

Islamic Religious-based Local Content Curriculum in Madrasah Tsanawiyah: A Multi-Site Study in Pekan Tanjung Pura

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the similarities and differences in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the religious-based local content curriculum in three different MTs, namely MTs Jam'iyah Mahmudiyah Tanjung Pura, MTs Yaspand Muslim Pematang Tengah, and MTs Pondok Pesantren Islam Shuffah Hizbullah Al-Fatah. The methods used are cross-site analysis, purposive sampling, internal sampling, time sampling, and data collection techniques using interviews, observation, and documentation. The results showed similarities in objectives, principles, scope, steps, materials, and evaluation of the local content curriculum, which aims to preserve Islamic values and improve students' understanding and religious practices. Differences are seen in the types of local content used, namely Malay Arabic script, Qur'an memorisation, and Qur'an memorisation, emphasising pesantren. This difference reflects the needs and local context of each madrasah. This study provides an overview of the practice of religion-based local content curricula in MTs and its implications for forming students' character and religious identity. It also suggests further research on the long-term impact of differences in implementing the local content curriculum on students' character-building and religious identity.

Keywords: Religious education; Local curriculum; Character and identity

Introduction

Education, as one of the main pillars in the development of a nation, plays a vital role in shaping the character and morals of the next generation. In Islamic education, innovations in local religious-based curriculum development have attracted attention.¹ This article aims to analyse the development of an Islamic Religious-based curriculum at three sandwich madrasahs in Pekan Tanjung Pura, namely MTs Jam'iyah Mahmudiyah, MTs Yaspand Muslim Pematang Tengah, and MTs Pondok Pesantren Islam Shuffah Hizbullah Al-Fatah.

This study aims to explore the implementation of the Islamic religious-based local content curriculum in three sanawiah madrasahs in Pekan Tanjung Pura. This research was initiated by the Langkat District government policy that regulates the local content curriculum and extracurricular activities as part of implementing the Nawa Cita launched by the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Mr. Joko Widodo.² The focus of this policy is to promote the revolution of national character, in line with the vision and mission of Langkat Regency to become a religious society.³

This research problem focuses on implementing the Islamic religious-based local content curriculum in Sanawiah madrasahs, Islamic educational institutions with unique characteristics. This research fills the knowledge gap by presenting a multi-site study approach, which allows for comparing and contrasting the different contexts in each madrasa, thus providing a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of the curriculum and its contribution to the preservation of Islamic values in the context of education.

Research on religious-based local content curricula in madrasahs has become an academic concern. The concept of curriculum development involves three phases: construction,⁴ implementation,⁵ and evaluation.⁶ In addition, Islamic religious local

¹ Desi Erawati and Rahmayanti Rahmayanti, "Development of Local Wisdom-Based Islamic Education Learning Material for Secondary School Students: A Design-Based Research," *Jurnal Iqra': Kajian Ilmu Pendidikan* 6, no. 2 (2021): 148–65.

² Asep Supriyadi et al., "Nawa Cita as Core Value of Culture-Based Character Education," *JIIIP-Scientific Journal of Education Science* 5, no. 9 (2022): 3755-3763.

³ Azizul Kholis et al., *Regional Development in Macro and Micro Perspectives* (Unisma Press, 2021).

⁴ Magdalena Magdalena, "Construction of Kaffah Muslims in Integrated Curriculum in Integrated Islamic Schools," *Proceeding IAIN Batusangkar* 1, no. 1 (2017): 477-488.

⁵ Moch Sya'roni Hasan and Solechan Solechan, "Implementation of Islamic Religious Local Content Policy at SMP Negeri 2 Kabuh Jombang," *Nidhomul Haq: Journal of Islamic Education Management* 7, no. 1 (2022): 135-143.

