



Teachers' Efforts in Developing the Creativity of New Students through Calligraphy Extracurricular Activities at Pondok Pesantren Wali Songo

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Abstract

His study explores how teachers aim to enhance the creativity of new students through calligraphy extracurricular activities, using a qualitative approach. The research reveals obstacles faced by new students at PP. Wali Songo Sukajadi, including boredom with teaching methods, inadequate facilities, and lack of guidance due to teacher inexperience. To address these issues, the Bakat Minat committee introduced an expert calligraphy teacher in 2024 to provide guidance and prevent student disinterest. Through dedicated efforts, the teacher successfully impacts the creativity development of new students. The study focuses on assessing the teacher's strategies in fostering student creativity through calligraphy extracurricular activities, employing descriptive analysis methods including observation, interviews, and documentation. The data analysis process involves data collection, reduction, presentation, validation, and drawing conclusions.

INTRODUCTION

Every human being possesses unique potential from birth. This potential grows in accordance with one's talents and abilities. However, in order to realize these talents, they must be examined and nurtured within each individual (Zulkarnain et al., 2023). Not all talents can be easily recognized or guided by others or even by teachers. This is due to the lack of awareness about the talents that one already possesses. In addition to talent, there is a closely related factor, namely interest.

Interest plays a crucial role in motivating students to be expressive and diverse in revealing what they find engaging (As'ari et al., 2024). This differs from creativity, which is the human capacity to combine past experiences and new inputs to produce something novel. As observed in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and madrasah-based schools, teachers strive not only to develop students' formal knowledge but also to enhance their creativity, talents, and interests.

Therefore, most educational institutions seek to develop students' creativity by organizing extracurricular activities across various fields, allowing students to choose according to their individual interests for instance, calligraphy art. These teacher led efforts

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have an influence on helping students in their creative development (Risnanosanti et al., 2022).

The development of creativity among new students at PP. Wali Songo is focused specifically on the calligraphy art extracurricular activity. This activity serves as a medium for students to express their abilities globally, fostering a new generation of future educators through their creativity (Sawiran, 2022). At PP. Wali Songo Sukajadi, this extracurricular activity is referred to as “Bakat Minat” (BakMin), a term introduced by Romo Kyai in 2013 with the hope that it would benefit all students.

New students will receive structured instruction and the opportunity to develop their creativity and abilities in accordance with their disciplines through this activity. This will in turn stimulate their enthusiasm for learning and encourage self-evaluation through each learning experience. Calligraphy art is an extracurricular activity that upholds Islamic values while cultivating artistic skills and imagination. Creativity does not arise on its own; it requires the integration of logic, creativity, motivation, and imagination into new ideas that lead to innovation (Muhibbin et al., 2023).

Creativity among new students in the BakMin program began to flourish in 2024, largely due to the dedicated efforts of the calligraphy teacher. Challenges that emerged in 2023 became a renewed motivation for the committee to further enhance the program's progress, especially for new students in the field of calligraphy art. Changes in the teaching structure addressed previous barriers faced by new students such as inadequate facilities, limited teaching experience among instructors, and a lack of enthusiasm during the learning process. These past issues now serve as a foundation for ongoing evaluation.

The efforts made by the calligraphy teacher for new students, following an evaluation meeting, included instruction in various styles of Arabic calligraphy, starting from khat naskhi to other forms. Many educational institutions have integrated calligraphy into their extracurricular programs to make it easier for students to develop artistic creativity. At PP. Wali Songo, new students with an interest in calligraphy are grouped into beginner classes, while returning students are placed in more advanced mushaf classes. This study focuses exclusively on the beginner class.

The skills and imagination possessed by new students are developed through the extracurricular calligraphy program. The procedure used is training, which is a step in enhancing psychomotor skills. In order to nurture student creativity effectively, the calligraphy training strategy must be adapted to the program's specific needs, beginning

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with basic knowledge and progressing to more advanced elements (Yuliani & Imsiyah, 2017).

Arabic calligraphy, known in most pesantren as “khat” or “Khatil Qur’an,” includes a variety of distinctive styles, such as Kufi, Tsuluts, Naskhi, Riq’ah, Diwani Jali, Farisi, and contemporary forms all of which are practiced in Indonesia. Calligraphy is a textual art form with aesthetic value and is considered a hallmark of the cultural advancement of Islam during its golden era (Oktavera & Abdullah, 2021).

