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DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHER COMPETENCE IN CREATIVE WRITING TO ACTUALIZE LITERACY OF MADRASAH

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Abstract

Teachers often have difficulty in developing competence in the writing aspect, especially in Islamic-based educational institutions. This study aims to explain the concept of developing teacher competence in creative writing to realize madrasa literacy. This study involved six informants, including school principals and teachers who are members of the writing community. Data was collected through direct interviews (telephone, WhatsApp messages, and video calls), observation, and documentation. The results showed several steps to developing teacher competence in writing at MI Perwanida Blitar: 1) Forming a writing community called ARUNIKA CAKRAWALA. It was started by building mutual commitment, self-efficacy, motivation, and writing habits, and determining rewards and punishments. 2) Implementation of the writing community by actively participating in seminars, workshops, writing training, and webinars, actively writing in external and internal communities of the institution, holding peer tutors, supporting school literacy programs, and publishing teacher and student writings in various genres. 3) Obstacles faced by writing teachers are limited time, limited ideas, and unstable teachers' motivation in writing. This finding offers the concept of developing teacher competence in writing. The findings are expected to be adopted in developing teacher competence in creative writing in other institutions.

Keywords: Competence Development, Writing Teacher, Literacy Madrasah.

Abstrak

Guru sering mengalami kesulitan dalam mengembangkan kompetensi dalam aspek menulis, terutama di lembaga pendidikan berbasis Islam. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan konsep pengembangan kompetensi guru dalam menulis kreative untuk mewujudkan literasi madrasah. Penelitian ini melibatkan enam informan, termasuk kepala sekolah dan guru yang tergabung dalam komunitas menulis. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara langsung (telepon, pesan WhatsApp, dan video call), observasi, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada beberapa langkah untuk mengembangkan kompetensi guru dalam menulis di MI Perwanida Blitar: 1) Membentuk komunitas menulis yang diberi nama ARUNIKA CAKRAWALA, Dimulai dengan membangun komitmen bersama, self-efficacy, motivasi, dan kebiasaan menulis dan dilanjutkan dengan penentuan reward dan punishment. 2) Pelaksanaan komunitas menulis yaitu dengan aktif mengikuti seminar, workshop, pelatihan menulis, dan webinar, aktif menulis di komunitas eksternal dan internal lembaga, mengadakan tutor sebaya, mendukung program literasi sekolah, dan mempublikasikan tulisan guru dan siswa di berbagai genre. 3) Kendala yang dihadapi guru menulis adalah keterbatasan waktu, keterbatasan ide, dan tidak stabilnya motivasi guru dalam menulis. Temuan ini menawarkan konsep pengembangan kompetensi guru dalam menulis, hasil temuan ini diharapkan dapat diadopsi dalam mengembangkan kompetensi guru dalam menulis kreatif di lembaga lain.

Kata Kunci: Pengembangan Kompetensi, Guru Menulis, Madrasah Literasi.

INTRODUCTION

All teachers have the potential to become writing teachers, regardless of the subjects they teach or the age of the students, or their writing skills. Therefore, the development of teacher competence should aim to develop schools and support student learning (Peter M. Senge *et al.* 2012). Reading activities followed by writing skills need to be made more meaningful so that what is discussed gives meaning to change. For educators, writing is critical as an example of educating in terms of literacy (Surangangga, 2017).



Ideally, teachers in this millennial era become literacy activists so that they have a comprehensive horizon or insight. Learning resources are abundant and easy to find. Sources related to the teacher's assignments are the priority to be read. Teachers should have a strong desire to explore science and technology continuously. Through reading, it can later show the teacher's ability to overcome learning through writing (Arsyad & Sulfemi, 2019). Do not let teachers be more diligent in reading and answering WhatsApp, scrolling Facebook, Twitter, and other social media than reading books, writing, and publishing their writings for their professional interests.

