

INNOVATION IN THE ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM: A CASE STUDY OF NURURRAHMAN INTEGRATED ISLAMIC SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the innovation of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum at SMAIT Nururrahman, particularly in the aspects of curriculum design, instructional implementation, religious habituation, and the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence its enactment. This qualitative case study involved PAI teachers, the vice principal for curriculum affairs, and students as key informants. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana. The findings show that SMAIT Nururrahman integrates the Independent Curriculum with an Islamic-based curriculum emphasizing worship habituation, tahfiz programs, and character centered learning. Innovations are reflected in various learning methods such as discussion, case studies, PBL, PJBL, and the use of digital technology through LMS and interactive media. Religious habituation such as daily Qur'an recitation, congregational prayers, MABIT, and dauroh effectively contributes to students' spiritual development. Supporting factors include teacher commitment, adequate facilities, and school policies, while challenges arise from limited technological mastery among some teachers and classroom management issues during certain learning hours. Overall, the innovation of the PAI curriculum at SMAIT Nururrahman positively impacts students' discipline, learning motivation, and religious character.

Keywords: curriculum innovation, Islamic Religious Education, religious habituation, Independent Curriculum, SMAIT Nururrahman.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan inovasi kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di SMAIT Nururrahman, terutama dalam aspek desain kurikulum, implementasi pembelajaran, pembiasaan religius, serta faktor pendukung dan penghambat pelaksanaannya. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus, melibatkan guru PAI, wakil kepala sekolah bidang kurikulum, dan siswa sebagai informan utama. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis dengan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldana. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa SMAIT Nururrahman mengintegrasikan Kurikulum Merdeka dengan kurikulum keislaman yang menekankan pembiasaan ibadah, kegiatan tahfiz, dan pembelajaran berbasis karakter. Inovasi tampak pada variasi metode pembelajaran seperti diskusi, studi kasus, PBL, PJBL, serta pemanfaatan teknologi digital melalui LMS dan media interaktif. Pembiasaan religius seperti tilawah, shalat

berjamaah, mabit, dan dauroh terbukti efektif membentuk karakter spiritual siswa. Faktor pendukung meliputi komitmen guru, dukungan fasilitas, dan kebijakan sekolah, sementara hambatan muncul pada penguasaan teknologi sebagian guru dan manajemen kelas pada jam belajar tertentu. Secara keseluruhan, inovasi kurikulum PAI di SMAIT Nururrahman memberikan dampak positif terhadap peningkatan kedisiplinan, motivasi belajar, dan religiusitas siswa.

Kata kunci: *inovasi kurikulum, Pendidikan Agama Islam, pembiasaan religius, Kurikulum Merdeka, SMAIT Nururrahman.*

INTRODUCTION

The curriculum holds an essential position in determining the direction and quality of education, as it encompasses the objectives, materials, methods, and evaluations that function as a unified system to achieve learning goals. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the curriculum is not only a technical instrument but also a strategic tool for shaping the religious character of students based on Islamic values. However, social, cultural, and technological developments in the era of globalization demand innovations in the PAI curriculum so that it becomes more relevant, adaptive, and contextual to the needs of contemporary learners.

Several studies indicate that PAI in schools often still focuses on cognitive aspects and has not optimally developed affective and psychomotor domains. Muhaimin emphasizes that PAI learning tends to be isolated and less integrated with habits and students' life experiences, thus requiring reforms that address all areas of students' development more holistically. In the context of a multicultural society such as Indonesia, Muflihin points out that the PAI curriculum must play a role in instilling local wisdom values to maintain interreligious harmony. A curriculum capable of internalizing local cultural values such as tolerance, mutual cooperation, and empathy will be more effective in shaping moderate and inclusive attitudes among students (Muflihin, 2020).