⁶ LulunSofiana Sari, "Evaluation Of Local Content Curriculum At Smk Negeri 1 Purwokerto" (IAIN, 2020).

content in the context of formal learning in madrasahs has become an evolution of the general learning system.⁷

This study explores the factors that influence the implementation of the Islamic religious-based local content curriculum in three sanawiah madrasahs in Pekan Tanjung Pura. A multi-site study approach was used to compare and analyse the different contexts in each madrasah. This method allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the implementation of the curriculum. This research is based on an analysis of previous research relevant to this topic, which includes aspects such as Andhika Wirabhakti,⁸ research examining local content learning, Indana & Sholichah research,⁹ Imam Hidayat and Mukhamad Hamid Samiaji,¹⁰ Khoirul Anwar,¹¹ Farihah,¹² exploring the local content curriculum. Meanwhile, the research of Buhari Luneto and Saiful Amien¹³ examines the madrasah experience. Thus, this research contributes new insights and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence the successful implementation of the curriculum in different madrasah contexts.

This article highlights the novelty in the research context, namely differences in implementing a religious-based local content curriculum at the Jam'iyah Mahmudiyah Tanjung Pura Islamic boarding school, making the local content in Malay Arabic script. In contrast, in the Yaspand Muslim Pematang Tengah Islamic boarding school, this religious local content is implemented in the subject of this Al-Qur'an; the next is the Islamic boarding school MTs Shuffah Hizbullah Al-Fatah Tanjung Pura. This pesantren-based madrasah includes local content in its curriculum in cottage-based religious

⁷ Siti Nurkayati, "Implementation of Pesantren-Based Local Content Curriculum at SMP A. Wahid Hasyim Tebuireng Jombang," *Journal of Industrial Engineering & Management Research* 2, no. 4 (2021): 318-329.

⁸ Andhika Wirabhakti, "Implementation of Curriculum Management and Learning of Local Content of the Boarding School Program at School," *NIZĀMULILMI: Journal of Islamic Education Management* 6, no. 1 (2021): 49-61.

⁹ Nurul Indana and Yekti Indah Nur Sholichah, "Concept Of Local Religious Content Kurikulum A Solution For The Improvement Of Islamic LearninG," *ILJ: Islamic Learning Journal* 1, no. 1 (2023): 120-143.

¹⁰ Imam Hidayat and Mukhamad Hamid Samiaji, "Strengthening Student Religious Moderation Based On Local Wisdom In The Tsanawiyah Madrasah Environment," *Jurnal Nusantara Raya* 2, no. 3 (2023): 181-189.

¹¹ Khoirul Anwar, "Implementation of Religious Local Charge Curriculum in the Formation of Religious Culture at SMPN 2 Ngoro Jombang," *Ilmuna: Journal of Islamic Education Studies* 4, no. 2 (2022): 173-190.

¹² Abidah Lailatul Farihah, Khoirul Umam, and Rofika Mutmainnah Sari, "Diversity Local Charge Curriculum in Forming a Religious Culture: Case Study at Islamic Junior High School Raudlatul Ulum Brangkal Bandar Kedungmuljo Jombang," *Education, Learning, and Islamic Journal* 2, no. 1 (2020): 98-110.

¹³ Saiful Amien, "Curriculum Review of Madrasah Aliyah Muhammadiyah (Mam) I Malang," *Progresiva* 3, no. 2 (2010): 162321.

subjects for example, Nahu saraf and TahfizAl-Qur'an and other yellow book learning. However, currently, the most prominent local content is this Al-Qur'an.

This study will examine local governments' involvement, the times' demands, and the challenges of globalisation, making religion-based education a solution to maintaining moral and religious values in a society affected by technological advances. This article aims to describe and analyse in depth the implementation of the Islamic religious-based local content curriculum in three Tsanawiah Pekan Tanjung Pura madrasahs, contributing to the understanding of the context of Islamic education, as well as presenting its urgency and uniqueness among previous studies.

Methods

This study aims to explore the implementation of the religion-based local content curriculum. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study and multi-site design.¹⁴ This approach was chosen because it is by the nature of the study, which is to explore phenomena in a natural context.¹⁵ The multi-site design was used to compare and analyse different contexts in each madrasah. The research sample consisted of three sanawiah madrasahs that have Islamic religious-based local content curriculum, namely MTs Jam'iyah Mahmudiyah Tanjung Pura, MTs Yaspand Muslim Pematang Tengah, and MTs Pondok Pesantren Islam Shuffah Hizbullah Al-Fatah Tanjung Pura.