Contrary to the results of UNESCO research, the literacy culture in Indonesia is very low. Likewise, the research results from the OECD place the culture of adult literacy in Indonesia getting the lowest value compared to other countries (OECD 2021a; OECD 2021b). The low interest in reading and writing in Indonesia has made the government launch a literacy movement in schools through the Ministry of Education and Culture. This movement was developed based on the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 21 of 2015 concerning the Growth of Character. Although in its development, the quality of reading continues to increase, the work is still far from expectations in the aspect of writing. Therefore, IGI (Indonesian Teachers Association) created the SAGUSAKU (one teacher, one book) program.

Teachers as the front line in cultivating literacy have not run optimally. Due to the low teacher literacy culture, each institution does not necessarily have an exemplary teacher figure in the school literacy movement, such as writing teachers. There are still not many teachers who see the importance of literacy culture for the continuity of science (Wijayati *et al.*, 2019). So that teachers lack confidence in writing and teach writing methods to students (Myers *et al.*, 2016).

Even though they have the competence to write, some of the teachers' writings have not described the writings of someone who has the main activity of a teacher. With a writing teacher, the teacher can convey many things in written form so that students can learn independently. If the teachers have good writing skills, they will have an added value that can elevate their position in the education and learning process (Saroni 2011:24). Becoming teacher creative writers can enhance their professionalism and rejuvenate their practice as authentic meaning-

makers and risk-takers (Yoo, 2018). The more written works produced, the better the content of the writing. It will show the higher intellectual level of a teacher; at the same time, it also can be a reflection of the education quality in Indonesia.

There have been many research results on the role of writing teachers, which tend to focus on the benefits obtained by teachers and students (Jones 2015; Yang 2018; Copp, Cabell, and Invernizzi 2019; Smith *et al.* 2020). However, it is rare to find research results on models of teacher competence development through creative writing that support writing pedagogy and identify the elements that position these educators to improve writing quality.

In its implementation in the field, both the pedagogical competence factor and the ability to write papers have not shown the real competence of teachers, especially in improving the quality of education. This is reflected in (a) teachers still have difficulties in managing the class, especially in using methods, strategies, and learning approaches that are fun for students; (b) there are still many teachers who do not fully pursue their profession, do not have time to read and write, and lack of motivation to improve themselves, especially in researching to produce works; (c) the teacher still has difficulty in writing and publishing works (Arsyad & Sulfemi, 2019). This problem arises because teachers have not been optimal in developing themselves through independent scientific institutions or organizations, such as teacher working group organizations.

MI Perwanida Blitar is an Islamic-based education institution that has a writing community named ARUNIKA CAKRAWALA. This community contains MI Perwanida Blitar teachers who have the same vision and mission in their work. There have been many works created by the writing community from both teachers and students in various writing genres. Therefore, this study explains the basis for planning the formation of a writing community, implementation, and the obstacles writing teachers face in developing teacher competence.

METHODS

This research was conducted in the ARUNIKA CAKRAWALA writing community under MI Perwanida Blitar, East Java, Indonesia. This Islamic-based education institution is an institution that has successfully implemented



a literacy madrasah. Many written works are written by individual teachers as well as collaborations with students in various genres.

Therefore, this research seeks to determine the process of developing the professionalism of creative writing teachers in realizing literacy madrasah. The research location is at MI Perwanida Blitar, East Java, Indonesia. This study is using a qualitative descriptive approach. The author determines six informants who have an essential role in developing the professionalism of writing teachers at the MI Perwanida Blitar institution consisting of 1 principal, five teachers who are members of the ARUNIKA CAKRAWALA community. Data were collected through interviews, participant observation, and documentation (Prastowo, 2012).

Data were obtained through structured and unstructured interviews. Interview techniques are telephone, WhatsApp messages, and video calls. Interview data were recorded using a telephone recorder and field notes via the Google Keep application. The photo document was taken from the social media of the MI Perwanida Blitar institution.

The collected data was then coded and analyzed qualitatively to explain the general description of the creative writing teacher's competence development activities. Qualitative analysis was carried out thematically to explore and find the concept of developing writing teacher professionalism in the planning, implementation, and obstacles faced segments.



