



STUDENT REFLECTIONS ON THE ISLAMIC EDUCATION COURSE: EVALUATING PEDAGOGICAL READINESS AND LEARNING CHALLENGES

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Abstract: This study aimed to describe the reflections of Islamic Education students on the implementation of the “Islamic Education Curriculum and Instruction for Senior High School” course, and to identify aspects of learning that need to be strengthened. The study employed a mixed-methods approach with an embedded design. Data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire, structured interviews, and documentation. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using percentages, while qualitative data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model. The results indicated that students provided positive reflections on the course implementation. A total of 96.9% of students stated that the lectures provided meaningful learning experiences and helped them understand Islamic Education instruction in high school, while 100% of students assessed the material as relevant to the needs of prospective Islamic Education teachers. However, students still faced challenges in understanding the material, connecting theory with practice, and building self-confidence during teaching practice. Students also expressed a desire for enhanced teaching practice, the use of educational media and technology, as well as more interactive and contextual learning. This study underscored the importance of reflective and experience-based learning in the education of prospective Islamic Education teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

The training of prospective Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in higher education institutions faces increasingly complex challenges amid the development of digital technology and the demands of 21st-century learning. These conditions require that IRE education focus not only on mastery of religious content, but also on strengthening students’ pedagogical competencies, reflective skills, and professional readiness as future educators (Alam & Ogawa,

2024 and Succarie, 2024). In the context of teacher education, the ability to integrate subject matter expertise, pedagogy, and an understanding of students is a key factor in shaping the quality of learning. This is also in line with Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, which stipulates that teachers must possess pedagogical, professional, and social competencies, as well as personal integrity, as the foundation of educational professionalism. Furthermore, Regulation of the Minister of Research, Technology, and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia No. 55 of 2017 also emphasizes the importance of learning that integrates mastery of subject matter, pedagogical practice, and reflective experience in the education of prospective teachers. Therefore, learning experiences during college play a strategic role in shaping the professional readiness of prospective Islamic Education teachers (Oktam et al., 2025 and Amaliah et al., 2024).

In the education of prospective Islamic Education teachers, the strengthening of these competencies is achieved through various education courses, one of which is the course "Study of Islamic Education Content and Instruction for High School" in the Islamic Education Study Program at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, UIN Palangka Raya. This course not only covers the substance of high school-level Islamic Education curriculum but is also designed to equip students with the various competencies required of prospective Islamic Education teachers, ranging from the analysis of learning outcomes, the formulation of learning objectives, the sequence of learning objectives, instructional modules, the selection of teaching strategies and media, assessment, to teaching practice through microteaching activities. Nevertheless, the course still places greater emphasis on achieving outcomes such as completing instructional materials and demonstrating teaching skills rather than on reflecting on students' learning experiences during the course. As a result, students tend to focus on meeting academic requirements and achieving final grades, while opportunities to identify their strengths, weaknesses, difficulties, and needs for developing pedagogical competencies through reflection have not been optimally facilitated. This situation not only has the potential to limit students' understanding of the meaning of their learning experiences but also affects their ability to integrate subject matter mastery, pedagogical decision-making, and teaching skills in a more reflective manner when facing real-world learning situations.

This situation is also supported by various research findings (Hill et al., 2023; Mensah et al., 2024) indicating that the implementation of teaching in education courses still faces a number of challenges. In some cases, higher education instruction still tends to focus on completing academic assignments and mastering theoretical concepts rather than strengthening reflective pedagogical experiences. As a result, students often understand learning concepts theoretically but are not yet fully able to implement them in their teaching practice. Research by Reimers (2024) and Saini et al. (2023) showed that prospective teacher students experience obstacles when implementing teaching practice at school, such as in managing classes, time management and using

variations in learning methods. Similar findings were reported by Raman et al. (2024) and Reimers (2024b), who noted that students still struggle to implement diverse teaching methods and utilize instructional media. These conditions are also related to the aspect of self-efficacy in the learning process. Ariyani et al., (2025); Taufik et al. (2025) and Woodcock et al. (2025) found that low self-efficacy can affect consistency and readiness in participating in the learning process. These conditions indicate that students' pedagogical readiness has not yet developed optimally.

This phenomenon highlights the importance of understanding students' learning experiences through a reflective approach. Reflection is understood as a process of critical thinking about learning experiences to gain new insights and achieve continuous improvement (Plack & Driscoll, 2024; Taabudillah et al., 2025). Through reflection, students not only assess what they have learned but also gain an understanding of the learning process, the challenges they face, and the need to develop their competencies as future educators. Reflection is also a crucial component of experiential learning and adult learning, which position students as active participants in the learning process (Tournaki et al., 2024 and Bayram, 2024). In teacher education, reflective ability is considered important because it helps students develop pedagogical awareness, evaluative skills, and a critical attitude toward teaching practices.

Various previous studies have shown that reflection has a positive impact on the learning process in higher education. Hannon et al. (2024) and Ponomariovienė & Jakavonytė-Staškuvienė (2024) explained that reflective activities help students understand the material more deeply and develop more effective learning strategies. That reflection activities at the end of lectures were effective in helping students understand learning in higher education. Furthermore, Bui & Yarsi (2023) and Aira & Doom (2025) showed that the implementation of the GO-DEEP reflection model helped students gain a more meaningful understanding of their learning experiences, build knowledge, and facilitate the learning process more effectively. These findings reinforce the idea that reflection serves not only as a means of evaluation but also as a learning strategy that encourages meaningful learning and the development of student competencies. In the context of Islamic education, research by Arraziq & Nurchalis (2025) and Plack & Driscoll (2024) showed that reflection by Islamic Education students contributes to strengthening the learning experiences and pedagogical competencies of prospective teachers.

