

The Role of Teacher Working Groups (KKG) in Fostering Teachers' Professional Skills in the Digital Era

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Abstract

Teachers are the dominant and most important factor in formal education. For students, teachers are often used as role models and even become self-identification figures. In schools/madrasahs, teachers are a very influential element in achieving educational goals in addition to students and other facilities. The success of the implementation of education is largely determined by the readiness of the teacher in preparing students through teaching and learning activities. However, the strategic position of teachers to improve the quality of educational outcomes is strongly influenced by the professional ability of teachers and the quality of their performance. The purpose of this research is to find out the role of the Teachers' Working Group (KKG) in fostering teachers' professional skills. This type of research is field research. Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that (1) the teachers' working group (KKG) for MI teachers in Tirto sub-district has been well implemented. This can be seen from the scope and types of activities/programmes held (2) The attendance of participants (teachers) in the Tirto sub-district teachers' working group activities is quite high, averaging 80% and above per activity. (3) Based on the data and discussion of the results of the interviews mentioned above, it can be stated that out of the 10 people interviewed, 7 teachers in Tirto sub-district have good professional competence.

Keywords: Teacher Working Group, Teacher Professional Skills

Introduction

Indonesian Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, requires teachers to: (1) have a minimum academic qualification of S1 / D4; (2) have competence as an agent of change, namely pedagogic competence; personality, social and professional competence; and (3) have an educator certificate. With the enactment of this law, it is expected to provide an appropriate opportunity for teachers to improve their professionalism through training, writing scientific papers, teacher working group (KKG) meetings, and subject teacher meetings (MGMP) (Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, 2005).

In order to implement Law No. 14/2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, the Minister of National Education through the Directorate General of Quality Improvement of Educators and Education Personnel (DG PMPTK) implemented the Better Education through Reformed Management and Universal Teacher Upgrading (BERMUTU) programme. The programme began in 2008 and ran until 2013, with 75 districts/cities in 16 provinces. The BERMUTU programme

aims to improve the quality of learning as a result of improved teacher competence, qualifications and performance. One of the strategic components of the BERMUTU programme is the continuous strengthening/improvement of teacher competence and professionalism.

Teacher groups must be formed to improve teacher competence. The group is called the teachers' working group (KKG), which is formed in one sub-district area. The teachers' working group (KKG) is a forum utilised by school/madrasa teachers to develop teachers' competencies through discussions to solve problems encountered both inside and outside the classroom. Efforts have been made to develop better quality education, including curriculum development and improvement, evaluation systems, teaching material development, teacher training and other efforts. This education development effort is a response to the development of global demands as an effort to adapt the education system that is able to develop human resources to meet the demands of the developing era. Through educational development, teachers must have a future perspective that provides guarantees for the realisation of human rights to develop all their potential and achievements optimally for the welfare of life in the future (Alwi, 2009).

One important component of the education system is the teacher. As the central actor in the education system, teachers play an active role and occupy a position as professionals who are always required to improve their competence continuously (Firdaus et al, 2022). Teachers do not just transfer knowledge, but also educate students to have a complete personality. Educating means transferring values to students, where these values must be manifested in daily behaviour (Khasanah, Sumarsih, & Yulidesni, 2018). (Lede et al., 2022)

Teachers are the dominant and most important factor in formal education. For students, teachers are often used as role models and even become self-identification figures. In schools/madrasahs, teachers are a very influential element in achieving educational goals in addition to students and other facilities. The success of the implementation of education is largely determined by the readiness of the teacher in preparing students through teaching and learning activities (Ismiati et al, 2021). However, the strategic position of teachers to improve the quality of educational outcomes is strongly influenced by the professional ability of teachers and the quality of their performance.

Realising this, professional attitudes and competencies need to be improved because as educators, teachers, as well as administrative personnel need to continue to improve their professionalism. There is a question that is always asked regarding the word "professional". Is it true that most primary school teachers are not professional? How can we improve the professionalism of primary school teachers? These questions often arise among the public and education observers. Actually, the process that requires serious effort is related to the question of what efforts can be made to improve the professionalism of primary school teachers.

One of the government's efforts to form professional teachers to improve students' learning achievement is by establishing Teacher Working Groups (KKGs), because this forum has many benefits, including accommodating and

solving problems faced by teachers in teaching and learning activities, discussions, teaching examples, demonstrations of the use and manufacture of teaching aids. This effort has been criticised by various parties in the field, including teachers/participants, core teachers and education observers. These criticisms mainly revolve around the lack of effectiveness of the teachers' working groups in achieving their stated objectives. (Alwi, 2009).