Meanwhile, from a managerial perspective, Fitroh's study stresses that strategic PAI curriculum development must be carried out through planning based on the educational institution's vision and mission. Their research shows that in leading Islamic schools such as SMA Islam PB Soedirman Bekasi, the PAI curriculum is even integrated into all subjects. This highlights the importance of the PAI curriculum in shaping a comprehensive Islamic school culture, not merely as a subject matter (Fitroh, 2024). The development of the digital era and globalization brings new challenges to the implementation of PAI. Learners are now confronted with various contemporary issues such as radicalism, intolerance, and moral degradation, which require more adaptive and contextual learning approaches. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated digital transformation in education, including PAI, necessitating innovations in teaching methods and evaluation strategies.

Curriculum innovation refers to educational ideas or practices perceived as new by individuals or communities to achieve educational goals or address educational problems. In the context of PAI, curriculum innovation becomes crucial considering the social

dynamics and evolving challenges of the times, while the Islamic values being taught must remain authentic.

Furthermore, the relevance of curriculum innovation to the demands of the 21st century has been emphasized in various literature studies. Wijayanti, Nasution, and Satria state that curriculum innovation is a crucial aspect in preparing the young generation to face the challenges of globalization and rapid technological advancement. Their research highlights that modern curriculum development must include technological literacy, character education, and project-based learning to equip students with critical thinking, collaborative, creative, and communicative skills. The success of such curriculum innovation largely depends on teacher readiness, institutional support, comprehensive educational policies, and adequate resources. These findings reinforce the importance of further examining how curriculum innovations and technological integration are implemented in Islamic Religious Education, particularly in Islamic-based schools facing similar challenges in aligning the curriculum with contemporary needs (Wijayanti, 2025).

However, real-world conditions show that the implementation of the PAI curriculum still faces many obstacles. The existing PAI curriculum is often rigid, not contextual, and less adaptive to societal developments, technology, and the needs of learners (Muzakkir, 2024). On the other hand, the need to present a PAI curriculum that integrates local wisdom and technological development has become a necessity (Hayati, 2022).

A number of global and national education figures have expressed support for curriculum innovation in addressing 21st-century educational challenges. John Dewey, for example, encouraged curriculum development based on students' experiences and continuous adaptation to social dynamics. Howard Gardner, through his Multiple Intelligences theory, emphasizes that the curriculum must be innovative and accommodate various types of learner intelligences. In Indonesia, Ki Hajar Dewantara stressed the importance of contextual education, while Nadiem Makarim, as Minister of Education, introduced the Merdeka Curriculum as a form of curriculum innovation designed to meet students' needs. Meanwhile, conservative thinkers such as E. D. Hirsch Jr. reject major curriculum changes, arguing that they may obscure the essential knowledge standards that all students must master. This debate shows that curriculum innovation is not only a technical issue but also a philosophical one, and it is important to be studied deeply within the context of Islamic Religious Education.

Curriculum innovation emerges as a response to these challenges. Innovation does not merely mean updating content but also renewing approaches, methods, strategies, and integrating new values such as local wisdom and religious moderation (Hafizon, 2022). Unfortunately, PAI curriculum innovation practices often remain top-down (instruction-based) and do not involve teachers as the main implementers of the curriculum (Hayati, 2022). Alif Achadah's research emphasizes the need for PAI curriculum innovation through an integrative approach between religious values and digital technology. He

highlights the importance of blended learning and the use of technological media to shape graduates with strong character and adaptability to change.

In Kusuma's research, the emergence of curriculum innovation is driven by changes in the times, which give rise to various problems individually and collectively, prompting schools to innovate their curricula in diverse ways. As explained by Hamalik: (1) there are innovations developed to address relevance issues such as local content programs in primary and secondary school curricula, and (2) innovations aimed at responding to challenges (Hamalik, 2016).