The urgency of this study stems from the need to evaluate the pedagogical readiness of prospective Islamic Religious Education teachers amidst the complex demands of 21st-century learning, where academic coursework often remains focused on formal academic achievement rather than fostering reflective and practical skills. The novelty of this study lies in its direct utilization of student reflections as the primary evaluation instrument to assess the implementation of the "SMA Islamic Education Content and Learning Studies" course, unlike previous studies that generally positioned reflection merely as a dependent variable to measure learning outcomes or general reflective thinking

skills. By integrating a mixed-methods approach, this study successfully reveals a critical gap between theoretical conceptual mastery and the practical challenges of pedagogical transformation in the field. Such as self-efficacy, technology-based module development, and teaching method variations thereby providing a novel empirical contribution to the formulation of an integrated, contextual, and experiential learning-based Islamic Education teacher education curriculum.

Nevertheless, most previous studies have focused on the impact of reflection on learning outcomes or the development of reflective skills in general. Studies that specifically examine student reflection as the primary source for understanding learning experiences in Islamic Education courses remain relatively limited, particularly in the course on Content and Instruction in Islamic Education for High School. In fact, student reflections can serve as a crucial source of evaluation for developing teacher education that is more relevant to the pedagogical needs of schools. Given this context, this study aims to describe the reflections of students in the Islamic Education program regarding the implementation of the “Study of Islamic Education Content and Instruction for Senior High School” course at the Faculty of Islamic Teacher Training and Education (FTIK), UIN Palangka Raya, and to identify aspects of learning that need to be strengthened. This study offers a novel approach by using student reflections as the primary source for understanding learning experiences and evaluating Islamic Education education courses in a contextual manner.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods approach using an embedded design, which combines quantitative and qualitative data in an unbalanced manner, with the qualitative approach serving as the primary method (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This design was chosen to gain a comprehensive understanding of students’ reflections on the implementation of the “Study of Islamic Education Content and Instruction for Senior High School” course, while quantitative data served as supplementary information to provide an overview of students’ learning experiences. The study was conducted in the Islamic Education Study Program, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Education, UIN Palangka Raya. The research subjects consisted of 32 students who had taken the “Study of Islamic Education Content and Instruction for Senior High School” course, as well as several students selected through purposive sampling to participate in in-depth interviews based on their full engagement in the course and their willingness to reflect on their learning experiences.

Data collection was conducted through a closed-ended questionnaire using a Likert scale to measure learning experiences, understanding of the material, learning motivation, and the conduct of lectures, as well as structured interviews to explore students’ reflections on their learning experiences, the challenges they faced, and aspects of learning that need to be strengthened. Secondary data were obtained through documentation in the form of Semester Learning Plans (SLPs),

teaching materials, and other supporting documents. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of percentages (Sugiyono, 2023), while qualitative data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles et.al (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Pilcher & Cortazzi, 2024), which includes data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification. To enhance the credibility of the findings, source triangulation was conducted by comparing interview results among participants with the documentary data.

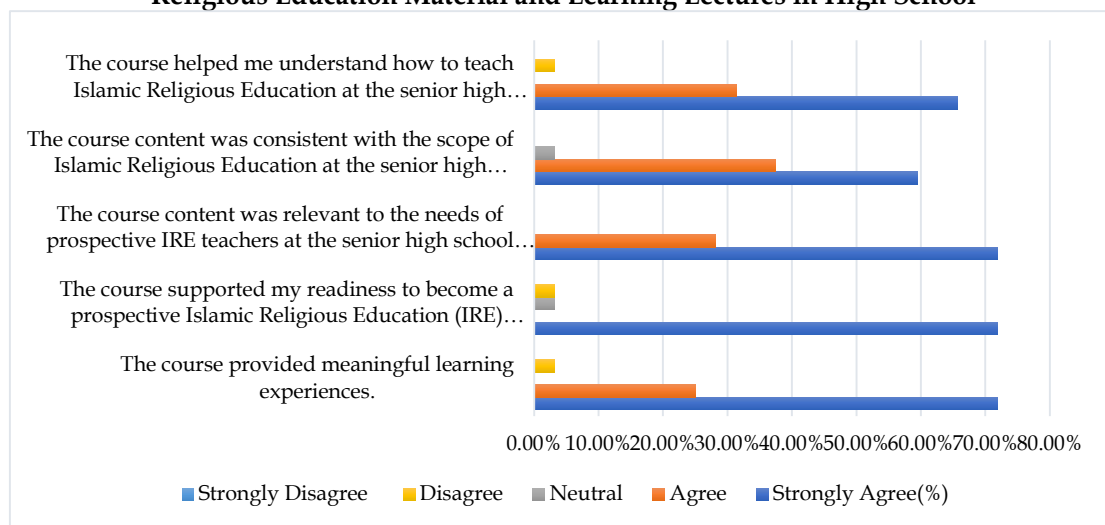
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Student Reflections on the Implementation of Lectures, Course Content, and Islamic Education Instruction

Students' reflections on the implementation of the "Islamic Religious Education Curriculum and Instruction" course at the high school level are a crucial component of this study for understanding how students interpret the learning experiences they gained while taking the course. These reflections encompass learning experiences, the relevance of the course material, pedagogical understanding, and the course's contribution to students' readiness as prospective Islamic Religious Education teachers. A depiction of the percentage of student responses in the lecture is presented in Graph 1.

