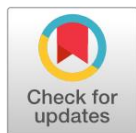


<https://research.adra.ac.id/index.php/ijen/>

P - ISSN: 2988-1579

E - ISSN: 2988-0092



## Narrative Inquiry into Teachers as Facilitators in Thematic Learning: Integrating Islamic Values in Elementary Education

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### ABSTRACT

**Background.** Teachers play a crucial role as facilitators in creating meaningful learning experiences, particularly in thematic learning that integrates multiple subjects. However, previous studies on teacher facilitation tend to focus on general pedagogical practices and lack strong theoretical integration, especially within Islamic educational contexts.

**Purpose.** This study aims to examine Grade 5 teachers' understanding and implementation of their role as facilitators in thematic learning at an Islamic elementary school, as well as to explore its theoretical contribution to facilitation practices.

**Method.** This research employed a qualitative case study approach conducted at Sabilul Huda Asy'ari Integrated Islamic Elementary School. Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews with teachers, students, parents, and the school principal, and documentation analysis. Data analysis involved coding, theme generation, and triangulation to ensure the credibility and validity of the findings.

**Results.** The findings reveal that the teacher's role as a facilitator is multidimensional, encompassing patience, respect, teacher-student relationships, humility, adaptive teaching strategies, structured lesson planning, motivational support, and collaborative learning facilitation. These dimensions operate as an integrated system that supports students' cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development. The integration of Islamic values was also found to play a significant role in shaping meaningful learning interactions.

**Conclusion.** This study proposes the Islamic Constructivist Facilitation Model, which conceptualizes teacher facilitation as a holistic process integrating constructivist learning, socio-cultural interaction, and value-based education. The findings highlight that effective facilitation extends beyond instructional practices to include relational, motivational, and moral dimensions, offering important implications for developing holistic teaching practices in elementary education.

### KEYWORDS

Islamic Elementary, Learning Motivation, Teaching Strategies

### INTRODUCTION

An engaging and meaningful learning environment is widely recognized as a key factor in promoting students' active participation and deep understanding (Alajmi, 2024). Within contemporary educational paradigms,

**Citation:** Susetiyo, A., Husna, L. R., Muid, A., Wahyuningsih, Y., & Sain, H. Z. (2026). Narrative Inquiry into Teachers as Facilitators in Thematic Learning: Integrating Islamic Values in Elementary Education. *International Journal of Educational Narrative*, 4(1), 375-385. <https://doi.org/10.70177/ijen.v4i1.3501>

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**Received:** November 09, 2025

**Accepted:** March 23, 2026

**Published:** February 27, 2026



learning is no longer viewed as a process of knowledge transmission, learning is no longer viewed as a process of knowledge transmission, but rather as an active process of knowledge construction (Alam dkk., 2023). Constructivist theory, particularly as developed by Piaget and further expanded by Vygotsky, emphasizes that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment and social context (Alghuwainem, 2025). In this perspective, the teacher's role shifts from being a knowledge transmitter to a facilitator who supports, guides, and scaffolds students' learning processes.

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory highlights the importance of social interaction and the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where teachers play a critical role in providing scaffolding to help students achieve higher levels of understanding (Alharbi, 2025). In this context, the role of the teacher as a facilitator is not merely technical, but pedagogically and theoretically grounded in assisting students to construct meaning through guided interaction and collaboration (Almanea, 2025). Previous studies have shown that effective facilitation significantly enhances student engagement and learning outcomes, particularly in integrated and student-centered learning environments.

These theoretical perspectives are highly relevant to the implementation of thematic learning, which integrates multiple subjects into a unified learning experience (Altakhaineh dkk., 2025). Thematic learning reflects constructivist principles by connecting learning materials to real-life contexts and encouraging students to actively explore and construct knowledge (Anderson dkk., 2024). Consequently, the success of thematic learning heavily depends on how teachers enact their role as facilitators in designing meaningful learning experiences and guiding student interaction.