In this context, SMAIT Nururrahman, as an integrated Islamic school, presents curriculum innovations that combine the National Curriculum with a habit-based religious curriculum. The school implements religious programs such as daily tilawah, congregational prayer, tahfiz, mentoring, and other worship activities as integral components of the PAI curriculum. The integration of religious values with intracurricular, extracurricular, and daily habits is a distinctive feature of the curriculum innovation at this institution, aimed at shaping graduates with noble character, discipline, and a strong enthusiasm for knowledge. Furthermore, the use of digital technology in PAI learning, along with varied methods such as discussions, case studies, peer tutoring, and project-based learning, constitutes part of the instructional renewal strategies at SMAIT Nururrahman. These diverse innovations demonstrate systematic efforts to make PAI more engaging, relevant, and closely connected to students' lives, as well as to support the sustainable development of religious character.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, as the researcher seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of the practices of curriculum innovation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) implemented at SMAIT Nururrahman. This approach was chosen to allow the phenomena under investigation to be interpreted comprehensively within the natural context in which the research takes place. The research subjects include PAI teachers, the vice principal for curriculum affairs, and students, as they are directly involved in the planning and implementation processes of curriculum innovation. Meanwhile, the primary objects of the research encompass various forms of PAI curriculum innovation at the school, ranging from teaching methods and instructional material development to strategies for fostering students' religious character.

Data collection was carried out through interviews, observations, and document analysis, which were then examined using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. This analysis consists of three main cyclical stages. The first is data reduction, which involves selecting, simplifying, and focusing raw data to align with the research objectives. Irrelevant data are eliminated, while relevant information is categorized into themes such as teaching methods, material development, and character-building strategies. The second stage is data display, presented in the form of descriptive narratives, tables, or other visualizations to help the researcher identify patterns and connections among the data. The third stage involves drawing conclusions or verification

through re-examining data from multiple sources (triangulation) to ensure the validity of the findings. Through this analytical procedure, the study aims to provide a clear and in-depth description of how PAI curriculum innovation is designed and implemented at SMAIT Nururrahman, as well as its impact on students' development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Curriculum Innovation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMAIT Nururrahman

Curriculum innovation defined as the development of new ideas or practices while retaining valuable elements of the previous curriculum plays an essential role in addressing various educational challenges. Curriculum reform functions not only to overcome obstacles in the learning process but also to respond to broader societal changes that influence the effectiveness of educational implementation (Hafizon, 2022). This principle is reflected in the curriculum development efforts at SMAIT Nururrahman. SMAIT Nururrahman implements the Merdeka Curriculum for grades X and XI, while grade XII continues to use the 2013 Curriculum. The hallmark of their innovation lies in the integration of the national curriculum with an integrated Islamic curriculum, emphasizing character formation through instructional activities and religious habituation. The primary goal is to cultivate Muslim youth with noble character, strong academic competence, and the ability to adapt to contemporary developments.

The curriculum design represents a synthesis between national standards and the school's Islamic educational vision. On one hand, the Merdeka Curriculum promotes student-centered learning, creativity, independence, and critical thinking. On the other hand, the integration of Islamic values strengthens the curriculum with moral and spiritual dimensions, ensuring that students develop both intellectual proficiency and virtuous character. Curriculum planning is carried out with consideration for learners' needs, modern societal challenges, and feedback from subject teachers. The intended outcomes focus on producing graduates who embody Islamic values, excel academically, and are responsive to current developments. The integration of the Merdeka Curriculum with religious programs such as tahfiz, Arabic language instruction, daily tilawah, and congregational prayer serves as a strategic approach to achieving these goals.

This integrated model demonstrates that the school's curriculum innovation extends beyond administrative compliance; it is fundamentally oriented toward character development and spiritual formation. Such an approach aligns with Tyler's principle that curriculum design must begin with clearly defined objectives based on student needs, contemporary societal demands, and expert recommendations (Blum, 1987). Thus, SMAIT Nururrahman's curriculum reflects its commitment to preparing knowledgeable, ethical, and globally competent Muslim learners.