Figure 1 Research Design

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Planning for Establishing Writing Community in Teacher Professional Development Program

As an institution known for its literacy culture, the teachers initially planned to form a writing group ARUNIKA CAKRAWALA consisting of MI Perwanida teachers who had the same vision and mission to actualize literacy madrasah. It was an individual awareness of the importance of writing for teachers. In this community, teachers provide mutual reinforcement to each other and strengthen self-efficacy. They have a high commitment to the writing community to make literacy madrasah with writing habits to become role models for teachers and other students.

Actually, teachers got suggestions from the madrasah principal to build writing habits as teacher competence development, but only for certain people. People have different talents; some like to write but can't speak, and vice versa. With the formation of the ARUNIKA CAKRAWALA community, we strengthen and motivate each other and guide fellow teachers and students who have writing talents.

The teachers themselves manage the movement of the ARUNIKA CAKRAWALA community by formulating the needs and work patterns that have been agreed upon by members. For example, habituation of one day one paper scheduled in turns by community members, joint ventures for the cost of publishing works, giving punishment for teachers who do not write by being excluded from writing community, and providing rewards for teachers who are productive in writing.

2. Implementation of the Writing Community in Teacher Professional Development Program

ARUNIKA CAKRAWAIA community actively participates in various writing activities such as training, workshops, seminars, and webinars to improve their writing skills. The principal also plays a role in actualizing writing teachers, for example, by providing motivation and encouragement for



each teacher to have the motivation to write, delegate, and conduct training, workshops, seminars, and writing webinars by inviting competent writers.

We have conducted some writing training, but I think it is still not optimal yet. Therefore, the institution supports them by presenting well-known writers and so on. Through the training, workshops, seminars, or webinars, the teachers become enthusiastic. This is one of the ways to charge them again.

In addition to participating in various supporting activities in improving teachers' writing skills, teachers are also active in writing in the institution's external community. For example, the IGMPL community (Ikatan Guru Madrasah Activating Literacy) consists of madrasah teachers from the City and District of Blitar who have the same interest in writing. Communication between members is connecting via WhatsApp groups. To hone teachers' writing skills, ARUNIKA CAKRAWALA Community also conducts peer tutoring led by MI Perwanida teachers themselves who have experience in writing and publishing their work, such as Ustadzah Etik Elfia Endrawati and Ustadzah Agustin Istiqlaliyah.

MI Perwanida literacy program also has a hand in developing teacher professionalism through writing in actualizing literacy madrasah: 1) adding enrichment books, 2) creating literacy corners, 3) getting used to reading books before learning begins, 4) providing a Wifi network that teachers and students can access to strengthen digital literacy, and 5) Language Month Program.

Some of the papers produced by MI Perwanida Blitar teachers were published: 1) Writing Opinions article in Print mass media, written by Agustin Istiqlaliyah, entitled World Education Crying Behind Fanatical Porters published on Radar Blitar, Jawa Pos on February 24th, 2020. 2) Historical books, written by Ustadzah Agustin Istiqlaliyah, entitled Advice Khofifah for Muslimah, published in Solutions Publishing. Anthology books, written by members of the ARUNIKA CAKRAWALA group, entitled "Cinta dan Humor", "Wyna and the Fairies", "Menua bersamamu Edisi 1 dan 2", "Kenangan Manis", "Photo Graphy", "Bundaran Sentono", "Wayang

Gamelan" and student work entitled "My Lovely Pet" published by OMERA. Meanwhile, with IGMPL, the publication of a book "Puisi Penantian" and "Kisah Ramadhan". 4) Historical Tria Yuanita, Diana, Agustin Istiqlaliyah, and Titin collaborated with the external community; it is Bung Karno Library community to publish a book chapter entitled "Jejak Sang Putra Fajar" and "Cerita Setelah Fajar". 5) Writing CAR (Classroom Action Research) is also recommended for all. However, the CAR writing was carried out to participate in the outstanding teacher competition with guidance from the Ministry of Religion of Blitar City and competent senior teachers. 6) Producing learning modules. It is implemented specifically for grade 6 in all subjects, both general and religious. The learning modules for the lower classes, grades 1-4, are not maximalized yet because there is a teacher rolling system. Thus, to cover that, the institution took steps to take modules from publishers such as Erlangga and Tiga Serangkai.