However, despite the strong theoretical foundation supporting the facilitator role, many studies in the Indonesian context still treat this role descriptively, without adequately linking it to broader educational theories such as constructivism or socio-cultural learning theory (Ateh & Ryan, 2023). Furthermore, previous research tends to focus on general teacher roles or instructional practices, rather than critically examining how facilitation is enacted within specific pedagogical frameworks such as thematic learning (Azari Noughabi dkk., 2024). This indicates a theoretical and empirical gap in understanding how the facilitator role operates within integrated learning models.

In addition, within Islamic educational contexts, the concept of facilitation requires further conceptual clarification (Bashori dkk., 2026). Islamic education emphasizes holistic human development, integrating cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions. However, the integration of Islamic values in classroom practices is often treated normatively rather than analytically (Li dkk., 2023). Recent studies suggest that Islamic educational practices can be aligned with constructivist approaches, where values such as patience (*ṣabr*), responsibility (*amanah*), and mutual respect (*ta'āwun*) function as socio-cultural elements that shape the learning process (Calcagni dkk., 2023). Therefore, the facilitator role in Islamic schools should not only be understood pedagogically but also as a process of value-mediated learning.

Despite growing interest in thematic learning and teacher facilitation, limited research has specifically examined how the facilitator role is theoretically grounded and practically implemented within Islamic integrated elementary schools (Mafarja dkk., 2023), particularly at the upper elementary level where students are expected to engage in more complex and integrative thinking (Chidambaram & Khalid, 2024). This indicates a significant research gap in linking constructivist theory, facilitation practices, and Islamic value integration within thematic learning contexts.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the understanding and implementation of the teacher's role as a facilitator in thematic learning within an Islamic integrated elementary school (García & Pérez-Oleaga, 2025). By situating the analysis within constructivist and socio-cultural theoretical

frameworks (Imaduddin & Eilks, 2024), this research seeks to provide a more comprehensive and theoretically grounded understanding of how facilitation supports meaningful learning and value integration in the classroom.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore in depth the role of teachers as facilitators in thematic learning within the context of an Islamic integrated elementary school (Maynard dkk., 2023). A case study approach was selected because it enables a comprehensive and contextualized understanding of a bounded system, particularly when examining complex educational practices situated in real-life settings.

The research was conducted at Sabilul Huda Asy'ari Integrated Islamic Elementary School, Kediri, Indonesia. The participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the thematic learning process (Moradi dkk., 2024). The informants consisted of one fifth-grade classroom teacher, one school principal, five fifth-grade students, and three parents of fifth-grade students. The selection criteria included active participation in Grade 5 thematic learning, willingness to provide relevant information, and experience related to the implementation of classroom learning activities (Morea & Ghanbar, 2024). The data collection process was carried out over a period of three months, allowing the researcher to observe learning activities in depth, conduct interviews, and verify data consistency through repeated engagement in the field.

Data were collected through triangulated methods, including observation, interviews, and documentation. Classroom observations were conducted in a non-participant manner to examine teaching practices, teacher–student interactions, facilitation strategies, and the integration of Islamic values in thematic learning. In addition, semi-structured interviews were carried out to explore participants' perspectives regarding the implementation of the teacher's role as a facilitator, strategies used to enhance student motivation, and the incorporation of Islamic values in the learning process (Namaziandost dkk., 2025). Documentation was also utilized as a supporting data source, including lesson plans, teaching materials, and records of classroom activities, to strengthen and validate the findings obtained from observations and interviews.

The data were analyzed using an interactive model combined with thematic analysis, as proposed by and further elaborated by Nowell et al. The analysis began with data condensation, in which raw data obtained from field notes, interview transcripts, and documentation were selected, simplified, and organized to focus on relevant information. This was followed by an open coding process, where meaningful units of data related to teacher facilitation, student engagement, and the integration of Islamic values were identified and labeled (Noviana dkk., 2023). The codes were then grouped into categories based on similarities and patterns. For example, data indicating that teachers guided students individually were coded as “individualized support” and categorized under facilitation strategies, while expressions of student enthusiasm were coded as “learning motivation” and categorized under student responses. These categories were subsequently developed into broader themes, such as facilitation strategies in thematic learning, challenges in implementation, and the integration of Islamic values (Najafi dkk., 2024). The analyzed data were then presented in descriptive narrative form and interpreted using constructivist and socio-cultural theoretical perspectives to generate meaningful conclusions aligned with the research objectives.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several validation strategies were employed. Triangulation was conducted through the comparison of data obtained from different techniques, sources, and time periods, ensuring consistency and credibility (Nuryana dkk., 2023). In addition, member checking was applied by allowing participants to review summaries of interview results to