Purposive, internal, and time sampling techniques were used to select samples that fit the research criteria. The data sources included the head of the madrasah, the head of the curriculum, local content teachers, and students from the three madrasahs. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were made to see the process of developing an Islamic religious-based local content curriculum in each madrasah. Interviews were conducted to obtain information from sources directly involved with the curriculum. Documentation was undertaken to collect records relevant to the research, such as curriculum documents, syllabi, lesson plans, and evaluation results. The data collected was analysed using thematic analysis techniques.

¹⁴ John.W Creswell, *Culaitative Research & Research Design Choosing Between Five Approaches*, (3rd ed. (Student Library, 2005).

¹⁵ Amir Hamzah, *Research Methods Case Study Single Case, Instrumental Case, Multicase & Multisite Equipped with Examples of Process Stages and Research Results* (CV Literasi Nusantara Abadi, 2021).

The stages of analysis include data reduction, data presentation, verification, and conclusion. The study looked for patterns, themes, and relationships in the data collected.¹⁶ Data validity and research conclusions were checked through long-term participation, persistence, and triangulation. Long-term involvement and persistence were done to build trust and a deep understanding of the research context. Triangulation was done by checking data consistency from various sources and methods and through continuous verification throughout the research. Initial conclusions were tentatively drawn and continually validated with new data discoveries throughout the research.

Variant Analysis of Religion-based Local Content Curriculum in Madrasah Tsanawiyah Pekan Tanjung Pura

The religious-based local content curriculum at MTs Jam'iyah Mahmudiyah Tanjung Pura is one of the madrasah's efforts to preserve and develop Islamic values among students. The curriculum emphasises using Malay Arabic script as one of the madrasah's cultural and scientific heritage and Quran memorisation as one of the leading programs in religious education. The curriculum is developed and implemented by involving the active role of teachers, the head of the curriculum, and the head of the madrasah, and is supported by appropriate learning resources. The curriculum is also evaluated regularly to monitor student development and improve the quality of education.

Planning the religious-based local content curriculum at MTs Jam'iyah Mahmudiyah Tanjung Pura is carried out by identifying subjects and local content needs based on the madrasah's characteristics. This planning process includes the preparation of Prota, Prosem, and syllabus, which become references in the implementation of learning. In formulating the learning materials, local content teachers work with the head of the curriculum and the head of the madrasah, considering the time allocation of about 2 hours per week. The learning resources used are local content pocket books published by the foundation, which contain the presentation of Malay Arabic script and how to write it. The local content curriculum is evaluated on a semester and weekly basis using written, oral, or practical tests. The results of this evaluation become the basis for decision-making related to learning activities and curriculum development.

¹⁶ Sugiyono, *Quantitative, Qualitative, and R&D*, ed. Alfabeta (Bandung, 2019).

Implementing the religious-based local content curriculum at MTs Jam'iyah Mahmudiyah Tanjung Pura is directed at developing its local content within the scope of the madrasah and evaluating its effectiveness in strengthening Islamic values among students. Local content teachers play an active role in strategising curriculum implementation, using various practical methods and media. The implementation of this curriculum is supported by a guidebook that has existed since the Mahtab period until it became the current madrasah sanawiyah. The Qur'an memorisation curriculum is the main program in the local content in this madrasah, with an allocation of 6 hours per week.

Although this time is less than required for Qur'an memorisation in Islamic boarding schools, it remains an integral part of religious education in madrasah. Tahfiz Al-Qur'an is not only a means to memorise the Al-Qur'an but also an effort to instil Islamic values through interaction between students and teachers. Meanwhile, the planning and implementing of a religious-based local content curriculum at MTs Yaspend Muslim Pematang Tengah is one form of madrasah's efforts to preserve and develop Islamic values among students. This curriculum emphasises Al-Qur'an as one of the leading programs in religious education. The curriculum is designed and implemented by involving the active role of teachers, the head of curriculum, and the head of the madrasah, and is supported by appropriate learning resources. The curriculum is also evaluated regularly to monitor student development and improve the quality of education.

