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Capacity Building for Lecturers in Textbook Writing through Participatory Action Research

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Abstract

The textbook writing training conducted at Universitas Islam Negeri Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri (UIN Saizu) Purwokerto was designed to address the low rate of independently authored textbooks among lecturers, despite their extensive teaching experience. This community service program aimed to enhance lecturers' capacity to develop systematic, learning-outcome-based teaching materials aligned with the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) curriculum. Using a qualitative descriptive method with a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, the program involved 30 lecturers from various faculties. The training combined conceptual sessions, group discussions, case studies, and hands-on activities, enabling participants to draft textbook outlines and initial chapters. Data were collected through observations, documentation, questionnaires, and pre-test/post-test assessments. The results showed significant improvement, with the average score increasing from 60 (adequate) in the pre-test to 87 (excellent) in the post-test. Additional outcomes included the completion of outlines by all participants, initial drafts by more than half, and the formation of a cross-faculty author network to sustain collaboration. The program not only strengthened participants' technical writing skills but also fostered a culture of academic authorship, contributing to the availability of locally relevant textbooks. In conclusion, this initiative provides a strategic and sustainable solution to improving teaching quality and supporting institutional accreditation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Textbooks play a strategic role in supporting effective and high-quality learning processes in higher education. As one of the academic outputs, textbooks enable lecturers to design materials tailored to students' needs and enrich their teaching experience through reflective pedagogical practices. A study conducted by lecturers at Makassar University revealed that writing textbooks provides lecturers with the opportunity to design contextual learning activities that address local needs, thereby strengthening teaching relevance and student engagement [1].

At Universitas Islam Negeri Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri (UIN Saizu) Purwokerto, the urgency for textbooks authored by internal lecturers has increased in line with the implementation of the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) curriculum. This curriculum emphasizes the importance of aligning learning materials with graduate learning outcomes (CPL), thus requiring textbooks to be contextually developed and adapted to the needs and characteristics of students. The use of commercial reference books often fails to address these specific needs in terms of substance, approach, and their connection to local culture and realities.

The process of writing textbooks not only impacts the learning process but also strengthens lecturers' academic competence. Challenges such as limited writing experience, lack of time, and low motivation remain major obstacles. However, systematic training and mentoring have been proven to

improve lecturers' skills and understanding in developing textbooks that meet academic standards and are eligible for publication with an ISBN [2].

Furthermore, in the context of selecting and using textbooks in higher education, lecturers consider various factors such as alignment with institutional culture, student needs, resource availability, and the quality of mathematical and pedagogical content. Research on mathematics lecturers shows that selecting the right textbook can help students understand the material more deeply and efficiently [3].

Through the development and validation of textbooks based on a genre-based process approach, researchers have also demonstrated that lecturers can prepare teaching materials that are not only content-valid but also effective in improving students' academic writing competence in higher education [4].

Textbook writing contributes significantly to lecturers' career development and to improving institutional quality, as stipulated in the Operational Guidelines for Credit Score Assessment (PO-PAK) by the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education (2019). Textbook writing is also one form of research output dissemination and supports the implementation of the tri dharma of higher education, particularly in teaching and scholarly publication [5].

This textbook writing training activity was organized as an intervention to address the competency gap in textbook writing among lecturers at UIN Saizu Purwokerto. The training aims to enhance lecturers' capacity to develop textbooks that meet academic standards and institutional needs, while fostering a sustainable writing culture. The approach employed includes strengthening conceptual understanding, technical training, and hands-on practice in drafting the initial manuscript of a textbook. Through this activity, it is expected that a more productive and collaborative academic ecosystem will emerge, along with an increase in the number of textbooks as measurable academic outputs that can be counted toward study program accreditation and comprehensive lecturer performance assessments.

2. METHOD

The method used in this textbook writing training research falls within the category of qualitative descriptive research with a participatory approach. The qualitative descriptive method was employed as the study aimed to systematically describe the training implementation process, participant engagement, the outcomes achieved, and the challenges encountered throughout the activity. Data were collected through direct observation during the training, documentation of activities (photos, videos, and participants' work), as well as daily evaluations in the form of short questionnaires distributed to participants to assess their level of understanding and engagement in the learning process [6].

