMTEK for PAI teachers to prepare them in presenting the learning materials as per the set educational objectives and focusing on developing innovative and student-friendly teaching methods.

Fifth, achieving proficiency in reading and writing the Quran thoroughly (TBTQ) involves intensive programs to enhance students' reading and writing skills in the Quran, including special teaching programs like extra classes or Quran lessons facilitated by PAI teachers. Sixth, the creation of digital PAI learning materials, where content taught by teachers is converted into digital formats, improves the cognitive aspect of learning without diminishing teachers' responsibilities in schools, as this digital learning primarily facilitates cognitive learning. Besides cognitive and psychomotor aspects, documents related to PAI learning are organized in digital formats, with facilities like smart rooms available as substitutes if necessary. This includes developing PAI learning materials in digital formats, such as e-books, instructional videos, or mobile applications, and equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills in digital technology use to support PAI learning.

### ***3. Services Provided by the Islamic Education Section at the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Sleman District***

The PAIS Section (Islamic Education and Madrasah) at the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Sleman District provides several services to the community. Here are explanations and descriptions of three types of services offered by the PAIS section:

#### ***a. Service for Submitting PAIS TPG Applications***

The service for submitting PAIS Professional Allowance (TPG) applications is one form of government support to PAIS teachers working in Sleman District. TPG is an allowance given to teachers as recognition of their quality and competence in teaching. Through the PAIS section at the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Sleman District, PAIS teachers can apply for TPG. The TPG PAIS application process generally involves several stages, such as collecting the necessary documents, verifying and validating data, and checking compliance with established requirements. At these stages, the PAIS section is responsible for providing services that include information, guidance, and support to PAIS teachers in applying for TPG.

#### ***b. SIMPATIK Service***

The SIMPATIK service is one of the services provided by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia to improve the efficiency of educational administration. SIMPATIK (Teacher and Madrasah Head Management Information System) is an information system used to manage teacher and madrasah head data across Indonesia. The PAIS section at the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Sleman District provides SIMPATIK services to PAIS teachers in the area. Through this service, PAIS teachers can access the SIMPATIK system to perform various administrative activities, such as submitting personal data, reporting attendance, updating employment data, and more. The SIMPATIK service makes it easier for PAIS teachers to complete educational administration online and efficiently.

#### ***c. E-Mis Service***

The E-Mis (Electronic Madrasah Indonesia) service is an electronic service developed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs as a support tool for managing madrasah data and information in Indonesia. The PAIS section at the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Sleman District also provides the E-Mis service to madrasahs in the area. Through the E-Mis service, madrasahs in Sleman District can access an electronic system that allows them to report data, register students, monitor student attendance, report learning activities, and various other activities. The E-Mis service aims to improve efficiency in madrasah management and facilitate access to data and information needed in the educational process at madrasahs.

### ***4. Challenges Faced by the Islamic Education Section at the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Sleman District***

The Islamic Education Section (PAIS) faces several challenges in implementing its programs, including:

**a. Limited Budget Constraints**

A limited budget can be a barrier for the Islamic Education Section (PAIS) in implementing its programs. With a limited budget, PAIS may face difficulties in providing the resources needed to offer quality Islamic education. This includes purchasing textbooks, learning materials, teaching aids, and other supporting facilities. Budget limitations can also affect the training of PAIS teachers and their professional development activities. To overcome this challenge, efforts are needed to increase budget allocation or seek additional funding sources through sponsors or external funding programs.

**b. Standard Competence and Commitment in Quality Islamic Education Services**

This refers to the ability and qualifications of PAIS teachers in providing quality teaching. If PAIS teachers lack adequate competence in the field of Islamic education, the quality of education provided to students will be affected. Additionally, a lack of commitment to improving the quality of Islamic education can also be a challenge. To address this, the PAIS section needs to undertake professional development efforts for their teachers through training, courses, and other development activities. Furthermore, supervision and evaluation of the teaching quality by PAIS teachers are necessary.