The planning of the religious-based local content curriculum at MTs Yaspend Muslim Pematang Tengah is carried out through a formation meeting at the beginning of the semester, which aims to regulate the policy and development of local content in the madrasah before the start of the new school year. In this meeting, it was determined that the religious-based local content in this madrasah is Al-Qur'an, which was chosen to preserve Islamic values among students. Previously, the madrasah used Arabic Malay script as the basis of the local content, but in the last two years, it switched to the local content of Qur'anic tahfiz. This was done to ensure that every madrasah graduate could at least memorise Juz 30 of the Qur'an with excellent and correct recitation.

In addition, this Al-Qur'an is also considered to affect students' behaviour in daily life, where they are trained to maintain manners and use time more effectively for valuable activities, such as improving the recitation of the Qur'an. This curriculum

planning determines the competency standards, indicators, learning materials, learning strategies, and learning evaluations that must be achieved in the Qur'an memorisation process.

The implementation of the religious-based local content curriculum, especially in the context of this Al-Qur'an at MTs Yaspand Muslim, signifies a concrete step in the effort to preserve Islamic values among students. This implementation not only follows the work plan that has been prepared but also shows the commitment of the madrasah to actualising the religious programs that have been planned. During the observation process, it was found that the time allocation for the Qur'an memorisation program at MTs Yaspand Muslim is 6 hours per week. Although this time is less than required for Qur'an memorisation in Islamic boarding schools, this curriculum remains integral to religious education in madrasahs. The main goal is to memorise 30 juz of the Qur'an and ensure that every student understands its contents, especially the chapters usually recited in prayer.

The implementation of the tahfiz Al-Qur'an curriculum also creates an Islamic culture that is integrated into the daily life of the madrasah. For example, students are accustomed to reciting surah Yasin together in the madrasah courtyard on Friday mornings. This strengthens Islamic values in students, forms good habits, and deepens understanding of the Qur'an.

Describing the planning and implementation of the religious-based local content curriculum at MTs Pondok Pesantren Islam Shuffah Hizbullah Al-Fatah is one form of madrasah's efforts to preserve and develop Islamic values among students. This curriculum emphasises Al-Qur'an as one of the leading programs in religious education. The curriculum is designed and implemented by involving the active role of teachers, the head of curriculum, and the head of the madrasah, and supported by appropriate learning resources. The curriculum is also evaluated regularly to monitor student development and improve the quality of education.

Planning the religious-based local content curriculum at MTs Pondok Pesantren Islam Shuffah Hizbullah Al-Fatah is carried out by paying attention to the principles of curriculum development, preparation steps, and the scope of material to be delivered to students. The planning process determined that the religious-based local content in this madrasah is Al-Qur'an, which was chosen to preserve Islamic values among students.

Tahfiz Al-Qur'an becomes the main program in the local content in this madrasa, with a minimum benchmark of Al-Qur'an memorisation that students must achieve in three years of learning in this sanawiah madrasa. For this year, it has been determined that students must memorise a minimum of 10 juz of the Qur'an as a graduation requirement.

This curriculum planning determines the competency standards, indicators, learning materials, learning strategies, and learning evaluations that must be achieved in the Qur'an memorisation process. The importance of synergy between the head of curriculum and teachers is also highlighted to ensure a proper understanding of the material to be delivered. Good communication between related parties is usually conveyed in routine monthly and teacher meetings so that learning can be well-planned and conducive.

The implementation of the religious-based local content curriculum, especially in the context of this Al-Qur'an, at MTs Pondok Pesantren Islam Shuffah Hizbullah Al-Fatah, signifies a concrete step in the effort to preserve Islamic values among students. This implementation not only follows the work plan that has been prepared but also shows the commitment of the madrasah to actualising the religious programs that have been planned.