Figure 2. The work of teachers and students

3. Obstacle Faced by Teachers in Writing

The first inhibiting factor faced by MI Perwanida writing teachers was time constraints. The duties as a teacher that have been carried out so far have become an obstacle in writing. The teachers are busy with the obligation to teach in the classroom, fulfill learning administration, guide students, and conduct several excellent madrasah programs. The time



constraint factor is the inhibiting factor for most teachers. The average teacher at MI Perwanida Blitar has relatively the same teaching obligations or burdens, which is around 24-28 hours per week. So, the free time for teachers outside of teaching hours is the same. One teacher with another teacher has homogeneous activities. No teacher develops himself by actively carrying out activities independently outside teaching hours at school due to binding regulations from the institution. This is what makes most teachers equally state that time is the main obstacle.

The second inhibiting factor is the limitation of ideas and ideas. The teachers cannot express their ideas in written form due to the teacher's lack of knowledge in creative writing. It makes the teachers having misperceptions about creative writing. The teachers consider writing to be a difficult thing to do, and the paradigm raises the teacher's reluctance to write because they feel it is not very useful. However, with the formation of this community as discussion groups, the limitations of these ideas can be minimized. They can conduct active discussions and sharing ideas whenever they want.

The third inhibiting factor is the unstable motivation of teachers. The unstable motivation of teachers in writing is due to age and support from their environment, such as family. The concrete solution step taken by the ARUNIKA CAKRAWALA community and IGMPL members is to provide mutual support such as motivation and inspiration. So, teacher motivation can increase again and again.

DISCUSSION

The challenges of education in the future are increasingly complex, and everything is disrupted. Indonesia is still in the lowest rank compared to other countries. To answer these challenges, teachers must be able to develop their writing competence to improve literacy culture according to the times. Teachers must be able to answer it by continuously improving their literacy in aspects of data literacy, technological literacy, humanism literacy. Data literacy is needed by teachers to improve their skills in processing and analyzing big data to improve their competence. Technological literacy is shown to utilize digital technology in

developing competence, and humanist literacy is mastered to develop individual characters in collaborating, adaptive and wise in using information.

In the 21st century, teachers must have competence, character, and high literacy power in human resource needs. In addition to academic qualifications, teachers must also meet teacher competencies. Law No. 14 of 2005 Article 10 concerning Teachers and Lecturers states that professional teachers must have four competencies: pedagogic, personality, social, and professional competence. Meanwhile, KMA No. 211 of 2011 added two spiritual and leadership competencies. Professional competence of teachers is the ability of teachers to master knowledge in the fields of science, technology, and/or arts and culture. Therefore, teachers must master their disciplines characterized by (1) broad and deep mastery of subject matter following the contents of the educational unit program, subject, and/or group of subjects to be taught. (2) Mastery of concepts and methods of relevant scientific, technological, or artistic disciplines, which are conceptually overshadowing or coherent with the educational unit program, subject matter, and/or group of subjects to be taught. On that basis, teachers should be able to become book writers according to their talents and interests.

The literacy tradition must be strengthened by implementing the literacy pillars, "read, write, and archive". What is read must be written; what is written must be read. By applying the literacy pillar, teachers can produce literacy products such as books, journals, proceedings, papers, scientific papers, and articles to actualize literacy madrasah.

Teachers' writing activity is a manifestation of the SAGUSAKU (One Teacher One Book) program initiated by IGI (Indonesian Teachers Association). Literacy among teachers is intended so that teachers, as a figure in the forefront of the education of the nation's children, can be a pioneer, role model, and driver of reading interest for students and colleagues at school through the school literacy movement.

Although there are already writing programs from the government and IGI. There are still some teachers who are reluctant to write an essay. Factors that become obstacles in writing scientific papers are the cost of writing papers, limited facilities, and infrastructure in writing papers, limited time to write papers,



lack of mastery of computers as a means of writing essays, difficulty finding and expressing ideas in the form of scientific papers, and limited insight due to low interest in reading. (Sodiq *et al.*, 2014). This problem shows the unfinished professional competence of teachers.