In addition, the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach was applied, as the researchers or implementing team not only acted as observers but also as active facilitators directly involved in the training process—from planning and implementation to evaluation [7]. This approach allowed the researchers to gain a deeper understanding of participant dynamics, training needs, and the direct impact of the activities on participants' abilities. The stages of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method are as follows:

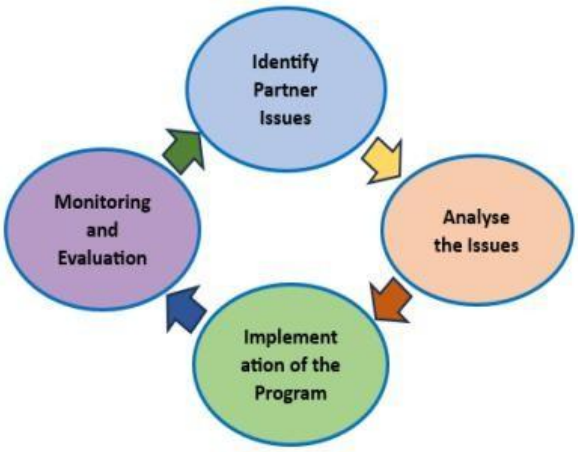


Figure 1. Participatory Action Research (PAR)

2.1 Monitoring dan Evaluasi

Pemantauan dilakukan selama kegiatan berlangsung melalui observasi dan lembar evaluasi harian. Evaluasi dilakukan untuk mengukur ketercapaian target, antusiasme peserta, serta kendala yang muncul selama pelatihan. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa pelatihan mampu meningkatkan pemahaman peserta tentang penulisan buku ajar, meskipun masih ditemui tantangan seperti keterbatasan waktu dan perbedaan kemampuan menulis antar peserta. Evaluasi ini juga menjadi dasar untuk pengembangan program lanjutan yang lebih intensif dan berkelanjutan.

2.2 Identification of Partner Problems

At the initial stage, the implementing team identified the needs of lecturers at UIN Saizu Purwokerto, particularly concerning the low number of textbooks authored independently. Through informal communication, preliminary observations, and internal institutional data, it was found that most lecturers lacked the technical skills to write textbooks and were not accustomed to leveraging their teaching experience as a basis for writing.

2.3 Problem Analysis

Once the partners' needs were identified, an analysis was conducted to determine the root causes of the issue, such as the lack of technical training, the absence of easily accessible writing guidelines, and minimal institutional support in the form of policies or incentives. This analysis served as the basis for designing the training program in terms of content, methodology, and desired outputs [8].

2.4 Program Implementation

The training program was carried out in the form of practice-based activities using a participatory approach. Participating lecturers were guided to develop textbook outlines based on their course syllabi (RPS), draft initial manuscripts, and receive direct feedback from facilitators. The training environment was designed to be interactive and supportive, enabling participants to learn actively and collaboratively.

2.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring was conducted throughout the activity through observation and daily evaluation sheets. The evaluation aimed to measure target achievement, participant enthusiasm, and challenges encountered during the training. The results indicated that the training successfully improved participants' understanding of textbook writing, although challenges such as limited time and varying levels of writing ability among participants remained. This evaluation also served as the basis for developing more intensive and sustainable follow-up programs.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The textbook writing training program conducted at Universitas Islam Negeri Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri (UIN Saizu) Purwokerto generated highly constructive and multidimensional outcomes, encompassing both the overall implementation process and the tangible outputs achieved. Designed as a targeted academic capacity-building initiative, the program was aimed at addressing the evident gap in scholarly textbook production among the institution's teaching staff. It brought together a cohort of 30 lecturers representing a wide range of faculties and academic disciplines, thereby ensuring diversity of perspectives and subject matter expertise within the training environment. While the majority of these participants possessed substantial teaching experience, having delivered courses and developed instructional materials over many years, it was evident from pre-training assessments that very few had ever undertaken the process of independently authoring a textbook in a formal, publishable format. This gap was not merely a reflection of limited technical writing skills but also indicative of broader challenges, including a lack of familiarity with academic publishing processes, uncertainty regarding content structuring in line with formal learning outcomes, and the absence of institutional mechanisms to guide and incentivize textbook production.

During the initial preparation and needs identification stage, the organizing team coordinated with faculty leaders to recruit participants and develop training materials. This process included a needs assessment of lecturers, which revealed a low rate of textbook authorship among lecturers despite their routine use of teaching materials. Based on these findings, a training module was developed covering the fundamental concepts of textbook writing, preparation based on the course syllabus (RPS), techniques for writing in a scholarly yet accessible style, as well as the procedures for publication and ISBN registration.