confirm accuracy. An audit trail was maintained to document all stages of data collection and analysis, enhancing the transparency and dependability of the research process. Furthermore, reflexivity was applied throughout the study, in which the researcher continuously reflected on potential biases and maintained reflective notes to ensure that interpretations remained grounded in the data.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' understanding of their role as facilitators is crucial for creating an engaging and supportive learning environment. By recognizing their role, teachers can design interactive activities that keep students interested and involved (Zynuddin dkk., 2023). In thematic learning, teachers adapt strategies to maintain students' attention and encourage active participation, both in and out of the classroom. Teachers also provide support through additional resources, such as communication outside of school hours and guidelines for assessments.

To prevent disengagement, teachers adjust their teaching methods, often organizing students into small groups or using discussion-based learning. However, limited resources may challenge teaching effectiveness, requiring creativity in choosing alternative strategies. Teachers also demonstrate key attitudes such as patience, respect, and humility, which are essential for fostering a positive learning atmosphere.

Grade 5 teachers at Sabilul Huda Asy'ari Islamic Elementary School practice patience by repeating explanations and offering guidance when students struggle (Vasel, 2025). They also foster a respectful classroom by acknowledging students' efforts, even if their answers are not entirely correct. This approach helps motivate students, encourages participation, and builds their confidence. It also supports students in taking responsibility for their learning, ensuring they stay engaged and motivated to improve.

### **Grade 5 Teachers' Understanding of the Facilitator Role in Thematic Learning at Sabilul Huda Asy'ari Islamic Elementary School**

An understanding of the teacher's role as a facilitator is essential, particularly in thematic learning. Teachers who grasp this role can provide clear explanations, create a supportive environment, and keep students engaged. They use simple language, clear communication, and respectful interactions to enhance student understanding.

At Sabilul Huda Asy'ari Islamic Elementary School, Grade 5 teachers demonstrate a strong understanding of their facilitator role, though they face challenges like limited facilities, especially when teaching science. Despite these limitations, teachers provide additional explanations and support, both in the classroom and through communication outside of class via mobile phones.

Teachers also provide learning outlines and guidelines to help students prepare for assessments (Syafiulia & Maadad, 2026). When some students struggle, they offer further guidance to reinforce understanding. Although the lack of adequate resources sometimes limits teaching methods, teachers adapt by combining lectures with interactive activities. Despite these challenges, teachers remain dedicated to motivating students and fostering a learning environment that supports academic and overall student engagement.

### **Implementation of the Grade 5 Teacher's Facilitator Role in Thematic Learning at Sabilul Huda Asy'ari Islamic Elementary School, Pranggang, Plosoklaten, Kediri**

Patience is a crucial characteristic that teachers must possess to facilitate effective learning, particularly in thematic learning at the fifth-grade level (Shamim dkk., 2025). Thematic learning integrates multiple subjects within a single theme, which often challenges students in understanding different concepts. In this context, patience becomes an essential element in providing continuous

support to students, in line with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory, which emphasizes the need for support to achieve higher levels of understanding.

Teachers at Sabilul Huda Asy'ari Islamic Elementary School demonstrate patience by providing additional explanations using simpler language, relevant examples, and step-by-step clarification. This approach aligns with differentiated instruction theory, which shows that adaptive instructional support significantly improves student comprehension and engagement. Moreover, teachers also show patience by repeating explanations and offering individual assistance to students who require more time to process information. They maintain a calm and supportive attitude during classroom instruction, offering encouragement rather than criticism when students encounter difficulties.