Graph 1. Percentage of Student Responses to Reflections on the Implementation of Islamic Religious Education Material and Learning Lectures in High School



The survey results presented in the graph above show that, in general, students gave positive evaluations of the implementation of the "Study of High School Islamic Education Content and Instruction" course. Regarding the learning experience indicator, 31 out of 32 students (96.9%) stated that the course provided a meaningful learning experience, consisting of 23 students (71.9%) who selected "strongly agree" and 8 students (25.0%) who selected "agree." Only 1 student (3.1%) stated that they "disagree." Regarding the indicator of readiness as prospective high school Islamic Education teachers, 30 out of 32 students (93.8%) gave positive responses, with 23 students (71.9%) selecting

"strongly agree" and 7 students (21.9%) selecting "agree." Meanwhile, 1 student (3.1%) gave a "neutral" response, and 1 student (3.1%) stated they "disagree."

Similar results were also observed regarding the relevance of the course material. All respondents (32 out of 32 students; 100%) assessed that the material studied was appropriate for the needs of prospective high school Islamic Education teachers, with 23 students (71.9%) stating they strongly agreed and 9 students (28.1%) stating they agreed. In addition, 31 out of 32 students (96.9%) assessed that the course material was appropriate for the scope of Islamic Education at the high school level, with 19 students (59.4%) selecting "strongly agree" and 12 students (37.5%) selecting "agree," while 1 student (3.1%) responded "somewhat agree." Regarding the indicator of understanding Islamic Education instruction at the high school level, 31 out of 32 students (96.9%) stated that the course material helped them understand how to teach Islamic Education at the high school level, with 21 students (65.6%) selecting "strongly agree" and 10 students (31.3%) selecting "agree." Only 1 student (3.1%) stated that they disagreed.

Overall, the survey results show that all indicators received a majority of responses in the "agree" and "strongly agree" categories. The percentage of positive responses ranged from 93.8% to 100%, while "somewhat agree" and "disagree" responses were given by only 1–2 students for some indicators. This pattern indicates that the majority of students view the course as having successfully provided a relevant learning experience, supported their understanding of the material, and helped build their readiness as prospective Islamic Education teachers.

Based on all these indicators, it can be concluded that approximately 30 out of 32 students demonstrated a good level of initial readiness as prospective Islamic Education teachers. This is reflected in the consistent positive responses across nearly all indicators related to learning experiences, the relevance of the material, pedagogical understanding, and teaching readiness. However, there were still 1–2 students who responded "somewhat agree" or "disagree" on several indicators. These findings indicate that although the majority of students already possess good pedagogical understanding and readiness, further reinforcement through more reflective learning experiences, ongoing teaching practice, and feedback is still needed to ensure that pedagogical readiness develops more evenly among all students. Table 1 presents a summary of student responses regarding the implementation of the "High School Islamic Education Curriculum and Instruction" course.

Table 1. Students' Responses to the Implementation of the "Study of Islamic Education Content and Instruction for Senior High School" Course (n = 32)

Statement	Category				
	Strongly Agree n (%)	Agree n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Strongly Disagree n (%)
The course provided meaningful learning experiences.	23 (71.9%)	8 (25.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.1%)	0 (0.0%)
The course supported my	23 (71.9%)	7 (21.9%)	1 (3.1%)	1 (3.1%)	0 (0.0%)

readiness to become a prospective Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teacher at the senior high school level.					
The course content was relevant to the needs of prospective IRE teachers at the senior high school level.	23 (71.9%)	9 (28.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
The course content was consistent with the scope of Islamic Religious Education at the senior high school level.	19 (59.4%)	12 (37.5%)	1 (3.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
The course helped me understand how to teach Islamic Religious Education at the senior high school level.	21 (65.6%)	10 (31.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.1%)	0 (0.0%)

Note: SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree, n = Number of respondents.

Based on the response trends shown in Table 1, the implementation of the “Study of Islamic Education Content and Instruction” course for high school students received consistently positive ratings across all measured indicators. The predominance of responses in the “agree” and “strongly agree” categories indicates that the course has provided a learning experience that supports mastery of the subject matter, pedagogical understanding, and the development of students’ competencies as prospective Islamic Education teachers. These findings also show that the course’s learning outcomes have been positively received by the majority of students. Overall, the results across all indicators show that the majority of respondents (30 out of 32 students) possess good initial pedagogical readiness as prospective Islamic Education teachers. This readiness is reflected in the students’ ability to understand the scope of Islamic Education material at the high school level, relate the material to the classroom learning process, and recognize the basic principles of designing and implementing instruction. Nevertheless, a small number of students still demonstrated suboptimal readiness on several indicators. This suggests that strengthening teaching practice, providing feedback, and engaging in reflective learning activities are still necessary to ensure that the development of pedagogical competencies proceeds more evenly among all students.

