Efforts of Islamic Religious Education Teachers to Improve Student Learning Achievement

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Abstract. Numerous challenges in the field of education have arisen as a result of the pandemic. One of the issues encountered is students' inability to keep up with and comprehend the subject matter, particularly in Islamic Education taught by their teachers. This situation leads to a decline in students' learning achievement. This research aims to explain a source of information regarding the efforts of Islamic Education teachers in enhancing students' learning achievement at MAN 1 Boyolali. This study adopts a field research approach, a type of qualitative phenomenology research. Data collection methods involve observation, interviews, and documentation. Data validity is ensured through diligent observation and triangulation. Data analysis techniques encompass data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The findings indicate that Islamic Education teachers employ various efforts and strategies at MAN 1 Boyolali. These include developing lesson plans, selecting teaching methods, creating conducive learning environments in-person and online, motivating students, evaluating progress, and implementing continuous improvement measures. The teachers also serve as role models, emphasizing character education throughout the learning process at MAN 1 Boyolali.

Keywords: Effort · Islamic Religious Education Teachers · Achievement

1 Introduction

Education is essential in improving the quality of human resources in a country because, through education, the inherent potential within individuals can develop into a higher quality. Human potential cannot develop independently; it requires a process that involves providing learning facilities and motivation to ignite the student's enthusiasm for learning. One of the platforms that can provide learning facilities is the school. Schools are formal educational institutions designed to facilitate students' learning, serving as the meeting point between teachers and students. Furthermore, teachers can provide guidance and direction to ensure students acquire general knowledge and exhibit good behavior by prevailing norms, particularly religious ones [1].

Education, especially Islamic education, plays a crucial role and should be taught in schools. Schools have a primary responsibility to realize the goals of national education. National education aims to prepare students to understand and apply knowledge [2]

easily. Therefore, teachers, especially Islamic education teachers, are responsible for students' academic success. Islamic education teachers provide knowledge and guidance in applying that knowledge to daily life so that students can exhibit good behavior at school and in the community.

Some members of society have a prevailing perception regarding students or graduates of Islamic schools (Madrasah), often judging them and considering them to be equipped only with religious knowledge, without a balance of general knowledge and character education [3]. However, the reality in the field is similar to the education provided in public schools. Madrasah students are also equipped with various educational knowledge, including character education [4]. As teachers, it is essential to provide the best learning facilities to our students, just as Madrasah teachers always make various efforts to do so. Since the Covid-19 pandemic hit Indonesia, many challenges have emerged that educators need to be prepared to face, ensuring that the world of education does not halt. The challenges in teaching and learning activities during the pandemic are not only limited to space and time constraints. However, they are more significant and complex than that. Many new issues have arisen due to the limitations of online learning, including students' attitudes during learning, student grades, and the fact that students may struggle to keep up with knowledge acquisition during online learning [5].

Numerous challenges in the field of education have been identified as a result of the pandemic. The transition from online to face-to-face learning has posed many issues in the learning process, particularly in Islamic education. One of the problems encountered is the students' inability to comprehend the knowledge of Islamic education as intended by the teachers, leading to a decline in their academic performance. Islamic education teachers must make additional efforts to minimize and overcome these issues. Furthermore, they must conduct evaluations and assessments that align with the established standards to be accountable in education.

Based on these factors, this journal is specifically prepared as a research study on the various efforts internalized by teachers, particularly Islamic education teachers at MAN 1 Boyolali, to enhance their students' learning outcomes and academic achievements.

2   Research Methods

In implementing field research, the researcher immerses themselves in the research field to gather the necessary data. It is stated that field research is useful for collecting observational, interview, and documentary data related to the efforts of Islamic education teachers in improving students' learning achievements at MAN 1 Boyolali. The research approach used in this study is phenomenology, where the researcher directly visits the research site to understand the reality related to the efforts made by Islamic education teachers to improve students' learning achievements at MAN 1 Boyolali.