Based on the research findings, the researcher offers a model for developing creative writing competence on teachers in actualizing literacy madrasah implemented at MI Perwanida Blitar, which succeeded in minimizing the inhibiting factors for teachers in writing. The model can be described as follows.:

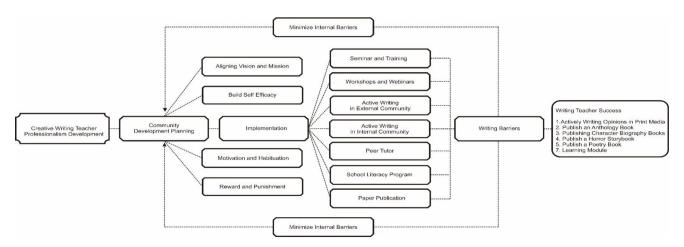


Figure 3. Writing Teacher Competency Development Model

The development of teacher competence in writing can be started by forming a writing community based on individual self-awareness by the teacher about the importance of writing and support by the principal. So, the goals of the school and individual teachers are aligned. It is manifested in commitment, self-efficacy, motivation, and habituation as a member of the community. With self-reflection potentially becoming part of the (re)creating literacy culture, people will increase their creativity (Stephens, 2018). Self-efficacy is a key mechanism in social cognitive theory, which postulates that achievement depends on the interaction between behavior, personal factors, and environmental conditions that affect teachers' self-efficacy, motivation, and writing.

Principals and community members can communicate a shared vision for literacy reform, which resulted in the improved implementation of the reform



framework in their schools (Lightner *et al.*, 2020). The relational trust built between the members and the principal allows them to navigate issues that may hinder literacy reform efforts in their schools. Through habituation of literacy in reading and writing, schools will build a literacy culture in schools (Khotimah *et al.*, 2018). The development of teacher competence in writing projects broadens teachers' understanding of different writing theories, provides a precise model of integrating new approaches into various writing activities, changing their instructional focus, and shifting their perception of the teacher's role in teaching (Teng, 2016). The appreciation given by the principal and other teachers encouraged them and kept their commitment to being active in a writing activity.

However, there must be a balance between teaching obligations and writing activities that run in harmony to improve writing competence. Meanwhile, madrasah principals or policymakers must reward teachers for flexibility in working conditions and writing (Braga *et al.* 2020: 12). In addition, school principals can provide rewards by covering the cost of publishing written works. By giving rewards, it is hoped that teachers will continue to improve their writing competence and continue to improve their knowledge to realize the institution's goals.

In practice, teachers can direct their own writing growth with manifestation through exploration of various methods of writing practice. (Williams, 2020) For example, they continuously attend various writing seminars, workshops or training, writing workshops and webinars, sharing work, and building dialogue between participants and instructors (Sholeh *et al.*, 2021). Creative writing workshop model for framing, outlining, explaining, and highlighting written content supporting metacognition, transformative education, identity development, creativity, and critical thinking across various demographics of writing teachers (Howe and Wig 2017; Alston and Danielson 2020). Through various programs to improve teachers' writing capacity, it impacts teachers' skills in writing various genres.

Writing training in actualizing literacy madrasah will be successful if several things here are conducted: building a strong climate and mutual trust between individuals; having clear roles and duties; having good communication; having plenty of time to practice co-writing, and monitoring their work (Scales *et*



al., 2019). Even though teachers have different skills, they have the same duties and obligations to set an example for their students. Teachers can focus on developing their potential to improve writing competence by publishing various works, making themselves inspirational for students to follow and publish their written works.

The benefits of supporting writing instructions are: (a) LTE understanding; (b) improve the structure of the RPP; (c) teacher follow-up; (d) improvement of writing output; and (e) the use of real-life experiences for students (Smith *et al.*, 2020). Writing teachers are essential to develop students' practical writing skills and help students to develop their identity and learner experience (Muhammad 2015; OECD 2018).