As explained by Philip K. Hitti in *History of the Arabs*, calligraphy originated from Islamic art and became renowned because its primary purpose was to present the words of Allah in a beautiful manner. This purpose is supported by historical Islamic traditions and by Surah Al-‘Alaq verse 4 (Arifin, 2021).

الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ

“He who taught (the use of) the pen...” (Q.S Al-‘Alaq: 4)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ جَمِيلٌ يُحِبُّ الْجَمَالَ

“Indeed, Allah is beautiful and loves beauty” (HR. Muslim from Ibn Mas’ud radhiyallahu’anhu).

These verses show that calligraphy is not merely aesthetic art it is meaningful. The beauty of Qur’anic verses, Islamic sayings, or other Arabic scripts is accentuated through a variety of styles. Individuals with artistic tendencies are naturally drawn to the study of calligraphy.

Beyond the challenges previously mentioned, some students only know about calligraphy without understanding its rules. Therefore, those with a passion for the arts are committed to preserving the tradition of calligraphy. Through training and extracurricular programs, teachers strive to transform students’ interests into true talents by developing their creativity. These efforts aim to prepare students to compete in calligraphy competitions and serve as a benchmark for continuous improvement (Wulandari et al., 2022).

In a study titled “The Role of Attanwir Calligrapher Association in Developing Students’ Creativity at Attanwir Islamic Boarding School Talun Sumberrejo Bojonegoro,” M. Nur Chozin states that all forms of art aligned with Islamic teachings are considered Islamic art. Calligraphy, a branch of Islamic visual art, exemplifies the unity of aesthetics and faith. While the subject and object of study are similar, this research differs in location and instructional background (Chozin et al., 2022).

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According to another study by Kartika Wulandari et al., titled "Islamic Calligraphy Art Training in Enhancing the Creativity of Santri at PPAI Tanwirul Qulub in Ngijo Village, Karangploso Sub-district," Islamic calligraphy can be taught in Madrasah Diniyah as it relates to Arabic script writing. Training in calligraphy, from recognizing hijaiyah letters to creating artwork, helps students increase creativity and preserve Islamic art. This research differs in location and implementation context, although the objectives remain the same (Wulandari et al., 2022).

Based on these prior studies, it is evident that calligraphy has already been implemented in various Islamic boarding schools and madrasahs, including PP. Wali Songo Sukajadi. The researcher chose this location because the institution has a mandatory extracurricular program for all students, providing them with opportunities to enhance creativity. Without such structured activities and the guidance of dedicated teachers, students' latent talents would be difficult to realize. Although BakMin was established in 2013, it experienced a period of inactivity in 2015, but was reactivated in 2018. Since then, significant progress has been observed, particularly in the calligraphy division.

METHOD

This study was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Wali Songo Sukajadi. The aim of this research is to describe the teacher's efforts in developing the creativity of new students through calligraphy extracurricular activities.

The research was carried out over four months, from December 2023 to March 2024, encompassing observation, proposal drafting, supervision, and data compilation.

The study employs a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis. It involves systematically collecting data, categorizing, presenting, validating, and drawing conclusions. The field research method used is aligned with Dedy Mulyana's view that field research is a type of study that observes phenomena within a natural setting where the primary data are obtained directly from the field.

The data collection techniques include: 1) Observation, the researcher directly observed how teachers made efforts to develop the creativity of new students through calligraphy extracurricular activities and monitored the process and outcomes of each weekly meeting. 2) Interview, interviews were conducted to obtain detailed information from relevant individuals involved in the program, including the head of the BakMin calligraphy division, new students participating in the calligraphy extracurricular, and the

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calligraphy instructor. 3) Documentation, documentation served to reinforce the findings, including records such as journals, photos, activity logs, and other supporting materials from PP. Wali Songo Sukajadi.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

History of the Institution

Pondok Pesantren Wali Songo, founded in 1983 by KH. Maulana Imam Syuhadak, is located in Sukajadi Village, Lampung Tengah. It has transitioned from a traditional pesantren (salaf) to a more modern administrative and organizational system, although classical teaching methods are still preserved. This transformation aims to produce students who are spiritually grounded yet capable of adapting to contemporary society.

Vision and Mission

The vision is to become an Islamic educational institution that produces moral, knowledgeable, competitive, and professional leaders rooted in pesantren values. The mission includes nurturing devout and independent Muslim youth with both religious and general knowledge to create intellectual Islamic scholars.