The data collection techniques used in this study include observation, interviews, and documentation. First, the researcher employs observational data collection by directly observing the efforts made by Islamic education teachers to improve learning achievements at MAN 1 Boyolali. Second, the researcher interviews the informants, engaging in direct question-and-answer sessions with the Islamic education teachers to obtain the necessary research data regarding their efforts. Third, documentation is utilized to gather

data from the school's documented materials, such as the school's vision and mission, a brief history of the school, ongoing programs, and other relevant school data related to the research theme.

The data validity is examined using two methods: meticulous observation and triangulation. Meticulous observation ensures that the researcher carefully observes the research field to stay focused on the efforts made by Islamic education teachers to improve student's learning achievements at MAN 1 Boyolali. Triangulation, on the other hand, involves comparing data obtained from observation, interviews, and documentation with direct observations to determine the validity of the data related to the efforts made by Islamic education teachers in improving students' learning achievements at MAN 1 Boyolali.

Regarding data analysis, this study utilizes the concept proposed by Miles and Huberman. The analysis process consists of three stages. First is the data reduction technique, followed by data presentation. The final stage is drawing conclusions based on the analyzed data.

3   Results and Discussion

In order to address internal issues related to learning activities, Islamic education teachers at MAN 1 Boyolali can implement various efforts to overcome these problems. These issues are closely related to students' learning interests, learning outcomes, learning processes, and the achievements obtained from their learning. Islamic education teachers at MAN 1 Boyolali incorporate various efforts and strategies into their teaching practices to overcome and surpass these issues. These efforts are demonstrated through several aspects, including:

1) Lesson Planning (Rancangan Perencanaan Pembelajaran/RPP): RPP is the foundation for teaching and learning activities. Teachers specifically delve into the problems that students need to solve. They also understand the students' conditions and circumstances, such as learning difficulties, low learning interest, and various obstacles that must be overcome. The RPP determines indicators and competency factors that students must fulfill during their learning process. It allows teachers to assess whether students have mastered the subject matter. Through RPP, teachers can conduct continuous teaching and learning activities. Suppose students are deemed incapable of understanding and mastering certain lesson materials. In that case, the teacher can provide repeated instruction, demanding the standard requirements that students must fulfill.

   By implementing these strategies, Islamic education teachers aim to improve students' learning achievements and create a conducive learning environment. These efforts demonstrate the commitment of Islamic education teachers to address the challenges and ensure the success of students' learning process at MAN 1 Boyolali [11]. In this case, the RPP illustrates the teaching and learning activities that will be carried out. So that if obstacles are found later, this can be attempted by overcoming the problems according to the plan in the RPP.

2) During the teaching and learning process, Islamic Education teachers at MAN 1 Boyolali have critically developed appropriate teaching strategies to ensure that none of their students falls behind in their lessons despite the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. One effort made by these teachers to maintain stability in the field of education during COVID-19 is the implementation of hybrid learning. This approach allows 50% of students in a class to attend school in person, strictly adhering to the applicable health protocols. The remaining 50% of students engage in remote learning with the same materials taught at school. These materials are shared through online groups specific to each class. In the subsequent scheduled meetings, a switch occurs, where students who previously attended school are required to learn from home, while those who previously learned from home are allowed to come to school. This condition persisted throughout the research period without any updates.

3) Evaluation: Evaluation is a crucial aspect of the learning process as it provides valuable insights for consideration and future improvements. It helps measure the level of students' understanding of the knowledge imparted by the teacher, leading to the implementation of the best possible solutions if students are deemed unable to comprehend the materials. Evaluation is a tangible manifestation of the Lesson Plan.

   Islamic Education teachers at MAN 1 Boyolali can employ various evaluation methods, such as written exams, assignments, projects, presentations, and discussions. Evaluation can also be conducted by directly observing students' practical skills in applying religious values in their daily lives. The evaluation results provide valuable information for teachers to assess the teaching methods' effectiveness and determine necessary improvements. Additionally, the evaluation results serve as a guide for providing guidance and direction to students who are still facing difficulties in understanding the materials.