Given the importance of the teacher's position in education, especially in educating the nation through learning activities in the classroom, improving the quality of learning must be realised. Realising this, the government has taken various ways to improve the quality of teachers, including through upgrading and training such as: PKG (Teacher Work Improvement), LKGI (Core Teacher Work Training), LKG (Teacher Work Training), SPKG (Sanggar Pemantapan Kerja Guru), and KKG (Teacher Working Group), both inservice and onservice training. The term inservice is used for the conventional component of upgrading and the term onservice is used for the innovative component of upgrading. KKG has tasks and functions, objectives, programs and organisation as a forum for teacher professionalism.

To improve the quality of teachers, the Tirta Sub-district Ma'arif NU Education Institute (LP Ma'arif NU) emphasises that teachers are expected to improve their professional skills. One way to improve the quality of madrasah ibtidaiyah (MI) teachers is through Teacher Working Group (KKG) activities. In Tirta sub-district, teachers' working groups for class teachers, sports teachers, PAI and Arabic language teachers, and Mulok (local content) teachers' working groups have been organised.

The teachers' working group activities, which are held regularly every Thursday, have been running well according to the schedule. Actually, the enthusiasm of the teachers in participating in the teachers' working groups is quite good, but due to financial constraints, the teachers' working groups only involve teachers who have certain advantages in delivering the material, whereas the teachers' working groups should bring in experts from other institutions who are more competent in certain fields, so that the knowledge gained is truly useful. Although not yet optimal, the implementation of teachers' working groups organised by the Ma'arif NU Education Institute (LP Ma'arif NU) in Tirta sub-district has had a good impact on fostering and improving teachers' professionalism.

In Harun Al Rasyid's research article entitled *The Function of Teacher Working Groups (KKG) for the Professional Development of Elementary School Teachers*. This article explains the function of the teachers' working group for teachers' professional development.

In Harun Al Rasyid's research article entitled *The Function of Teacher Working Groups (KKG) for the Professional Development of Elementary School Teachers*. This article describes the function of the teachers' working group (KKG) from the perspective of continuing professional development. The research location was in Kras sub-district, Kediri district (Rasyid, 2005). The type of research focuses on a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study research type. The similarities with the author's article are related to the study of

improving teacher professionalism and the research methods used. Meanwhile, the difference lies in the object of research (Rasyid, 2005).

Meanwhile, in the *At-Thariqah Journal* article by Sarmadhan Lubis with the writing title *Improving the Professionalism of PAI Teachers through Teacher Working Groups (KKG)*. This paper aims to find out how to improve the professionalism of PAI teachers through the Teacher Working Group (KKG). This research is a library research by reviewing some literature related to improving the professionalism of PAI teachers and Teacher Working Groups (Lubis, 2017). The similarity with the author's article is in the object of research which is both in the PAI teacher working group (KKG). As for the difference lies in the research method, the author uses the field research method.

From the explanation above, the researcher is interested in conducting research on the role of the Teacher Working Group (KKG) in fostering teachers' professional abilities. With the aim of knowing the role of the Teachers' Working Group (KKG) in fostering teachers' professional abilities as an effort to improve and enhance the professionalism of PAI teachers in the sub-district in particular and in Indonesia in general.

Teacher Professionalism

Teachers have the task of directing student learning activities to achieve teaching goals. For this reason, teachers are required to be able to convey teaching materials. Teachers must always master and expand the subject matter and expand the subject matter to be presented. This can be achieved by reading a lot and following developments related to this matter. actually the teacher as a resource person who must always be ready in the teaching and learning process.

The professional ability of each teacher is not the same. This is a dilemma in achieving educational goals in general. Teachers are required to be responsive to changes that occur in society, as a result of the advancement of information flows and the development of science and technology. Professional development can be done by oneself, through persistence in carrying out their duties. On the other hand, teachers, as personnel in schools, are subordinate to school principals. The principal is directly obliged to develop teachers' professional abilities.

Professionalism is an understanding that teaches that every job must be done by a professional. Teacher professionalism is the ability of a teacher to carry out his duties as an educator properly and responsibly. This includes the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours needed to teach students effectively and efficiently, and to help them achieve their goals.