**c. Suboptimal Parental Support**

Many parents are indifferent to their children's education, which can negatively affect the effectiveness of the Islamic education program. Lack of parental support can reduce students' motivation to learn and seriously participate in PAIS programs. To overcome this challenge, PAIS can make more intensive communication efforts with parents, hold meetings or discussions with them, and provide an understanding of the importance of Islamic education in shaping children's character. PAIS can also involve parents in Islamic education activities, such as supervising assignments or activities that involve parents in the learning process.

## Discussion

The initiation of this research was driven by the quest to understand the effectiveness of the Islamic Education Section (Seksi PAIS) work programs within the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Sleman District. This exploration is rooted in a broader context where the professional development of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers is pivotal for enhancing the quality of Islamic education, as echoed in previous studies (Drits-Esser dkk., 2017; Magpily & Mercado, 2017). The focus was on dissecting how these programs not only bolster teacher professionalism but also impact the progression and quality of Islamic education in the area.

Our findings reveal that the Seksi PAIS has been instrumental in providing essential services, technical guidance, data management, and reporting in Islamic education sectors, from early childhood to vocational levels. Notably, the development programs for PAI teachers in public schools underscore a significant stride towards ensuring that teachers grasp their roles effectively. These initiatives mirror the emphasis on continuous professional development found in broader educational research, indicating a shared understanding of its importance across different educational contexts (Cigdemoglu & Köseoğlu, 2019; Dille, 2022).

Comparatively, the efforts by the Seksi PAIS align with the global trend towards enhancing teacher competencies through targeted professional development programs. However, unlike some findings that suggest a one-size-fits-all approach may be prevalent (Hennessy dkk., 2016; Toran & Güder, 2020), the tailored approach in Sleman District, focusing on the specific needs of Islamic education teachers, offers a nuanced understanding of professional development. This specificity supports the notion that effective professional development must be contextually relevant and cater to the unique needs of educators within their specific teaching domains (Kutnick dkk., 2022).

The significance of these findings cannot be overstated, especially when considering the unique challenges faced by the Seksi PAIS, including limited funding and the need for enhanced teacher competency and commitment. These challenges are reflective of broader systemic issues within educational systems, necessitating a multifaceted approach to teacher development that encompasses not only skill enhancement but also motivational aspects (Borelli dkk., 2023; Edwards dkk., 2019). Moreover, the integration of digital learning tools as part of the professional development reflects an innovative step towards modernizing Islamic education in response to contemporary educational demands.

The implications of this study extend beyond the immediate context, offering valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders within the realm of Islamic education and beyond. By identifying the strengths and areas for improvement within the Seksi PAIS's programs, this research contributes to the broader discourse on enhancing educational quality through targeted professional development. It underscores the necessity of continuous investment in teacher development as a cornerstone for educational excellence and societal advancement.

In conclusion, the work of Seksi PAIS in Sleman District exemplifies a comprehensive approach to supporting Islamic education through teacher professional development. Despite facing challenges such as limited resources and the need for greater teacher commitment, their programs represent a critical investment in the future of education. This study highlights the importance of contextually adapted professional development programs and calls for increased support and resources to sustain and expand such initiatives. Future research should further explore the long-term impacts of these programs on teacher performance and student outcomes, contributing to a deeper understanding of effective professional development strategies in diverse educational settings.

## Conclusion

This research aimed to analyze the work programs of Islamic Education at the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Sleman District, specifically focusing on enhancing the professionalism of Islamic Education teachers (PAI) and contributing to the development of Islamic education. The findings revealed concerted efforts by Seksi PAIS to provide comprehensive services, technical guidance, curriculum development, and digital learning resources, aimed at improving the quality and effectiveness of Islamic education. The initiatives highlighted include professional development for PAI teachers, data updating, curriculum enhancement, and the introduction of digital tools, all designed to equip teachers with essential skills and streamline administrative processes. The implications of these efforts extend beyond Sleman District, suggesting a model for educational improvement through targeted programs and technological integration. Despite its focused scope, the study acknowledges limitations and underscores the need for further research to explore the scalability and impact of these initiatives in diverse settings. Future studies are recommended to assess the long-term effects on teacher performance, student learning outcomes, and the broader integration of technology in Islamic education, alongside the engagement of parents and communities in the educational process.

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