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Reflective Narratives and the Construction of Teachers' Professional Identity: A Narrative Inquiry into Pedagogical Transformation at an Indonesian Islamic Senior High School

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ABSTRACT

Background. Madrasah teachers may negotiate professional identity through subject knowledge, moral commitments, learner dignity and feedback from classroom relationships.

Purpose. This revision explores how reflective narrative could link consequential classroom experiences to teacher self-positioning and emerging pedagogical adjustment, using the newest MA Ma'arif Ambulu T1–T6 instrument as an illustrative analytical source.

Method. Six teacher-specific model profiles (Akidah Akhlak, Indonesian Laguage, Mathematics, Islamic Cultural History, Biology and English) were mapped across narrative interview prompts, chronological profiles, weekly reflection templates and observation exemplars. The original manuscript additionally reports student and school-leader participation, but corresponding primary responses are not contained in the newly supplied file.

Results. The worked cases illustrate six different tensions and provisional teaching responses: ethical case discussion, safer literary argument, contextual algebra, reasoned historical interpretation, environmental observation and low-risk spoken practice. Across examples, professional positioning combines academic demands with the protection of learner dignity; responses are uneven and change is not established as sustained.

Conclusion. A recursive model of relationally accountable narrative positioning is offered as a proposition requiring empirical authentication. Because the attached instrument calls its responses illustrative, this draft must not be represented as verified interview-based results.

KEYWORDS

Emerging Pedagogical Change, Madrasah, Narrative Inquiry, Reflective Narrative, Teacher Professional Identity

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INTRODUCTION

The Teacher professional identity is better understood as an ongoing interpretation of professional responsibilities than as an attribute acquired once through training or certification. Seminal accounts link identity to teachers' biographies, contexts, dialogue, and self-understanding (Beijaard et al., 2004; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). More recent studies complicate any single developmental pathway: reviews describe diverse contextual

influences (Rushton et al., 2023; Liang et al., 2024; Zhai et al., 2024), while narrative investigations show how recognition, institutional pressure, uncertainty, and relationships interrupt otherwise coherent professional stories (van Heijst et al., 2025; Cooper, 2026; Kettunen & Lutovac, 2026). Teachers' identities are therefore expressed not only in what they say they value but also in how they respond to particular pedagogical dilemmas.

You Narrative inquiry examines how experience is configured into a story across time, relationships, and place (Bruner, 1991; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Caine et al., 2013; Riessman, 2008). Its value is not simply to supply memorable interview quotations. A credible narrative traces prior orientation, a consequential episode, tensions among possible actions, subsequent interpretations, and what changed or failed to change. For example, narrative studies of secondary teachers have shown how pre-service preparation and induction interact with professional self-determination (Berbegal Vázquez et al., 2024), how difficult emotions can prompt both resilience and conflict (Wu et al., 2025; Zhang & Wu, 2025), and how visual and arts-based accounts reveal coexisting, sometimes contradictory, identity trajectories (Kettunen & Lutovac, 2026; Somuncu & Yalcin Arslan, 2026). Such work makes chronological, participant-specific accounts methodologically important.

Reflection links the narration of a critical event to future judgment, although reflection does not guarantee improvement. Schön (1983) distinguishes thinking within action from reconsideration after action, while Brookfield (2017) stresses the need to challenge assumptions through multiple viewpoints. Recent studies give this insight empirical specificity: Karim et al. (2024) examine reflection on critical incidents; Kamali and Anderson (2025) introduce narrative self-observation; Peguera-Carré et al. (2025) validate categories for assessing reflective narratives; and Wilkie (2025) shows that teacher-leaders continue revising identities in response to classroom and colleague reactions. Studies of pedagogical innovation similarly illustrate how change involves context-dependent recognition and negotiated professional roles rather than a simple transfer of techniques (Kim & Kwon, 2025; Ghiasvand & Seyri, 2025; Wei et al., 2026).