During the observation process, it was found that the time allocation for the Qur'an memorisation program in this madrasah is 6 hours per week. Although this time is less than required for Qur'an memorisation in Islamic boarding schools, this curriculum remains integral to religious education in the madrasah. The main objective is to memorise 30 juz of the Qur'an and ensure that every student understands its content, especially the chapters usually recited in prayer. The implementation of this Qur'an memorisation curriculum also creates an Islamic culture that is integrated into the daily life of the madrasah. For example, students are accustomed to reciting surah Yasin together in the madrasah courtyard on Friday mornings. This strengthens Islamic values in students, forms good habits, and deepens understanding of the Qur'an.

Evaluation of the religious-based local content curriculum at MTs Pondok Pesantren Islam Shuffah Hizbullah Al-Fatah is carried out regularly, both per semester and weekly, to ensure students' progress in understanding learning materials. This evaluation measures student achievement and provides valuable insight into improving and enhancing the quality of Islamic education in the madrasah.

Flexible Strategies in Curriculum Design: Accommodating Local Needs and Characteristics in Madrasah Tsanawiyah

Cross-site analysis shows that there are similarities in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the religious-based local content curriculum at MTs Jam'iyah Mahmudiyah Tanjung Pura, MTs Yaspeng Muslim Pematang Tengah, and MTs Pondok Pesantren Islam Shuffah Hizbullah Al-Fatah.

Similarities in Curriculum Planning: All three madrasahs pay attention to regional and madrasah needs and the demands of the national curriculum in planning the local content curriculum. They also pay attention to the principles of development, scope, and steps of preparing porta, prose, and syllabus, focusing on preserving Islamic values.

Similarities in implementing the local content curriculum in the three madrasahs aim to preserve Islamic values. Learning materials are presented in lesson plans or Prota and Prosem. Tahfiz Al-Qur'an is a religious local content to help students understand and memorise the Al-Qur'an and improve morals.¹⁷ **Similarities in Curriculum Evaluation** The three madrasahs use semester and weekly evaluations to see the development of the local content curriculum. This evaluation helps in determining learning policies and developing curriculum and learning systems. The assessment is carried out by bringing students' achievement books to see the progress of the subject matter and identify the obstacles faced.¹⁸

There are differences in planning, implementation, and evaluation: first, There is no significant difference in the planning steps of the local content curriculum in the three madrasahs. Second, Implementation: The difference lies in the type of local content used. MTs Jam'iyah Mahmudiyah uses the Malay Arabic script local content curriculum, while the other two madrasahs use this Al-Qur'an. There is also a difference in the time allocation for this Al-Qur'an between madrasahs based on Islamic boarding schools and those not. Third, Evaluation: There is no significant difference in the evaluation steps of the local content curriculum in the three madrasahs.

Although there are some differences in the implementation of the local content curriculum, the main objective of the three madrasahs remains the same, namely

¹⁷ Abdul Haiy Abdul Sali and Arlyne Canales Marasigan, "Madrasah Education Program Implementation in the Philippines: An Exploratory Case Study," *International Journal of Comparative Education and Development* 22, no. 3 (2020): 201–17.

¹⁸ Herman Susilo et al., "Madrasah Quality Improvement Management," *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 01 (2021).

preserving Islamic values and improving students' understanding and religious practices. Regular evaluations also help to monitor and improve the quality of learning in each madrasah.

This study found that the three MTs (Madrasah Tsanawiyah) that became the research object had similarities in planning, implementing, and evaluating the religious-based local content curriculum.¹⁹ They have the same focus on preserving Islamic values and improving students' understanding and religious practices. However, there are differences in the types of local content used, namely Malay Arabic script, Qur'an memorisation, and Qur'an memorisation emphasising pesantren.²⁰

Although there are differences in the implementation of the local content curriculum between the three MTs, the main objectives of the three madrasahs remain consistent, namely preserving Islamic values and improving students' understanding and religious practices. The different approaches to implementation reflect variations in each madrasah's local needs and contexts.