In general, the informants felt that the course “Study of High School Islamic Education Content and Instruction” not only helped them understand the substance of Islamic Education content but also provided learning experiences related to teaching practices in schools and helped build their readiness as prospective teachers. One of the informants explained that the course not only improved his understanding of the material but also provided practical experience that helped him understand the learning process at the high school

level. This view is consistent with that of another informant, who believes that this course provides relevant preparation for aspiring Islamic Education teachers, particularly through experience in designing instructional materials, selecting teaching methods and media, and developing teaching skills. These findings were also corroborated by another informant, who emphasized that the lectures provided a more contextual learning experience regarding the implementation of Islamic Education in schools.

While taking the course on Curriculum and Instruction in Islamic Religious Education for High School, I felt that I gained a lot of new experiences and knowledge, particularly regarding how to teach Islamic Religious Education in a way that is effective and engaging for high school students (Interview with MA, May 9, 2026).

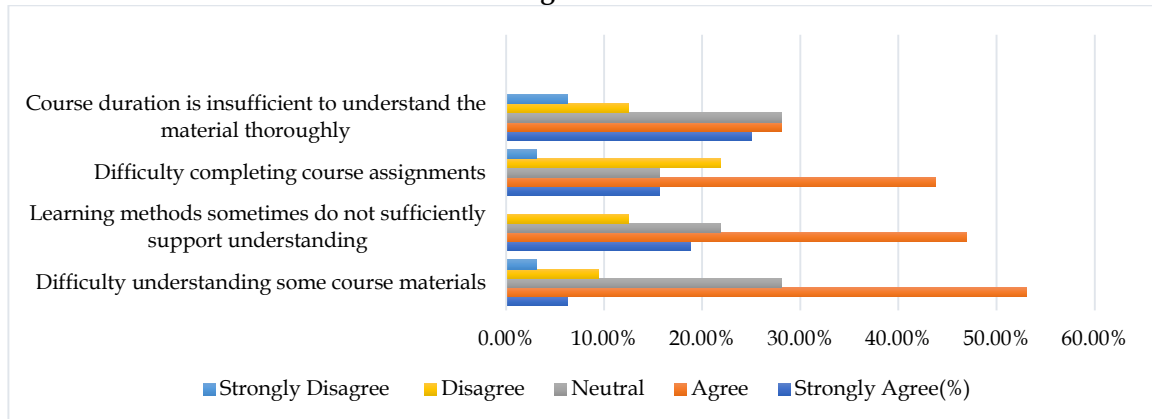
Based on the results of these three interviews, there appears to be a shared view that the “Study of Islamic Education Content and Instruction for High School” course contributes to the development of students’ competencies as prospective Islamic Education teachers. All three informants emphasized that the course is not only oriented toward mastery of the subject matter but also provides experience in understanding teaching practices, developing instructional materials, selecting teaching strategies, and building confidence in teaching. The shared perspective of these three informants indicates consistency in the interview data, thereby reinforcing the quantitative findings regarding students’ pedagogical readiness.

The research findings indicate that students provided positive feedback on the implementation of the “Study of Islamic Education Curriculum and Instruction for High School” course at the Faculty of Islamic Teacher Training and Education, UIN Palangka Raya. The course was evaluated as having provided a meaningful learning experience, strengthened students’ understanding of Islamic Education curriculum and instruction at the high school level, and fostered initial pedagogical readiness as prospective Islamic Education teachers. On the other hand, the results of this study also confirm that strengthening practical experience, learning reflection, and providing feedback are still necessary so that learning in this course can produce more comprehensive pedagogical readiness for all students.

Challenges in Teaching and Learning Islamic Education

The implementation of the “Study of Islamic Education Curriculum and Instruction for High School” course, while providing a positive learning experience, still faces several challenges experienced by students during the learning process. These challenges relate to understanding the material, teaching methods, completing assignments, and limited class time. The following graph shows the percentage of challenges faced by students in their Islamic Education coursework and learning.

Graph 2. Challenges Faced by Students in the “Study of Islamic Education Course Content and Teaching Methods” Course



The results in the graph above show that 19 out of 32 students (59.4%) stated that they still have difficulty understanding some of the course material; of these, 2 students (6.3%) selected “strongly agree” and 17 students (53.1%) selected “agree.” Meanwhile, 9 students (28.1%) responded “somewhat agree,” and 4 students (12.5%)—comprising 3 students (9.4%) who stated they “disagree” and 1 student (3.1%) who stated they “strongly disagree”—were in the “disagree” category. Furthermore, regarding teaching methods, 21 out of 32 students (65.7%) assessed that the teaching methods used sometimes did not fully help them understand the material; 6 students (18.8%) strongly agreed and 15 students (46.9%) agreed, while 7 students (21.9%) responded “somewhat,” and 4 students (12.5%) stated they disagreed.

Challenges were also identified in completing course assignments. A total of 19 out of 32 students (59.4%) reported having difficulty completing the assigned tasks, with 5 students (15.6%) stating they strongly agreed and 14 students (43.8%) stating they agreed. Meanwhile, 5 students (15.6%) responded “somewhat agree,” and 8 students (25.0%)—comprising 7 students (21.9%) who disagreed and 1 student (3.1%) who strongly disagreed—expressed other views. In addition, 17 out of 32 students (53.1%) felt that the time allocated for lectures was insufficient to understand the material in depth. This consisted of 8 students (25%) who strongly agreed and 9 students (28.1%) who agreed. Meanwhile, 9 students (28.1%) responded “somewhat agree,” and 6 students (18.8%)—comprising 4 students (12.5%) who disagreed and 2 students (6.3%) who strongly disagreed expressed their views. The following is a summary of the survey results regarding the challenges students faced while attending classes.