The second stage involved conducting the training in an offline (in-person) format over the course of one day. The methods used included interactive lectures, group discussions, case studies, and hands-on practice in developing outlines and drafting the initial chapters of textbooks. Participant enthusiasm was notably high, as demonstrated by active engagement in both discussion and practical sessions. Based on daily evaluation sheets, the majority of participants reported gaining new understanding of textbook structure and developing greater confidence to begin writing. Substantively, the training resulted in several key outputs:

a. Completion of textbook outlines by all participants, each aligned with their respective RPS, including chapter structure, learning outcomes, and an initial reference list.
b. Initial drafts of textbooks written by more than half of the participants, generally consisting of the introduction and one to two initial chapters.
c. Formation of a cross-faculty lecturer author network, which emerged spontaneously through discussion forums during the training and marked the beginning of a community of writers committed to supporting one another in the ongoing writing process.

Additionally, participants recognized that textbooks are not only important for students but also contribute directly to the academic performance evaluation of lecturers and support study program accreditation. Several participants have committed to completing and publishing their textbooks within the next semester, with continued mentoring from the organizing team.



Figure 2. Opening of the Training Program



Figure 3. Presentation of Training Materials by the Facilitator



Figure 4. Discussion Session

In the third stage, following the completion of the training, participants were given additional time to refine their drafts. The organizing team opened an online consultation channel to provide informal mentoring and continuous support. An evaluation was conducted through a questionnaire, the results of which indicated that 90% of participants found the training to be directly beneficial to their teaching duties.

As part of the evaluation of the effectiveness of the textbook writing training, a pre-test and post-test were administered to all participants. The purpose of these tests was to measure the participants' level of understanding before and after the training. The test instrument consisted of ten questions covering aspects such as the conceptual understanding of textbooks, their structure and components, differences from other types of teaching materials, and basic skills in developing a textbook outline and draft.

The pre-test results showed that most participants were in the "adequate" category, with an average score of 60. This finding reflected a notable gap in knowledge and technical skills related to textbook writing, despite the participants' years of teaching experience. Several participants had yet to fully grasp the fundamental differences between textbooks, modules, and handouts.

Following the training, the post-test conducted on the final day of the program showed a significant improvement in scores. The participants' average post-test score increased to 87, placing them in the "excellent" category. This improvement indicated that the training was not only successful in transferring theoretical knowledge but also effective in building participants' confidence to initiate the textbook writing process.

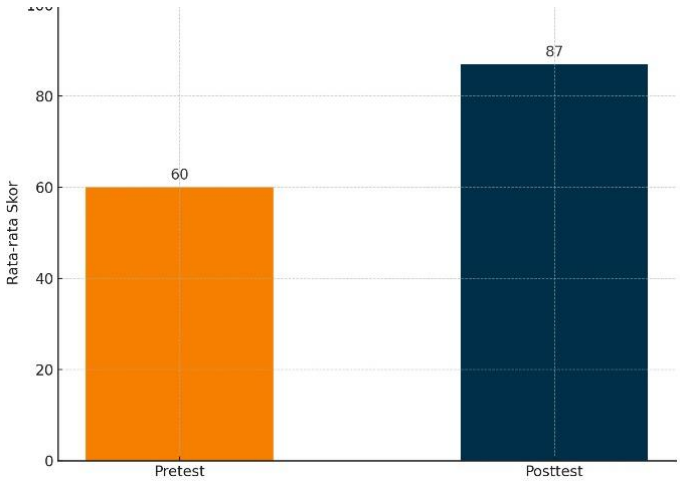


Figure 5. Pre-test and Post-test

4. CONCLUSION

The textbook writing training conducted at UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto has proven to have a positive impact on enhancing lecturers' competence in developing systematic, learningoutcome-based teaching materials. The program not only equipped participants with theoretical understanding of the structure and characteristics of textbooks but also provided hands-on practice through the preparation of outlines and initial drafts based on each participant's teaching experience. The significant improvement demonstrated by the comparison of pre-test and post-test results served as a key indicator of the training's success, with participants' average scores increasing from 60 to 87. This outcome shows that a participatory, application-oriented, and contextually relevant training approach is effective in building writing capacity among lecturers. Furthermore, the training fostered collaborative initiatives among participants, as evidenced by the formation of a cross-faculty author network. This network has the potential to evolve into a sustainable academic community that supports a culture of literacy within the campus environment. Although some challenges remain such as variations in participants' writing abilities and the limited time available for training the overall implementation of the program has successfully addressed a genuine need in the professional development of lecturers. In conclusion, this training not only provided a solution to the scarcity of locally produced textbooks but also represents a strategic step toward improving the quality of teaching and supporting continuous institutional accreditation.

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