Patience is also reflected in teachers' efforts to regain students' attention by incorporating relaxation or ice-breaking activities when classroom conditions become less conducive. Overall, patience is not only a personal trait but also a pedagogical mechanism that supports differentiated instruction, student engagement, and effective classroom management. In the context of Islamic education, patience is regarded as a moral virtue that shapes teaching practices and character development (Saha, 2023). This study extends the concept of patience by presenting it as an "affective scaffolding" that integrates emotional regulation and instructional support in guiding students' learning processes.

### **Respecting Students**

Respecting students is a crucial aspect of the teacher's role as a facilitator in the learning process. Teachers who show respect not only strengthen the teacher-student relationship but also create a supportive classroom environment that encourages active participation (Pelaez-Morales & Brice, 2025). This approach aligns with socio-cultural learning theory, which emphasizes that learning is mediated through social interaction and the quality of relationships within the learning environment. At Sabilul Huda Asy'ari Islamic Elementary School, teachers consistently show respect for students by acknowledging their efforts, even if their responses are not entirely correct, fostering a growth-oriented mindset.

By encouraging students to participate without fear of making mistakes, teachers reduce anxiety and foster a climate where mistakes are viewed as part of the learning process. Teachers recognize that students have unique learning styles and abilities, and they adapt their teaching strategies accordingly to ensure all students feel valued and included. This practice extends beyond the classroom, with teachers maintaining open communication outside school hours, strengthening relational trust and supporting sustained engagement.

Respect contributes significantly to students' self-esteem, motivation, and academic progress. In an Islamic education context, respect also aligns with moral values like kindness and fairness, acting as a socio-pedagogical tool that supports both learning and character development. Overall, respect is not just a behavioral practice but a key component of facilitative teaching, fostering a positive and inclusive learning environment that enhances students' confidence, participation, and academic growth.

### **Building Friendly Teacher-Student Relationships**

A positive relationship between teachers and students is crucial for creating an effective learning environment. Such relationships significantly impact student motivation, participation, and academic development. Teachers who show empathy, patience, and understanding foster a classroom atmosphere where students feel safe, confident, and encouraged to actively engage in learning. This aligns with socio-cultural and attachment theories, which emphasize that learning is shaped through social interactions and supportive relationships.

At Sabilul Huda Asy'ari Islamic Elementary School, teachers build friendly relationships with all students, acknowledging their individual learning needs and characteristics. This practice promotes a growth mindset, boosting students' confidence and willingness to participate. Positive teacher-student relationships also help teachers identify students' challenges, providing tailored support to keep them engaged (Seddighi dkk., 2023). These relationships enhance collaboration, as students are more likely to participate in group activities and cooperative learning, especially in thematic learning settings that emphasize interaction and active participation.

Respect and trust within the teacher-student relationship also improve classroom behavior and academic responsibility. In Islamic education, values like compassion, respect, and sincerity further shape these interactions, fostering a supportive, value-driven learning environment. Overall, the study emphasizes that teacher-student relationships are not just interpersonal skills but fundamental to effective learning, contributing to cognitive, emotional, and social development in students.

### **Demonstrating Humility**

Humility is a key characteristic that teachers must demonstrate in their role as facilitators. It involves treating students with respect, allowing them to express their opinions freely, and fostering a more democratic, participatory learning environment. In learner-centered pedagogy and constructivist theory, humility is seen as a pedagogical approach that encourages student agency and collaborative knowledge construction.

At Sabilul Huda Asy'ari Islamic Elementary School, teachers exemplify humility by giving students the autonomy to decide whether they want to participate in activities, such as competitions, based on their readiness. This supports student autonomy and enhances intrinsic motivation, encouraging greater engagement and responsibility for learning (Tolesa dkk., 2025). Teachers also appreciate students' efforts, regardless of their outcomes, which aligns with growth mindset theory that emphasizes the value of effort over fixed outcomes. This approach encourages persistence and self-improvement.