   By integrating appropriate teaching strategies, implementing hybrid learning, and conducting continuous evaluation, Islamic Education teachers at MAN 1 Boyolali are making maximum efforts to ensure that their students do not miss out on their lessons despite the challenging circumstances. These efforts also contribute to the stability of the education system during the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring that students continue to receive quality Islamic Education despite the limitations. In the Lesson Plan, which consists of various instructional plans, implementation and evaluation occur throughout the teaching and learning process. For example, to conduct evaluations, Islamic Education teachers at MAN 1 Boyolali regularly administer quizzes or daily tests within a specified timeframe after delivering the lesson. It serves as an indicator to determine whether a student has understood the material or not [12].

4) Follow-up activities. As a follow-up to the evaluation, this stage will be implemented. Similar to what is stated in the Lesson Plan (RPP), the sequence of activities in teaching and learning will proceed accordingly. After the evaluation, the teacher will obtain the student's understanding data. Subsequently, in order to fulfill that understanding, follow-up activities will be conducted. In cases where students do not fully comprehend the material, the teacher will provide repeated explanations until the students achieve understanding. Furthermore, the teacher will set expectations for the students to grasp the material, which can be remedial measures based on the quizzes or tests administered. A standard criterion determines these remedial measures, so

if students have not met the required standard, the teacher will implement the best solution by the Lesson Plan (RPP).

5) The implementation of providing examples to students by the teacher. In the teaching and learning process, students need to observe and emulate the behavior of their teachers. By doing so, besides achieving remarkable learning outcomes, students can develop intellectually sound character traits. Therefore, teachers must exemplify good behavior that students can emulate. The teachers of Islamic Education have practiced this act at MAN 1 Boyolali, where they have implemented exemplary behaviors for their students. In addition to the efforts mentioned above, teachers of Islamic Education at MAN 1 Boyolali employ various strategies to maintain students' interest in learning, as it serves as a foundation for achieving and surpassing learning achievements. Some of the strategies implemented by teachers of Islamic Education at MAN 1 Boyolali include:

a) Adapting Learning Methods. Adapting learning methods is important to provide an effective understanding of the subject matter conveyed by the teacher to the students. Depending on the learning content to be explained, the teacher will choose the best alternative method to ensure that students achieve comprehension. Sometimes, the learning method employed is active learning. At the same time, at other times, it may involve lectures or other methods that are considered more effective in delivering the intended material.

b) Creating a conducive learning environment, in-person and online, is a priority for the teachers of Islamic Education at MAN 1 Boyolali. They strive to establish a conducive learning atmosphere. They employ various strategies in the classroom to capture students' attention and engage them in the teacher's instructions. On the other hand, they create a conducive environment in the online setting by sending instructions and assignments to students via WhatsApp groups. These instructions are tasks that must be completed within a specified time frame. It ensures that students are actively involved in their studies even when learning from home.

c) Strategy of providing learning encouragement through motivation. The teaching and learning process should be accompanied by a teacher's attitude and behavior reflecting student motivation. This motivation serves not only to maintain students' interest in continuous learning but also to encourage them to excel in their learning outcomes. Various forms of motivation can be given to students, such as motivating statements, deadlines for completing assignments, and rewards for meeting or surpassing learning standards [13]. Motivating students is one of the teacher's tasks and involves effective communication between the teacher and students. A student's success is often closely tied to the motivation provided by their teachers [14]. Therefore, the understanding of this concept is put into practice by teachers of Islamic Education at MAN 1 Boyolali as a strategy to achieve students' learning outcomes that meet the set standards and exceed their learning achievements [15].