Description of BakMin Participants and Structure

The BakMin extracurricular program is managed by student leaders selected based on their competence and experience. They are responsible for overseeing various branches, including calligraphy. Central and division-level structures collaborate to ensure smooth operations of the program.

BakMin's implementation is supported by proper management, teacher involvement, and structured student placement. Students are grouped according to their level beginners and mushaf (advanced). This study focuses solely on the beginner level, consisting of eight students: six female and two male students.

The teachers are alumni of the pesantren, selected for their qualifications and achievements. The calligraphy teacher appointed for this period is a national champion of Musabaqah Khattil Qur'an (MKQ), which greatly enhances the program's quality and impact.

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Implementation of Calligraphy Extracurricular Activities

Calligraphy training is conducted once a week for two hours. The activities are divided into three stages: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. During preparation, students are introduced to the basics of Arabic calligraphy, especially khat naskhi, using standard tools such as calligraphy markers, rulers, and guidebooks. Implementation involves practicing letter formation and applying styles into structured compositions. In the final stage, students create their own calligraphy works for evaluation.



Figure 1.1 The Process and Outcome of Learning Calligraphy in a Beginner Class

The learning process is supported by available facilities and regular scheduling, which was previously a challenge. Prior to 2021, the teaching was less structured, with limited types of khat taught and poor student engagement. As stated in interviews with the BakMin leadership, the teaching method was previously limited to basic styles and lacked appropriate infrastructure.

Since the restructuring in 2021, students are taught multiple styles, including decorative and contemporary calligraphy. This enables students to gradually develop from learning to sketch lines to understanding the use of tools, and eventually producing various types of calligraphy (Yuliani & Imsiyah, 2017). Santri are grouped based on their ability level new students are enrolled in beginner classes, while advanced students enter mushaf classes.

The training is conducted with appropriate procedures to enhance psychomotor skills, including repetitive exercises, sketching techniques, stroke control, and application of artistic composition. According to Oktavera and Abdullah (2021), this method aligns with the concept that consistent calligraphy training significantly boosts creative writing abilities.

Teacher's Efforts in Developing Creativity

The creativity of students in the calligraphy BakMin program has shown marked improvement, particularly in 2021, following comprehensive efforts by the calligraphy

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teacher. Based on data gathered from interviews, the teacher's efforts include understanding student characteristics, offering diverse and enjoyable activities, assigning homework with rewards, and providing personal motivation through storytelling.

The calligraphy teacher emphasized the importance of identifying students' individual traits in order to adapt teaching strategies. To prevent monotony, the teacher integrates creativity and fun elements into practice sessions. Homework and assessments are conducted regularly, with simple rewards used to increase student engagement. The teacher also shares inspirational experiences to build student motivation.

In the words of one student, Shinta Zahra, the activities have helped her feel more enthusiastic about learning calligraphy. She mentioned that the teacher's guidance and encouragement gave her the motivation to keep improving her skills.

The BakMin chairperson highlighted that while the calligraphy division existed since 2016, it had faced significant challenges in 2019 due to limited facilities, untrained instructors, and unstructured scheduling. Following major improvements in 2021, the program has grown rapidly, particularly with the involvement of an expert alumnus instructor.

Furthermore, student works have been showcased during internal competitions held at the pesantren, such as the Haul Romo Kyai event. This event includes musabaqah (competitions) where students display their skills in various Islamic arts, including calligraphy. Participation in such events serves as motivation for students to further develop their abilities and strive for excellence.

Based on the teacher's assessment, 75% of the beginner students have demonstrated significant improvement in creativity and artistic skill. The remaining 25% will continue to receive guidance in the following academic year, highlighting the long-term nature of creativity development.

The creative outcomes of students are not only evident in their class performance but also in their participation in external competitions at the sub district and district levels. These activities have become a benchmark for the success of the calligraphy extracurricular program at PP. Wali Songo Sukajadi.

CONCLUSION

The teacher's continuous and structured efforts during the calligraphy extracurricular sessions significantly helped new students at PP. Wali Songo Sukajadi

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enhance their creativity. Instruction began with basic writing skills and progressed to more advanced techniques. Tasks and rewards motivated students to engage more actively. The teacher's motivational strategies inspired enthusiasm among students throughout the learning process.

BakMin has proven to be an effective medium for fostering creativity, especially among new students. Annual projects and continuous practice, guided by competent teachers, resulted in a 75% increase in creativity development. Students' works were appreciated by teachers and committee members, further reinforcing their motivation to improve in the future.

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