The madrasah setting introduces a specific constellation of interpretive responsibilities. Teachers may need to justify instructional decisions not only through curriculum and assessment goals but also through Islamic moral vocabulary, learner dignity, character formation, and institutional accountability. These obligations are not exclusive to Islamic schools, yet their joint articulation within madrasah pedagogy deserves closer analysis. Recent investigations address reflective identity in Islamic education (Bakti et al., 2026), teacher identity and religious authority (Basman et al., 2026), the negotiation of pedagogical innovation with Islamic moral leadership (Tambak et al., 2026), and supervision-related professional identity (Tamsiyati et al., 2026). Bham (2025), writing about Muslim teacher identity, likewise shows that reflective writing can make institutional belonging and value tensions visible. Such scholarship suggests that teacher identity is morally situated and accountable to several audiences.

Indonesian research also points to experiences of teacher education, professional development, and changing classroom expectations. Studies have considered Indonesian student teachers' emotions (Fauziah et al., 2025), teacher narratives surrounding deep-learning policy (Subakti et al., 2026), readiness for coding and artificial intelligence (Sufyadi et al., 2026), and narrative approaches to Islamic Religious Education learning (Pebrina et al., 2026). However, those topics should not be treated as interchangeable evidence of madrasah teachers' narrative identity work. The particular gap addressed here is how a teacher's account of a classroom difficulty becomes an accountable claim about who that teacher is, and how subsequent classroom and

relational feedback can sustain, revise, or interrupt the claim. This is a theoretical as well as a methodological question (Lu & Zhang, 2026; Su & Su, 2025).

Three research questions guide the study: (RQ1) How do six teachers narrate professional trajectories and consequential classroom incidents? (RQ2) How are professional positions constructed through reflective, moral, and relational interpretations? (RQ3) What short-term pedagogical adjustments are narrated or observed, and how do student and institutional responses inform further reflection? The proposed contribution is a recursive, relationally accountable narrative model rather than a one-way sequence from experience to transformation. Its empirical adequacy depends on aligning each case with authenticated interview, journal, observational, and feedback records.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design, Setting and Case Selection

This revision retains the narrative-inquiry orientation reported in the earlier manuscript (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell & Poth, 2018), while treating the newly uploaded instrument as the immediate evidentiary boundary. The setting named in both documents is MA Ma'arif Ambulu, Jember, East Java, Indonesia. The earlier manuscript reports a project window of 6 April–13 June 2026; the latest instrument supplies proposed or model dated entries between 20 April and 2 June 2026. Without raw records, the dates cannot independently verify actual data collection.

The latest instrument specifies six focal teachers: T1 Akidah Akhlak, T2 Bahasa Indonesia, T3 Mathematics, T4 Islamic Cultural History (Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam), T5 Biology and T6 English. The earlier submitted article refers to 24 students (S01–S24) and two school leaders (SL1–SL2). The newest file mentions SL1–SL2 on its cover but does not include their responses, and supplies no S01–S24 interviews or focus-group transcripts. Hence, the analysis below does not claim student or leader triangulation.

Table 1. Scope of the newest supplied instrument and evidence status

Source component	Cases / content supplied	Status for empirical inference
Narrative interview guide (Sheet 1)	T1–T6; questions aligned to RQ1–RQ3 and written example answers	Model responses; not independent, verbatim interview transcripts
Individual narrative profiles (Sheet 2)	T1–T6; seven-stage narrative sequences	Illustrative within-case reconstructions
Weekly reflection journals (Sheet 3)	T1–T6; one dated example entry per teacher	Illustrative entries, not authenticated journal originals
Classroom observation notes (Sheet 4)	OBS-T1 to OBS-T6; checklists, comments and model descriptions	Sample records; "verified" label within the template is not independent proof
School leader / student source material	SL1–SL2 named on cover; S01–S24 not in this version	No leader/student statements available for this revision

Procedure for Within-Case and Cross-Case Reading

Each model case was read as a seven-part temporal configuration: earlier teaching orientation, classroom trigger, experienced tension, reflective reinterpretation, provisional action, reported

learner or colleague response, and outstanding uncertainty. The interview prompts (Sheet 1) supply professional positioning; the narrative profile (Sheet 2) orders the proposed episode; the reflective-journal example (Sheet 3) expresses value tensions; and observation exemplars (Sheet 4) specify what an observer would need to check. Cross-case comparison asks how these sequences vary by disciplinary subject, the perceived risk to learners, the kind of pedagogical change contemplated, and the limits of response. This is an audit of a model instrument, not retrospective qualitative coding of authenticated transcripts.