Table 2. Students' Perceptions of Challenges in the Implementation of the Study of Islamic Education Content and Instruction for Senior High School Course

Statement	Category				
	Strongly Agree n (%)	Agree n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Strongly Disagree n (%)
Difficulty understanding some course materials	2 (6.3%)	17 (53.1%)	9 (28.1%)	3 (9.4%)	1 (3.1%)
Learning methods	6 (18.8%)	15 (46.9%)	7 (21.9%)	4 (12.5%)	0 (0.0%)

sometimes do not sufficiently support understanding						
Difficulty completing course assignments	5 (15.6%)	14 (43.8%)	5 (15.6%)	7 (21.9%)	1 (3.1%)	
Course duration is insufficient to understand the material thoroughly	8 (25%)	9 (28.1%)	9 (28.1%)	4 (12.5%)	2 (6.3%)	

Notes: SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree, n = Number of respondents.

Based on Table 2, it is evident that the challenges most frequently reported by students relate to teaching methods, followed by understanding the material, completing course assignments, and limited study time. This pattern suggests that the challenges faced by students are not solely due to the complexity of the material but are also related to a learning process that has not yet fully enabled students to connect conceptual understanding with actual teaching practice. Although in the previous section most students gave positive evaluations of the course implementation, these findings indicate that there are still aspects of learning that need to be strengthened so that the learning process can more optimally support students' pedagogical readiness.

These quantitative findings were further explored through interview results to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the types of challenges students faced while attending classes. In general, the informants revealed that the challenges they experienced were not only related to understanding the material but also to applying theory to teaching practice, developing instructional materials, and their confidence when conducting teaching practice. One informant explained that the difficulties encountered were primarily related to understanding certain fairly complex course materials, developing instructional materials, and selecting methods appropriate to the characteristics of the students. This view is consistent with that of another informant (other student), who noted that the complexity of the material means students need more time to understand it before they can apply it in their teaching practice. These findings were also corroborated by another informant, who pointed out that teaching practicum assignments—particularly those involving the creation of instructional videos—presented a unique challenge because they required both pedagogical readiness and self-confidence when delivering the material.

The main challenge I faced was when I was asked to create a teaching demonstration video; I was a little worried that I wouldn't be able to perform it smoothly (Interview with RA, May 9, 2026).

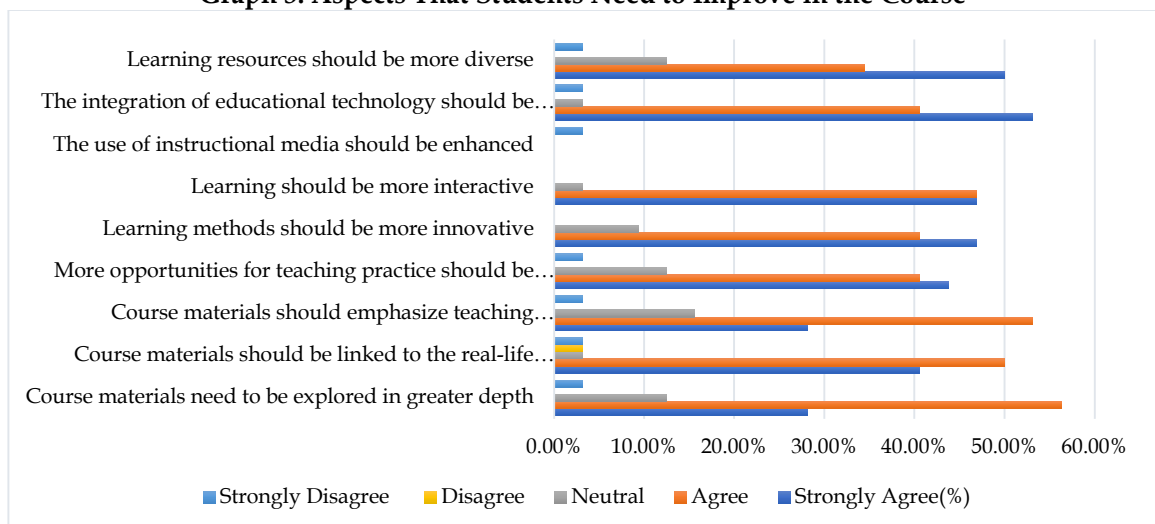
Based on the results of these three interviews, it is evident that the students shared similar experiences regarding various challenges they faced while attending classes. All three informants revealed that the challenges they faced were not only related to understanding the material but also included the ability

to apply theory to teaching practice, develop teaching materials, select appropriate teaching strategies, and build self-confidence during teaching practice. The shared perspectives of these three informants indicate consistency in the findings, thereby reinforcing the survey results regarding the aspects that remain obstacles in the implementation of the course. In general, the research findings indicate that the implementation of the “Study of Islamic Education Content and Instruction” course in high school still faces several challenges related to understanding the material, applying theory to teaching practice, developing instructional materials, managing teaching methods, and building confidence in teaching practice. These findings indicate that the development of this course should not only focus on strengthening mastery of the subject matter but also on providing learning experiences that are more practical, reflective, and practice-oriented, thereby supporting the more comprehensive development of students’ pedagogical competencies as prospective Islamic Education teachers.