Humility also reduces power distance in the classroom, fostering open communication and reciprocal interaction, which in turn promotes student participation and critical thinking. In Islamic education, humility (*tawādu'*) is a core value that shapes relationships and teaching practices. The study introduces the concept of "pedagogical humility," positioning it as a mechanism that reduces hierarchical barriers, enhances student agency, and supports collaborative learning. Humility, therefore, is not only an ethical virtue but also a strategic component in facilitative teaching that integrates cognitive, motivational, and value-based dimensions in thematic learning.

### **Teachers Explore Various Teaching Strategies**

Teachers must continuously explore various teaching strategies to keep learning activities engaging and effective. In thematic learning, where multiple subjects are integrated within a single theme, the use of diverse instructional methods is essential to help students connect ideas across disciplines. Teachers at Sabilul Huda Asy'ari Islamic Elementary School recognize that relying on one teaching method can lead to student boredom and disengagement. They adapt their approaches through professional collaboration with colleagues, sharing ideas and strategies to improve their teaching practices.

Despite limited resources, these teachers use creative and flexible methods to create meaningful learning experiences. Common strategies include discussions, group work, and interactive questioning to stimulate critical thinking and participation (Karim & Harwood, 2026). This approach aligns with constructivist and social constructivist theories, which emphasize knowledge construction through social interaction. Teachers also integrate Islamic values into their teaching, promoting cooperation, honesty, and responsibility during lessons.

The study highlights the importance of “adaptive facilitative pedagogy,” where teachers adjust their methods based on student needs and contextual challenges. This dynamic approach to teaching, incorporating professional collaboration, value integration, and pedagogical flexibility, is vital for achieving holistic and meaningful learning outcomes in thematic education.

### **Teachers Design and Plan Learning Activities**

Effective lesson planning is crucial for ensuring that the learning process is systematic, engaging, and aligned with educational goals. Teachers at Sabilul Huda Asy’ari Islamic Elementary School prepare lesson plans (Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran or RPP) to guide thematic learning, which integrates multiple subjects into one theme (Jayanti & Adlini, 2023). This approach helps students connect knowledge from various disciplines, promoting holistic understanding. Lesson planning follows a structured cycle with opening, core, and closing activities, each serving a specific pedagogical function.

Opening activities prepare students psychologically and cognitively for the lesson, while core activities engage students in collaborative learning, developing higher-order thinking skills and fostering active participation. Closing activities consolidate learning through reflection and evaluation, reinforcing both academic knowledge and moral values, especially within the context of Islamic education.

This study emphasizes the importance of integrating values such as cooperation, responsibility, and honesty into learning activities, which helps in both cognitive and character development. The concept of “integrative facilitative design” is proposed, where lesson planning functions as a dynamic, adaptive framework that combines cognitive structuring, social interaction, and value integration. This ensures that thematic learning becomes a comprehensive experience that supports students’ cognitive, social, and moral development.

### **Teachers Provide Learning Motivation**

Teachers play a vital role in motivating students, which is key to enhancing their engagement, participation, and academic success. Motivation is essential, especially in thematic learning, where students need to integrate knowledge across various subjects. Teachers at Sabilul Huda Asy’ari Islamic Elementary School use different strategies to motivate students, including positive feedback, verbal praise, and constructive guidance. These methods align with theories like self-determination and growth mindset, which emphasize the importance of autonomy, effort, and resilience in motivating students.

Teachers also foster motivation through interactive activities such as discussions, group work, and problem-solving tasks, which align with active learning and collaborative learning theories. By connecting learning materials to real-life experiences, teachers make learning more meaningful, which enhances student engagement (Pei dkk., 2025). In Islamic education, motivating students is also tied to moral and spiritual values, where the pursuit of knowledge is encouraged as an intrinsic motivator.

Additionally, a supportive and respectful classroom atmosphere, where students feel valued and safe, is crucial for fostering motivation. Teachers adapt their teaching to meet individual student needs, ensuring all students stay engaged. Overall, the study highlights that motivation is not just a supportive activity but an integral part of facilitative teaching, which incorporates cognitive, emotional, and value-based dimensions to create an effective and sustainable learning environment.