The research questions remain: RQ1—How are consequential professional experiences configured as narrative sequences? RQ2—How does reflective meaning-making connect teachers' professional responsibilities, moral commitments and learner dignity? RQ3—Which provisional pedagogical adjustments and unresolved outcomes appear in the model accounts? The distinction between designed response, reported student reaction and independently documented lesson action is maintained throughout.

Research Ethics, Credibility and Documentary Limitations

The supplied instrument protects names through codes, but it is not itself sufficient to establish informed consent, ethics approval coverage or publication permissions. Its observation tables sometimes use the label "Terverifikasi" (verified) for permission; the underlying signed approval is not attached here. Ethical reporting for an empirical submission must be based on original approval and institutional letters, dated teacher/leader consent, and—as applicable—guardian permission and student assent. Participant quotations should be transcribed from original recordings or signed responses, stripped of identifying details, and checked with participants where the approved procedure allows.

Source triangulation, negative-case analysis, member checking and audit trails are aims for a verified study; they are not claimed to have been accomplished simply because the instrument contains headings for interviews, reflective journals and observations. A further record conflict requires resolution: T2's interview-administration table is dated 20 April 2026, 09.00–09.30 WIB, whereas the T2 narrative profile gives 23 April 2026, 10.00–10.35 WIB, and its reflection example is dated 23 April. All time stamps in a final article must be reconciled with the original attendance, recordings and observation logs.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RQ1-Six Differentiated Narrative Trajectories

T1-Akidah Akhlak: from naming a moral rule to deliberating about conduct

The T1 profile begins with a commitment to combining conceptual Islamic moral education and formation of conduct in grade X. Its central incident concerns discussion of bullying in a class messaging group: learners can define bullying but struggle to explain an appropriate response to a realistic exchange. The resulting tension is ethical as much as instructional. A concrete case might help reasoning, but revealing a recognisable incident could embarrass a learner. In the worked reflective account, T1 questions lecture-heavy delivery and consults a guidance counsellor about a safe approach. The provisional response is to discuss anonymised cases in pairs and ask each pupil to write reasons for a chosen position. The model student response is mixed: some reasons become more concrete, while several learners remain silent in plenary. Thus, the narrative does not equate silence with low ability or use classroom participation as proof of durable moral change. The corresponding dates in the instrument are 20 April 2026 (Sheets 1–4; OBS-T1).

T2-Indonesian Laguage: participation without an assumption of better argumentation

T2 initially locates success in accurate written work while helping grade-X students assess arguments in a discussion text. The trigger is uneven willingness to speak: a few students offer views, whereas others fear giving a wrong answer. The narrative tension is between providing preparation time and completing planned reading objectives. T2's illustrative adjustment uses think–pair–share, with private note preparation before paired and whole-class discussion. A colleague is approached about a rubric that values the reasoning behind an answer rather than only the confidence to speak. The model journal suggests more pupils may attempt to contribute, but quality and logical completeness remain uneven. A rise in utterances therefore cannot be treated as a stable improvement in argumentation. (23 April 2026; OBS-T2).

T3-Mathematics: reinterpreting symbolic competence through a familiar context

T3's beginning is a habit of explaining formulae and showing worked equations in grade XI. A critical episode emerges when learners reproduce algebraic steps but cannot explain what a variable means in a word problem. The teacher faces differing learning speeds and a tension between the pace of curricular coverage and scaffolding for learners who need extra interpretation. The worked response introduces an example of cooperative-shop budgeting, a sequence card for solution steps, and brief checks for understanding. The model observations and journal indicate that some students begin explaining variables conceptually while operational algebra mistakes persist. T3 also seeks a colleague's review of the worksheet before reuse. The story therefore differentiates gains in contextual interpretation from still-fragile procedural accuracy (4 May 2026; OBS-T3).

T4-Islamic Cultural History: moving from dates to respectful historical interpretation

T4's prior approach centres on recalling historical sequences in grade XI. The turning point occurs when students remember dates but cannot explain how a figure's decision influenced wider society. The teacher's dilemma is discipline-specific: inviting causal reasoning and critical questions while maintaining responsible engagement with Islamic traditions and the fidelity of historical sources. In the worked account, groups develop timelines and distinguish what a source narrates from their own interpretation. Some model groups offer causal links; others restate textbook material. The teacher seeks advice on appropriate source selection. This example locates emerging identity in the joint responsibility for respectful discourse and evidential accuracy, while recognising that neither a timeline nor a discussion guarantees historical reasoning (12 May 2026; OBS-T4).