Aspects of Instruction That Need to Be Strengthened in the Course

Students’ reflections on the implementation of the “High School Islamic Education Curriculum and Instruction” course indicate that, in addition to various positive learning experiences, there are still several aspects that need to be strengthened to improve the quality of learning. These aspects include deeper exploration of the subject matter, strengthening of teaching practices, the use of instructional media and technology, and the development of more interactive and contextual learning. Identifying these aspects is crucial as a basis for evaluating and developing the course so that it better aligns with the needs of students as prospective Islamic Education teachers. The following graph shows the percentages of aspects that students need to improve in the course.

Graph 3. Aspects That Students Need to Improve in the Course



Based on the survey results, 27 out of 32 students (84.4%) stated that the course material still needs to be expanded to make it more comprehensive; of these, 9 students (28.1%) strongly agreed and 18 students (56.3%) agreed, while 4

students (12.5%) selected “somewhat,” and only 1 student (3.1%) selected “strongly disagree.” Furthermore, 29 out of 32 students (90.6%) felt that the learning material should be more closely linked to the real-life experiences of high school students. This included 13 students (40.6%) who strongly agreed and 16 students (50%) who agreed. Meanwhile, 1 student (3.1%) responded “somewhat agree,” and 2 students (6.2%) responded “disagree” or “strongly disagree.” These findings indicate that students expect learning that not only reinforces conceptual mastery but also provides a more contextual understanding of how Islamic Education content is implemented in actual classroom practice.

The students also felt that their teaching practicum experience still needed to be strengthened. A total of 26 out of 32 students (81.2%) stated that the course material should be more focused on the practical aspects of teaching Islamic Education in high school. Of these, 9 students (28.1%) strongly agreed, 17 students (53.1%) agreed, 5 students (15.6%) somewhat agreed, and only 1 student (3.1%) disagreed. Furthermore, 27 out of 32 students (84.4%) wanted more teaching practice opportunities during their studies. This included 14 students (43.8%) who strongly agreed, 13 students (40.6%) who agreed, 3 students (12.5%) who were somewhat in agreement, and only 1 student (3.1%) who disagreed. In addition, 28 out of 32 students (87.5%) stated that teaching methods need to be made more innovative. This included 15 students (46.9%) who strongly agreed, 13 students (40.6%) who agreed, 3 students (9.4%) who were neutral, and only 1 student (3.1%) who disagreed. Meanwhile, 30 out of 32 students (93.8%) believed that learning should more actively involve students. This included 15 students (46.9%) who strongly agreed, 15 students (46.9%) who agreed, 3 students (3.1%) who were somewhat in agreement, and only 1 student (3.1%) who strongly disagreed.

Regarding the use of learning media and technology, the majority of students also gave positive feedback on the need to strengthen these aspects. A total of 28 out of 32 students (87.5%) stated that the use of learning media needs to be improved, with 16 students (50%) strongly agreeing, 12 students (37.5%) agreeing, 3 students (9.4%) somewhat agreeing, and only 1 student (3.1%) strongly disagreeing. Furthermore, 30 out of 32 students (93.7%) felt that the use of technology in lectures needs to be further developed. This included 17 students (53.1%) who strongly agreed, 13 students (40.6%) who agreed, 1 student (3.1%) who responded “somewhat,” and 1 student (3.1%) who strongly disagreed. Meanwhile, 27 out of 32 students (84.4%) hoped for more varied learning resources, such as instructional videos, modules, scientific articles, and examples of learning tools. This consisted of 16 students (50%) who strongly agreed, 11 students (34.4%) who agreed, 4 students (12.5%) who were neutral, and 1 student (3.1%) who strongly disagreed. A summary of student responses regarding aspects of the course that need to be strengthened is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Aspects of the Course that Need Further Strengthening

Statement	Category				
	Strongly Agree n (%)	Agree n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Strongly Disagree n (%)
Course materials need to be explored in greater depth	9 (28.1%)	18 (56.3%)	4 (12.5%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.1%)
Course materials should be linked to the real-life context of senior high school students	13 (40.6%)	16 (50%)	1 (3.1%)	1 (3.1%)	1 (3.1%)
Course materials should emphasize teaching practice in Islamic Education	9 (28.1%)	17 (53.1%)	5 (15.6%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.1%)
More opportunities for teaching practice should be provided	14 (43.8%)	13 (40.6%)	4 (12.5%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.1%)
Learning methods should be more innovative	15 (46.9%)	13 (40.6%)	3 (9.4%)	1 (3.1%)	0 (0%)
Learning should be more interactive	15 (46.9%)	15 (46.9%)	1 (3.1%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.1%)
The use of instructional media should be enhanced	16 (50%)	12 (37.5%)	3 (9.4%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.1%)
The integration of educational technology should be improved	17 (53.1%)	13 (40.6%)	1 (3.1%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.1%)
Learning resources should be more diverse	16 (50%)	11 (34.4%)	4 (12.5%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.1%)

Notes: SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree, n = Number of respondents.