Teachers can join internal and external writing communities, emphasizing the collaborative nature of the writing process. Collaborative writing was found to be helpful in improving writing, providing opportunities to gather ideas, and having positive emotional (e.g., reducing stress) and social effects (e.g., networking). Minimize worry in terms of limiting their actual learning and thinking negative emotions, for example, loss of self-confidence and feeling isolated (Chen & Yu, 2019). Therefore, the teacher must minimize the obstacles of the teacher writing both from the individual's internal and external.

In accordance with the results of research from Arsyad and Sulfemi (2019) By actively writing internal and external groups, teachers can develop teaching abilities or competencies and writing skills. Due to:

- 1. Collaborative activities allow teachers to constantly interact with the knowledge that can be used for writing through subject matter materials.
- 2. The teacher consistently communicates with students in the study room in realizing a writing culture.
- 3. Teachers regularly work with the educational world which has a dynamic policy, which expects them to convey ideas and communicate through writing competitions. Extensive communication also provides an instructive rubric that allows teachers to communicate their creative and innovative thinking.
- 4. Teachers have independent scientific forums that allow teachers to learn and hone skills, including writing scientific papers through journals. Scientific



work in the form of research results reflects the ability of researchers in presenting their thoughts through the results of their research following their competence

According to the author's self-characterization, the creative writing genre can be taken in academic and non-academic contexts for future advancement (Barrett *et al.* 2017; Stephens 2018). Teachers play a role in students' personal growth through their work, encourage exploration of topics, and foster criticism by developing profound experiences. Creative writing and thinking produce extraordinary learning encounters that understudies can use to widen their understanding (Price, 2020).

For educators, independent writing like this contributes to professional reflection, as does the need for teacher education programs to improve writing instruction. It also can increase understanding of the field of inquiry in its own right and write to understand the content and other fields of inquiry (Grisham & Wolsey, 2011). Writing can explain pedagogic identity as a tool to explain tensions and contradictions between the conception and practice of teaching creative writing.

Writing essays for teachers is a necessity. As people involved in the world of education and learning, they need to continuously increase their knowledge and understanding of various things, both directly and indirectly related to the subjects they teach. according to Arsyad and Sulfemi (2019) There are some reasons behind the need for developing writing skills for teachers: (1) teachers as educated people; (2) teachers as agents of reform; (3) teachers as motivators and partners of students in writing scientific papers; (4) teachers as researchers (especially CAR); and (5) teachers as writers of scientific papers. These five reasons reinforce that teachers need to continuously learn to develop their writing skills.

This study strengthens and extends the research results of (Smith *et al.*, 2020). Through the independent and collaborative writing process, literacy teachers are formed, influenced by the writing teacher's understanding, advocacy, writing identity, administrative support, teamwork and follow-up. In addition, it also fills the gap in the literacy of writing teachers who are scholars that already have life experience in writing essays.



Writing teachers deserve the highest appreciation because teachers are active actors in a knowledge construction process. Reading, writing, and publishing their work is a series of activities that cannot be separated from his knowledge-building efforts. Reading, writing, and publishing the work is one thing that should not be separated from teachers' activities in the context of carrying out their educational profession at school. This knowledge formation activity should become a habit and be entrenched in the individual soul of educators so that literacy madrasah will be realized.

CONCLUSION

The development of teacher competence in writing can run successfully because of the individual teacher's awareness to write. The formation of writing communities in Islamic-based education institutions is a forum for gathering teachers with the same vision and passion for writing to actualize literacy madrasah. Stakeholders should take an active role in providing support to educators in various forms of motivation and literacy madrasah policies.

As for writing teachers, they should continue to develop their writing skills by actively participating in various activities such as seminars, training, workshops, and webinars and providing tutors to colleagues for teachers who are competent in writing. In addition, teachers must also actively participate in writing activities in external and internal communities of the institution so that writing habits are built within the teacher. The work published on various media gives confidence and enthusiasm to individual teachers. Teachers must help and motivate each other in the writing community to face the obstacles faced in writing, such as exchanging experiences and work.

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