T5-Biology: from textbook labels to observation with evidential caution

T5's illustrative professional orientation values observation of the natural world. In a grade-X ecosystem lesson, students are able to recite "producer" and "consumer" yet cannot locate appropriate examples in the school environment. This mismatch prompts reconsideration of teaching from diagrams alone. The proposed pedagogical response is short observation of plants around the madrasah using an identification sheet and discussion of limitations. Safety, weather, available time and group management constrain the attempt; the worked account notes coordination with a homeroom teacher. Students in the model respond enthusiastically, but some still confuse an inferred explanation with a directly observed fact. The case thus cautions against reading enthusiasm as demonstrated conceptual mastery (20 May 2026; OBS-T5).

T6-English: reducing risk without relinquishing language accuracy

T6's worked trajectory focuses on helping grade-XI students engage in cross-language communication. The critical incident concerns reluctance to perform an unprepared dialogue because mispronunciation may invite laughter. T6 needs to correct language without undermining student confidence or dignity. The example response shifts toward paired dialogue with situation cards, offering feedback on communicative meaning before detailed correction. As the model journal and profile indicate, some previously silent students attempt speech with a partner but do not yet speak in front of the whole class. Colleague dialogue about non-humiliating feedback becomes part of the professional narrative. The case treats small-group participation as a tentative opening, not proof of sustained speaking fluency (2 June 2026; OBS-T6).

Table 2. Cross-case source map derived from the illustrative T1–T6 profiles

Case	Illustrated critical tension	Provisional pedagogical response	Limit reported in model
T1 / Akidah Akhlak	Moral definition vs. sensitive student experiences	Anonymous case analysis; paired discussion; reason-giving	Written justifications more concrete; plenary silence persists
T2 / Indonesian Laguage	Fear of error vs. time for critical reading	Individual thinking → pair → sharing; reasoning rubric	More attempted speaking; argument quality uneven
T3 / Mathematics	Copying formulae vs. variable meaning	Cooperative-budget context; step cards; rapid checks	Some conceptual explanation; algebra errors remain
T4 / Islamic Cultural History	Recall vs. causal explanation with source respect	Timelines; separating source account from interpretation	Some causal links; some textbook repetition
T5 / Biology	Naming ecosystem roles vs. identifying local examples	Campus-plant observation; evidence record	Interest present; inference/observation confused
T6 / English	Language accuracy vs. fear of public error	Paired situation-card dialogues; message-first feedback	Pair participation rises; plenary hesitation persists

RQ2-Reflective narration as academically and morally situated positioning

Across the six designed stories, professional self-understanding is revised through more than the instrumental question of which teaching technique works. The teacher is portrayed as responsible for understanding as well as content coverage, for correction as well as learner dignity, and for disciplinary accuracy as well as access to participation. T1 and T6 especially frame the possible harm of public exposure or ridicule; T2 associates silence with fear of error rather than low capacity; T3 foregrounds fair pacing; T4 balances interpretive discussion with respectful treatment of sources; and T5 links subject inquiry to classroom safety and adequate evidence. These are distinctions built into the example cases, not verified frequency patterns among teachers at the school.

All six reflective-journal examples repeat a common template of academic responsibility, justice, exemplification, care and respect for student dignity. Such repetition suggests the

instrument is deliberately standardised, which is helpful for asking comparable questions but risky if treated as independently emergent testimony. For a publishable narrative study, each participant's distinctive language, hesitation, contradictory examples and actual revisions must be recovered from raw transcripts. This distinction is crucial to avoid creating an artificial consensus about what it means to be a good madrasah teacher.

RQ3-Emerging adjustment, heterogeneous feedback and unresolved outcomes

The modeled strategies move across different pedagogical forms—anonymised ethical cases, structured talk, local budgeting, historiographical timelines, field observation and low-stakes speaking rehearsal. Yet each case also describes an incompleteness: silence, uneven argument, calculation error, textbook copying, faulty inference or continuing presentation anxiety. These counterpoints matter because they portray early experimentation rather than a completed transformation. In the current version there are no authenticated repeated post-intervention observations or learning measures sufficient to infer long-term improvement.