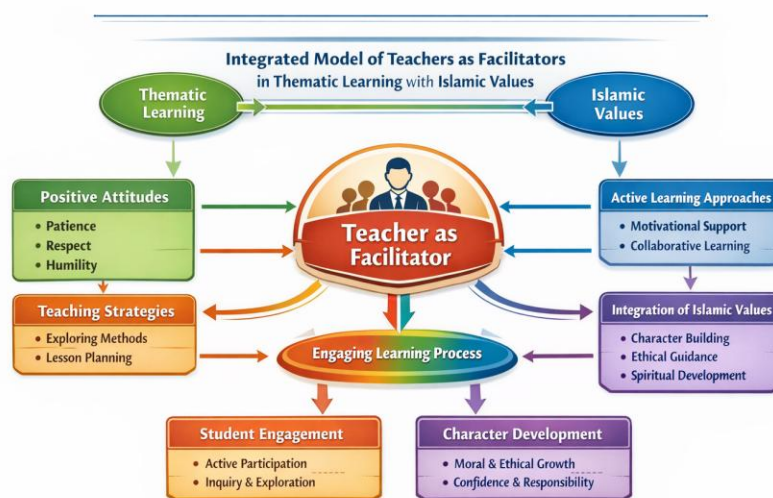
### **Teachers Facilitate Collaborative Learning**

Facilitating collaborative learning is a key aspect of the teacher’s role in promoting student interaction, cooperation, and shared responsibility. In thematic learning, where multiple subjects are integrated, collaborative learning is particularly valuable as it encourages students to explore ideas

from different perspectives through group work (Pelaez-Morales & Brice, 2023). At Sabilul Huda Asy'ari Islamic Elementary School, teachers organize students into small groups for discussions and assignments, allowing them to exchange ideas, ask questions, and deepen their understanding of the material.

Group discussions foster critical thinking by helping students articulate and evaluate different viewpoints. Collaborative learning also enhances social skills, such as communication, teamwork, and responsibility, preparing students for broader social interactions. Teachers guide group activities, ensuring active participation and providing targeted support based on students' needs.

In Islamic education, collaborative learning aligns with values like cooperation, mutual respect, and collective responsibility, reinforcing both academic and moral development. This approach boosts students' motivation and engagement, creating an interactive and participatory learning environment that supports holistic intellectual and character development.



**Figure 1.** Relate figure Teachers as Facilitators in Thematic Learning: Integrating Islamic Values in Elementary Education

## CONCLUSION

This study explores the role of Grade 5 teachers as facilitators in thematic learning within an Islamic elementary school setting. It highlights that teachers' facilitative roles extend beyond instructional support to include cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development of students. The findings align with and expand on constructivist and socio-cultural learning theories, emphasizing that learning is socially mediated and context-dependent, with teachers acting as facilitators who guide interaction and help students build their own understanding.

The study also demonstrates that facilitation in an Islamic educational context integrates moral and spiritual dimensions alongside cognitive and social aspects. Key dimensions of facilitative teaching include patience, respect, relationship-building, humility, instructional strategies, structured planning, motivational support, and collaborative learning. These elements work together to support effective thematic learning, offering a comprehensive understanding that integrates constructivist pedagogy with Islamic values.

The study introduces the "Islamic Constructivist Facilitation Model," a theoretical framework that combines pedagogical strategies, relational dynamics, and value integration, emphasizing the importance of affective, relational, and moral dimensions in learning. Despite challenges like limited resources, teachers creatively adapt their methods, suggesting that teacher agency is crucial

in optimizing learning experiences. The model offers a holistic perspective on facilitative teaching, incorporating cultural and religious dimensions to enhance the theoretical development of constructivist pedagogy in elementary education.

## DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used ChatGPT to improve the language of the text and assist in finding relevant references. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

Author 4: Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

Author 5: Supervision; Validation.

## DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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