The long-term impact of differences in implementing the local content curriculum on forming students' character and religious identity. Will the Malay Arabic script more effectively maintain Islamic cultural heritage in specific areas than the Qur'an memorisation approach, which focuses more on memorisation? From these findings, it can be concluded that although there are variations in the implementation of the local content curriculum, the ultimate goal of religious education in MTs remains consistent, namely to strengthen students' Islamic identity and spiritual understanding. This confirms the importance of flexibility in curriculum design to accommodate each madrasah's local needs and characteristics.²¹

In addition, this research complements previous research, highlighting the importance of the local content curriculum in religious education. Mohamad Erihadiana's research describes implementing the local Islamic content curriculum through curricular,

¹⁹ Puspo Nugroho and Wifda Untsa Nailufaz, "Religious Moderation and Local Religious Content Curriculum: A Study of the Internalization of the Religious Moderation Values in Madrasa," *Penamas* 35, no. 1 (2022): 131–46.

²⁰ Rosnani Hashim, Saheed Ahmad Rufai, and Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, "Traditional Islamic Education in Asia and Africa: A Comparative Study of Malaysia's Pondok, Indonesia's Pesantren and Nigeria's Traditional Madrasah," *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization* 1, no. 2 (2011): 94–107.

²¹ Saipul Umar and Agung Gumelar, "Madrasa Committee Participation in the Implementation of the Integrated Curriculum as an Effort to Strengthen the Profile of Madrasah Aliyah Institutions," *Progressive of Cognitive and Ability* 2, no. 3 (2023): 157–70.

co-curricular, and extracurricular programs at Al-Amanah Cileunyi Junior High School to shape student character according to Islamic morals. Likewise, Imam Mawardi's research,²² which examines the superior local Islamic content curriculum at Al Firdaus Islamic Elementary School, is carried out through planning, organising, implementing, and controlling. However, this study adds to the understanding by showing variations in curriculum implementation in various madrasahs. Differences in the types of local content and implementation approaches offer flexibility in designing a curriculum that suits local needs and madrasah characteristics.²³

This study has some limitations that need to be noted. Firstly, the limited sample size reduces the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, the qualitative data collection method requires subjective interpretation and is prone to researcher bias. Thirdly, the absence of a comparative study with other madrasahs using different local content curricula limits understanding of the variation and impact of local content curricula. Therefore, further research is needed to test the validity and reliability of these findings and answer open questions, such as the long-term impact of different local content curriculum implementations on students' character-building and religious identity. Further research could also examine the factors that influence the success and challenges in planning, implementing and evaluating the religion-based local content curriculum in MTs and provide recommendations to improve the quality and relevance of the local content curriculum in MTs.

Conclusion

This study aims to analyse the similarities and differences in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of religion-based local content curriculum in three different MTs, namely MTs Jam'iyah Mahmudiyah Tanjung Pura, MTs Yaspend Muslim Pematang Tengah, and MTs Pondok Pesantren Islam Shuffah Hizbullah Al-Fatah. The results showed that the three MTs have similarities in objectives, principles, scope, steps, materials, and evaluation of the local content curriculum, which aims to preserve Islamic

²² Imam Mawardi, "Superior Local Content Curriculum Development Management of Al Firdaus Islamic Elementary School," in *1st Borobudur International Symposium on Humanities, Economics and Social Sciences (BIS-HESS 2019)* (Atlantis Press, 2020), 303-307.

²³ Nabila Zakiya et al., "Management Integrative Curriculum for Modern Islamic Boarding Schools Based on Kulliyatul Mu'allimin Al Islamiyyah," *Nidhomul Haq: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 3 (2023): 541-53.

values and improve students' understanding and religious practices. Differences are seen in the types of local content used, namely Malay Arabic script, Qur'an memorisation, and Qur'an memorisation, emphasising pesantren. This difference reflects the needs and local context of each madrasah.

This study has limitations, such as the limited sample size, the primarily qualitative data collection methods, and the lack of comparative studies with other madrasahs that use different local content curricula. Therefore, further research is needed to test the validity and reliability of these findings and answer open questions, such as the long-term impact of differences in local content curriculum implementation on students' character-building and religious identity. Further research can also examine the factors that influence the success and challenges in planning, implementing, and evaluating the religious-based local content curriculum in MTs and provide recommendations to improve the quality and relevance of the local content curriculum in MTs.

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