Based on Table 3, it is evident that the need to strengthen lectures is not focused on a single specific aspect but encompasses the entire learning process. The patterns in student responses indicate that the aspects most in need of attention are increasing the interactivity of learning, optimizing the use of technology, strengthening the use of learning media, and linking course material to real-world contexts in schools. These findings suggest that students expect a learning process that is not only oriented toward mastering course material but also provides a learning experience that is more contextual, practical, and relevant to the demands of the Islamic Education teaching profession. Furthermore, students' high expectations regarding the strengthening of teaching practice indicate that they view practical experience as a crucial component in developing pedagogical competencies. Thus, course development should not only focus on delivering academic content but also provide students with greater opportunities to integrate their knowledge, teaching skills, and reflective experiences through more active, student-centered learning activities.

One informant noted that the aspect that most needs to be strengthened is the balance between theoretical knowledge and teaching practice, so that students have more opportunities to apply the concepts they have learned. This view was reinforced by another informant, who noted that the use of media and learning technologies needs to be further developed so that the learning process becomes more engaging and better aligned with the characteristics of today's students. These findings were also supported by another one informants who emphasized the importance of implementing learning practices and using a variety of learning media and methods to make learning more interactive. Based on the results of these three interviews, a consistent pattern emerges: students no longer need only reinforcement in mastering course material but also expect learning experiences that connect theory with practical teaching in schools. Students believe that more intensive teaching practice, the use of learning media and technology, and the presentation of contextual examples can help improve both their conceptual understanding and their pedagogical skills as prospective Islamic Education teachers.

In general, the research findings indicate that the development of the "Study of Islamic Education Content and Instruction" course for high school teachers should not focus solely on mastery of instructional content but should also strengthen instructional design that provides authentic learning experiences through teaching practice, the use of instructional media and technology, more innovative methods, and ongoing reflective activities. Strengthening these aspects is expected to improve students' pedagogical readiness, bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and teaching practice, and prepare future Islamic Education teachers to be more adaptable to the learning needs in schools.

Discussion

Student Reflection as a Learning Experience for Prospective Islamic Education Teachers

The results of the study indicate that students provided generally positive feedback regarding the implementation of the "Study of High School Islamic Education Content and Instruction" course. Quantitatively, nearly all indicators received positive responses from the majority of students, with approval rates ranging from 93.8% to 100%. These findings indicate that most students assessed the course as having provided a meaningful learning experience, material relevant to the needs of prospective Islamic Education teachers, and as contributing to the development of pedagogical understanding and teaching readiness at the high school level. Conceptually, these findings can be explained through the perspective of reflective learning, which views reflection as an active process in constructing meaning from learning experiences. Through the reflective process, students integrate their learning experiences, knowledge, and self-evaluation, thereby enabling them to connect theory with practice more effectively. Research by Liu et al., (2025) and Rosen et al. (2024) indicated that scaffolded reflective learning enhances reflective abilities as well as the quality of prospective teachers' academic and professional performance. These findings are

also consistent with the study by Nurhidayah & Wirza (2024) and Tiainen et al. (2024), which demonstrated that reflective practices contribute to improvements in teaching competencies, self-awareness, and professional readiness among prospective teachers. Furthermore, Arraziq & Nurchalis (2025) and Plack & Driscoll (2024) found that reflection in teaching practice contributes to strengthening pedagogical competencies, shaping professional identity, and developing ethical awareness among prospective Islamic Religious Education teachers. These consistent findings indicate that learning experiences accompanied by a reflective process play a crucial role in strengthening students' professional readiness as prospective teachers.

The findings indicate that students' learning experiences are determined not only by their conceptual mastery of the subject matter but also by their engagement in authentic learning activities. This is likely due to the fact that the "Study of High School Islamic Education Content and Instruction" course is designed to integrate subject matter mastery with pedagogical practice through the development of learning outcomes, learning objectives, teaching modules, instructional media, assessments, and teaching practice. This series of activities provides students with the opportunity to apply the knowledge they have acquired in learning situations that resemble actual teaching practices in schools. Therefore, reflection is a crucial component of this course, as it enables students to review their learning experiences, evaluate the pedagogical decisions they have made, and identify their strengths as well as areas that still need development as prospective Islamic Education teachers. This process fosters the development of pedagogical awareness, boosts self-confidence, and strengthens students' professional readiness to take on teaching responsibilities at the high school level. Consequently, the positive evaluations provided by students are influenced not only by their mastery of the subject matter but also by a learning experience that offers continuous opportunities to connect theory with practice.

Pedagogical Challenges in Teaching Islamic Education

The results of the study indicate that although the implementation of the "Study of Islamic Education Content and Instruction" course for high school students received positive feedback from the majority of students, there are still a number of pedagogical challenges that require attention.. These research findings indicate that the challenges faced by students are not only related to mastering the material but also to their readiness to implement pedagogical knowledge in teaching practice at school. These findings are consistent with the research by Chan (2024) and Zul et al. (2026), which shows that prospective teachers' readiness is shaped not only by practical academic experiences but also by the strengthening of self-confidence as an internal psychological factor. Several studies, such as those by Chen & Shuib (2026) and Zvereva (2023), confirm that teaching practice, microteaching, and learning simulations play a crucial role in building self-efficacy and pedagogical readiness among prospective teachers. These findings are further supported by Assalihee et al. (2024) and Coelho et al. (2025), who indicated that Islamic Education teachers

still face challenges in simultaneously integrating pedagogical aspects, subject matter mastery, and learning technology. Taken together, these findings indicate that the pedagogical readiness of prospective teachers develops through the integration of theoretical mastery, practical experience, reflective skills, and the use of technology in learning.