The observation checklists in Sheet 4 consistently mark practices such as warm opening, open questions, contextual examples and non-shaming feedback. Several sentences are repeated verbatim across discipline-specific schedules. This repeated wording indicates that the forms are standardized exemplars; it cannot independently triangulate each purported event. The strongest verified resubmission would contrast each teacher's interview, journal and observation using dated, observer-authored descriptions and disconfirming student responses from separately collected records.

Narrative inquiry adds temporal tension and non-confirming responses

The six case templates supply a way to answer the reviewer's methodological concern: rather than stopping with themes such as service, reflection and transformation, each case contains a prior professional orientation, an incident that challenges it, a tension to be negotiated and an unfinished adjustment. As a proposed analytical grammar, this structure builds on narrative inquiry's concern with temporality and social relationships (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). The non-confirming outcomes illustrate why reflection should not be narrated as automatic progress. Still, this conceptual improvement alone cannot substitute for authentic participant voices and source-dependent chronology.

Madrasah identity as relationally accountable practice

The distinctive contribution proposed here is "relationally accountable narrative positioning": the teacher's professional story must become defensible to several audiences and values at once—disciplinary correctness, learners' participation and dignity, colleagues' advice, and the moral expectations of a madrasah. In the T1 illustration, discussing bullying must protect potentially affected students; in T4, critical historical interpretation must remain accountable to evidence and respectful language. In T6, corrective linguistic authority is constrained by psychological safety. This is not a claim that only Islamic schools exhibit these responsibilities; it specifies how an Islamic school's moral vocabulary may enter already complex professional dilemmas. Related scholarship on teacher identity and reflective practice provides theoretical comparison (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Brookfield, 2017; Bham, 2025; Tambak et al., 2026).

Revised conceptual model: a recursive rather than linear process

The original diagram's fixed path from classroom experience to identity to transformed teaching risks implying causation and completion. The revised model starts with a consequential episode, moves through reflective interpretation and normative judgment, produces a tentative pedagogical action, and receives feedback that may support, qualify or contradict the teacher's account. The loop then returns to the next understanding of both the teacher's role and learners' needs. Colleagues and leaders may participate in this feedback environment.

Table 3. Provisional recursive narrative model (analytical proposition)

1. Classroom tension ↔	2. Reflective interpretation ↔	3. Provisional action ↔	4. Response and return ↔
Trigger, prior self-positioning, affect and discipline-specific dilemma	Student dignity, academic judgment, Islamic/madrasah moral vocabulary, alternatives	Questioning, paired talk, local example, observation, source interpretation	Uneven student responses; colleague dialogue; further action and renewed reflection

The two-way arrows represent potential revisiting of earlier interpretations; institutional culture forms the surrounding context rather than a final validating stage. The model should be tested with original time-linked accounts, including cases that do not change their practice.

Implications, limits and the conditions for an empirical claim

If the proposed mechanism is supported by the eventual primary records, teacher development could value confidential post-lesson narratives, peer interpretation of difficult moments and student feedback without reducing reflection to an inspection checklist. Particularly in mixed-ability classes, the pedagogical aim is not merely to make pupils speak more often but to investigate whose understanding improves, who remains silent and whether lessons protect student dignity alongside curricular demands.

CONCLUSION

The Read strictly as an instrument-derived analytical draft, the six model cases illustrate how madrasah teachers' professional identities might be negotiated through particular classroom tensions: responding to ethically sensitive discussion, fear of mistakes, contextual reasoning gaps, the respectful interpretation of religious history, the reliability of scientific observation and public-speaking anxiety. They show the value of tracing an initial orientation through a triggering episode, reflection, a tentative teaching response and mixed student reactions. The conceptual proposition is relationally accountable narrative positioning, in which instructional judgment and moral responsibility remain open to revision through dialogue and feedback. This working material proves that those episodes occurred as described, nor that any adjustment persisted.

DECLARATION

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT to assist with language refinement, academic writing structure, and manuscript organization. The authors subsequently reviewed, verified, and edited the content and accept full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the publication.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.
Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.
Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

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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