The teacher is a profession whose focus is to function as a source and person who provides knowledge for students. Therefore, how a teacher plays a full role by providing knowledge or skills, so that the knowledge or skills he has can be transferred to his students. In the sense of logic, the students have the knowledge that the teacher has. This depends on the success or failure of a teacher to fulfil his duties and obligations (Economy, 2004).

The professional duties of teachers are essentially three: educating, teaching and training. The task of teachers in educating means: providing guidance to children so that they can develop as optimally as possible and can

continue and develop life values. Meanwhile, the teacher's task in teaching means providing teaching to develop science and technology. To be able to carry out this task, teachers are also required to have a set of knowledge and technical teaching skills (Resmini, 2010).

Sardiman (2001: 42) states that the characteristics of professional teachers consist of: (1) capable, meaning that teachers have a level of knowledge, expertise, to improve the quality of education and have the ability to turn it into something that benefits both the teacher himself and his students, (2) innovator, meaning that teachers always try to find new breakthroughs in finding solutions to student difficulties in the teaching and learning process. So that the difficulties in learning can be mapped, and (3) developer, meaning that professional teachers always try to develop themselves and also develop various learning models so as to increase student motivation (Mas, 2008).

The Role of the Teachers' Working Group (KKG)

Ratna Julia (2010: 3) defines the Teachers' Working Group (KKG) as a forum for teachers' professional development that can be utilised to communicate, exchange ideas and share experiences, carry out various demonstrations, attractions and simulations in learning. Meanwhile, according to Din Wahyudin (1995: 10), "the teachers' working group is a professional forum for teachers who are active, compact and familiar. In this forum teachers can discuss problems from them and for them" (Julia, 2010).

Based on the purpose and role of the teachers' working group as described above, the teachers' working group is a strategic platform for improving the competence of teachers and students in order to improve the quality of education in general. However, looking at the reality in the field, the teachers' working groups still have many limitations. These limitations can be seen in human resources, the non-optimal involvement of administrators and participants, and limited operational funds,

The MI teachers' working group in Tirto sub-district, Pekalongan district, is a forum for MI teachers in Tirto sub-district to seek new knowledge and share experiences on how to deliver good learning, as explained above.

The roles of the Tirto sub-district teachers' working group include:

1. As a place to discuss and solve problems for teachers who experience difficulties in learning activities and as a place to update and refresh knowledge.
2. As a forum for the activities of teachers who are members of one area who want to improve their professionalism together.
3. As a place to disseminate information about curriculum and education system reforms, especially those related to improving learning outcomes.
4. As a centre for the practice of making teaching aids, using the library and acquiring various teaching skills and developing classroom administration.
5. Equalise perceptions of knowledge and experience about the curriculum and education system that is always evolving.
6. As a working group or team that can publish grids and questions on certain learning evaluations.

Methods

This type of research is field research or field research. Field research or field research is conducted where respondents or primary and secondary data sources are located. Then the research approach uses descriptive qualitative.

This research uses two types of data, namely primary and secondary data. Primary data is data that is extracted directly through this research. Primary data includes: the implementation of the Teacher Working Group (KKG) on teachers' professional competence. Meanwhile, secondary data is existing data that has been extracted by other parties. Secondary data includes: Teachers' working group programme, percentage of attendance at teachers' working groups, syllabus, lesson plans and scenarios. Documentation was obtained from the teachers' working group administrators.

The data referred to above will be extracted or collected through several sources, namely: Firstly, teachers participating in the teachers' working groups. Teachers are expected to obtain data on their professional competence and the implementation of the teachers' working group programme. Secondly, the administrators of the teachers' working groups, in this case the administrators of the MA'arif NU LP. It is hoped that data can be obtained on the strategic steps taken to improve the quality of teachers' professional competence.

To obtain data and process the materials needed in this research, the author used several techniques including interviews, observation and documentation. As for analysing the data, it starts from data reduction, then presenting the data and finally drawing conclusions.

Results

A. Implementation of Teachers' Working Groups

The following are the findings on the implementation of MI teachers' working group activities within LP Ma'arif NU in Tirto sub-district, based on interviews with teachers' working group managers and administrators (Abdul Aziz and Khumaini, interview, 20 March 2023).