From various strategies and efforts implemented by teachers of Islamic Education at MAN 1 Boyolali, the aim is to maintain students' interest in learning, achieve students' understanding, and ensure students' learning outcomes surpass their achievements. There is a harmonization between the goals and the teaching and learning process [16]. The teaching activities of Islamic Education teachers at MAN 1 Boyolali apply

various effective efforts and strategies, indicating that the teachers have fulfilled their duties correctly. Regardless of the student's learning outcomes as the goal, the learning process is highly important for students in the teaching and learning activities. Students prefer practical experiences and real-life situations to uncertain theories and descriptions [17]. By implementing an appropriate learning system based on learning standards, the teachers of Islamic Education at MAN 1 Boyolali have contributed to maintaining stability in the education sector, especially during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. In the era of Covid-19, where all sectors have been forced to stop due to various obstacles and the threat of a deadly virus, the teachers of Islamic Education at MAN 1 Boyolali are still striving to improve student learning outcomes through various implemented strategies. The significant role of teachers in maximizing students' learning achievements during this pandemic era deserves appreciation because, without the great contributions of teachers, the educational system would face instability during the pandemic [18]. Many sectors have stopped as they cannot adapt to the prevailing pandemic. However, the teaching and learning activities in the education sector have never stopped. This situation indicates the crucial role of teachers, as evidenced by the facts discovered by researchers during the research process. The facts about various efforts made by teachers to maintain students' interest in learning, achieve students' understanding, maintain students' learning outcomes, and even surpass students' achievements are not easy to accomplish, especially when constrained by space and time. Teachers must adapt to the circumstances, which divide their role into direct and online teaching [19]. Monitoring students' progress from these two different perspectives also poses a challenge for teachers [20]. However, it is not only about pursuing various efforts. The Islamic Education teachers at MAN 1 Boyolali implement various strategies to complement the efforts. It shows that the Islamic Education teachers at MAN 1 Boyolali have acted as standards for educators, even in the pandemic era. The requirements of being a teacher have competence, acting sincerely, being based on piety, having a good personality, and fulfilling the teacher's competencies, which have been proven through the actions of the Islamic Education teachers at MAN 1 Boyolali in their efforts to improve student's learning outcomes. Moreover, the behavior of teachers as role models is a form of character formation that should be emulated to dispel any social perceptions that always associate Madrasah with the actions of individuals who were once students or are already alumni. It would be highly unethical to continue developing such stigmas. This result is evident from the facts and realities encountered by the researcher directly during the study, where teachers as educators have maximized their efforts to shape the character of students that reflects exemplary qualities [21]. Although it may not eliminate the stigma associated with these issues, the critical efforts and strategies implemented by teachers have successfully demonstrated that they have played their role to the fullest in the students' learning process [22]. Therefore, regarding the various stigmas in society related to these matters, there is no need for validation because it is the actual efforts and strategies that should be implemented to create a generation of excellence in this country[23].

4   Conclusion

Based on various reviews revealed by the researcher regarding the discussed phe-
nomenon, the researcher not only discusses the phenomenon but also presents it with
data obtained from previous studies. As a result, it can be concluded that the Islamic
Education teachers at MAN 1 Boyolali have played a maximum role in striving for
and implementing various strategies to maintain students' interest in learning, achieve
students' understanding, maintain students' learning outcomes, and even surpass stu-
dents' academic achievements. However, all of this is not easily achieved. It requires the
creation of lesson plans, determining teaching methods, creating a conducive learning
environment both in-person and online, providing motivation as an encouragement to
students, evaluation and follow-up actions, and the provision of teacher role models as a
form of character education, all of which have been implemented throughout the learn-
ing activities. The various efforts and strategies implemented by the Islamic Education
teachers at MAN 1 Boyolali aim to improve student's learning outcomes and have proven
to be highly valuable in maintaining the stability of the education system in Indonesia,
even during the current pandemic. Therefore, as individuals who have grown up under
the guidance of teachers, we must always appreciate and acknowledge the efforts of
teachers in educating their students. Actions that reflect respect and appreciation can
be shown in various ways, such as showing respect, being polite, obeying instructions,
refraining from spreading gossip or spreading hatred towards teachers' shortcomings
in delivering the material, and many more. Considering that a nation's intelligence is
inseparable from its teachers' dedication, it is important to remember and appreciate
their contributions. A smart nation is a nation that remembers the contributions of its
teachers, as we all know that teachers are heroes or what we often refer to as unsung
heroes.

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