These findings indicate that students' pedagogical challenges arise because the learning process has not yet fully provided adequate opportunities to integrate conceptual knowledge with practical experience on an ongoing basis. The courses have provided experience in developing instructional materials, selecting learning strategies, and conducting teaching practice; however, the complexity of the competencies that prospective Islamic Education teachers must master means that some students still face difficulties when applying these concepts in real-world learning situations. This situation is also influenced by the demands of 21st-century learning, which require students not only to master subject matter and learning strategies but also to effectively utilize learning media and technology. As a result, some students still struggle to develop instructional materials, determine methods appropriate for students' characteristics, create technology-based learning media, and build self-confidence when conducting teaching practice. Thus, the pedagogical challenges identified in this study are not solely due to students' individual abilities but also stem from the complexity of professional competencies that must be developed gradually through authentic, reflective, and continuous learning experiences.

Strengthening Reflective Learning for Prospective Islamic Education Teachers

The research results show that students not only provided positive evaluations of the High School Islamic Education Curriculum and Instruction course, but also identified various aspects that need to be strengthened to build professional competence through authentic learning experiences. Conceptually, these findings align with the experiential learning theory of Rosen et al., (2024) and Demir (2024), which asserted that learning becomes more meaningful when students gain direct experience, reflect, and apply it in new situations. In line with this, studies by Tiainen et al., (2024) and Abdullah et al., (2026) explained that systematic and collaborative reflective practice plays a crucial role in shaping professional understanding, self-identity, and enhancing the quality of pre-service teachers' teaching practices. Supporting research from Haşlamani et al., (2024); Harahap & Ritonga (2023) and Mawardi et al. (2025) further demonstrated that a student-centered learning approach effectively develops pre-service teachers' skills, emotional awareness, and professional competencies. Furthermore, findings regarding the importance of technology integration are reinforced by Abdullah & Sya'roni (2026) and Adhinugraha et al. (2024), who showed that the utilization of digital media supports a learning process that is contextual, relevant, and adaptive to student characteristics. In addition, these findings aligned on the urgency of using systematically designed instructional materials to facilitate effective student learning. Overall, the synthesis between

empirical findings and supporting literature confirms that strengthening reflective learning is a crucial component in preparing prospective Islamic Education teachers capable of integrating subject matter mastery, pedagogical competence, technology integration, and continuous practical experience.

Students' high expectations regarding the strengthening of various aspects of learning indicate a shift in the learning orientation of prospective Islamic Education teachers from merely mastering academic content toward the development of more comprehensive professional competencies. This shift is believed to have occurred because students are beginning to realize that the demands of the teaching profession in today's educational landscape are becoming increasingly complex. Mastery of subject matter is no longer sufficient unless it is accompanied by the ability to connect the material to students' real-world contexts, apply appropriate teaching strategies, utilize media and technology effectively, and reflect on past teaching practices. Therefore, students expect learning that is more interactive, contextual, applied, and experience-based so that they can continuously integrate knowledge, pedagogical skills, reflective abilities, and digital competencies. A variety of learning resources, more intensive teaching practice, and the use of educational technology are viewed as complementary needs in shaping the professional readiness of prospective Islamic Education teachers. Thus, students' need for enhanced reflective learning stems from their growing awareness of the complexity of the competencies required to address the dynamics of Islamic Education instruction in schools.

The empirical and practical contributions of this study highlight the use of student reflection as an essential evaluation source for course implementation in Islamic teacher education, shifting the focus from viewing reflection merely as a tool for measuring learning outcomes to using student perceptions to identify pedagogic gaps, assess learning design, and evaluate professional readiness. Empirically, this research expands the understanding of the dynamic relationship between experiential learning, pedagogical challenges, and teacher preparedness in Islamic higher education by demonstrating how student feedback reveals critical areas needing reinforcement, such as the gap between theoretical mastery and practical classroom application. Practically, the findings emphasize the necessity of systematically incorporating reflective practices at every stage of the course, providing actionable insights for faculty and academic programs to refine curriculum design by increasing authentic teaching practice, fostering student-centered and interactive learning, optimizing digital media and technology integration, and offering diverse learning resources to better prepare prospective Islamic Education teachers for modern classroom demands.

CONCLUSION

This study showed that students' reflections on the "Subject Matter and Teaching Methods in High School Islamic Education" course underscore the importance of learning that is not only focused on mastering the subject matter but also integrates teaching practice, learning experiences, and reflection to build

the pedagogical readiness of prospective Islamic Education teachers. These findings imply that the development of the course should be directed toward learning that is more student-centered, contextual, and practice-based through the strengthening of teaching experiences, feedback, and the use of learning media and technology. Scientifically, this study reinforces the importance of reflective learning in the development of pedagogical competencies among prospective Islamic Education teachers, while practically, the results can serve as material for evaluation in the development of the course. This study is limited to a single program of study and a single course; therefore, the results cannot yet be generalized broadly. Consequently, future research is recommended to examine the implementation of reflective learning in more diverse contexts and institutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of practice-based learning models in enhancing the pedagogical competencies of prospective Islamic Education teachers.

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