1. The preparation of the teachers' working group activity programme, apart from being adapted to the needs of teachers and the development of science and technology, also needs to consider breakthroughs and cooperation with the community, in line with improving the quality of school-based education.
2. The teachers' working group administrators need to think about efforts to activate teachers to participate in teachers' working group activities on time, including by providing teachers' working group certificates.
3. Subject guides/tutors need to be able to collaborate with learning media and methods in performing their duties.
4. In addition to media tutorials, the interaction process can be optimised by conducting systematic evaluations by the teachers' working group administrators, who then try to fix the various problems that exist in the implementation of the teachers' working groups.

5. To eliminate monotony in the teachers' working group, the Tirto sub-district LP Ma'arif NU teachers' working group needs to occasionally collaborate with third parties, such as conducting workshops in collaboration with the nearest university or the Pekalongan District Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

B. Teacher Professionalism Competence

Based on the data and discussion of the results of the interviews, it can be stated that of the 10 people interviewed, it turns out that there are 7 MI teachers in Tirto sub-district whose professional competence is good. The average teacher is already a certified educator. The learning programme is well prepared. Then in carrying out learning guided by the preparation that has been prepared previously.

Likewise with the assessment programme, these 7 teachers make grids and question cards and analyse learning outcomes. The data above is also supported by the results of interviews with several school principals, among others: Abdul Ghofur, Kholid, Nur Amila, Afif Wildani, and Ghufroon, that improving teachers' pedagogical competence is supported by KKG activities that provide knowledge and insight, where teachers complete learning administration, update learning tools, develop learning methods, make teaching aids and try to create innovations in the teaching and learning process (interview, 20 March 2023).

Discussion

Teachers have a role as agents of change that is very vital and fundamental in helping and guiding students in the process of change from not knowing to knowing, not understanding to understanding, not mastering to mastering and so on (Aditama et al., 2022). To be able to carry out this role, teachers must always improve their competence. Teachers can participate in various competency improvement activities such as training, seminars, discussions organised by organisations and communities.

Mulyasa (2007:10) states that there are at least two of the four competencies that teachers must have, namely professional competence and personality competence. Professional competence is the ability to design, implement and assess tasks as a teacher, which includes mastery, science and educational technology. Personality competence (personal) which includes ethics, morals, devotion, social and spiritual abilities.

Moh. Uzer Usman in his book *Menjadi Guru Profesional* defines that: a professional teacher is a person who has special abilities and expertise in the field of teaching so that he is able to perform his duties and functions as a teacher with maximum ability (Usman, 2009).

Teacher professionalism is the condition, direction, value, purpose and quality of an expertise and authority in the field of education and teaching related to one's work for a living. Meanwhile, a professional teacher is a teacher who has the competencies required to perform educational and teaching tasks. In other words, it can be concluded that the definition of a professional teacher is a person who has special abilities and expertise in the field of

teaching so that he is able to perform his duties and functions as a teacher with maximum ability.

Meanwhile, Oemar Hamalik argues that professional teachers are people who have taken a teacher education programme and have a master's degree and have received a state diploma and have experience in teaching large classes (Hamalik, 2006).

The KKG activities for MI teachers organised by LP Ma'arif NU Tirto Sub-district are certainly intended to improve teachers' competencies, not least professional competencies, although there are still many shortcomings in its implementation.

Conclusion

Based on the data analysis above, several conclusions can be formulated, as follows:

a. Well Implemented

The teachers' working group (KKG) for MI teachers in Tirto sub-district has been well implemented. This can be seen from the scope and type of activities/programmes held. The programme of activities has been prepared according to class and the level of problems that arise in the field in accordance with the field of study with the types of activities varying from discussions on learning programmes, classroom management to the calculation of teacher credit (performance appraisal).

b. High Attendance and Participation

The attendance of participants (teachers) in the Tirto sub-district teachers' working group activities is quite high, averaging 80% and above per activity. Furthermore, in terms of activeness, the teachers (KKG participants) are quite active. During the teachers' working group activities, teachers ask questions, respond to other teachers' questions, and share information with each other through multi-directional interactions between participants, tutors and fellow tutors.

c. The Number of Teachers in The Professional Category is Quite High

Based on the data and discussion of the results of the interviews referred to above, it can be stated that of the 10 people interviewed, it turns out that there are 7 MI teachers in Tirto sub-district whose professional competence is good. The learning programme is well prepared.

Then in carrying out learning guided by the preparation that has been prepared previously. Likewise with the assessment programme, these 7 teachers make grids and question cards and analyse learning outcomes.

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