2. Implementation of PAI Curriculum Innovations

a. Intracurricular and Extracurricular Activities

The implementation of the curriculum at SMAIT Nururrahman demonstrates innovation in teaching methods, technology integration, and religious character habituation. The advancement of digital learning has brought significant transformation to education, enabling teachers and students to explore more dynamic, flexible, and efficient learning approaches. Digital technologies enhance access to information, enrich instructional methods, and create more interactive and engaging learning experiences (Pratiwi, 2022).

In delivering PAI instruction, teachers are encouraged to apply contextual approaches by linking religious content to current issues and students' everyday experiences. This relevance enables learners to understand how Islamic teachings apply within contemporary life, fostering deeper appreciation and meaningful engagement (Lingga, 2025).

1) Learning Methods

Islamic Religious Education learning methods are ways or techniques used to make the learning process more effective and efficient so that learning objectives can be achieved, namely that students are able to know, understand, and master all the material taught. In its application, the selection of methods must consider various important aspects, such as the potential and characteristics of students, teacher competence, the type of material being studied, learning conditions and situations, and the availability of supporting media and facilities. No matter how well-designed the Islamic Education method is, without the support of these factors, the learning process will not run optimally and the results will not achieve the expected effectiveness (Syar'I, 2020).

Based on the results of interviews and observations, PAI teachers at this school often use lectures and discussions because they are considered the most effective in delivering material, especially in the subjects of fiqh, aqidah, and Islamic history. However, teachers also combine learning methods with group discussions, case studies, peer tutoring, and educational games so that students are not passive. For example, in teaching critical thinking, teachers ask students to analyze real cases and then relate them to the Qur'an and Hadith. As stated by Mr. Tanzil, *"Mostly when we explain issues about history and morals. When we have a discussion, it is always accompanied by a discussion. But there are more of them. If you ask me what percentage, it's more than 50 percent. It's like a game. So we just put everything on stage. So in one performance, it's not a whole lecture. But compared to others, it depends on the material we want to convey."*

In addition to this method, learning innovation is also seen through the application of modern models such as *Problem Based Learning (PBL)*, *Project Based Learning (PJBL)*, and collaborative discussions. Through PBL, students are encouraged to find solutions to real problems, for example, in understanding fiqh muamalah issues by analyzing transaction cases that they often encounter. Meanwhile, PJBL is used by teachers to foster creativity and cooperation, for example, by assigning students to create Islamic entrepreneurship simulation projects based on sharia principles.

The use of digital technology is also an important part of the learning process. Teachers use interactive media such as videos, digital presentations, and e-learning platforms that facilitate access to materials. This makes learning more interesting and relevant to the technological developments that are familiar to students' lives. In fact, in some activities, students are directed to search for reference sources from reliable online Islamic literature, so that they become accustomed to thinking critically in sorting information.

The teaching methods used in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) refer to the strategies and techniques applied to ensure that learning takes place effectively and efficiently, enabling students to understand and master the material delivered. The selection of

methods must take into account several essential factors, including students' characteristics and abilities, teacher competence, the nature of the subject matter, classroom conditions, and the availability of instructional media and supporting facilities. No matter how well-designed a teaching method is, the learning process will not achieve optimal results unless these supporting factors are present (Syar'i, 2020).

Findings from interviews and classroom observations show that PAI teachers at SMAIT Nururrahman frequently employ lectures and discussions, particularly when teaching subjects such as fiqh, Islamic creed, and Islamic history. These methods are considered effective for delivering foundational concepts. However, teachers also combine them with group discussions, case studies, peer tutoring, and educational games to ensure that students remain active participants in the learning process. For example, when teaching critical thinking skills, teachers encourage students to analyze real-life cases and connect them with the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. As stated by Mr. Tanzil, "When explaining topics related to history or ethics, we usually combine lectures with discussions. Lecture is still used for more than half of the learning time, but we always incorporate interactive elements such as games. So, not everything is delivered through lecturing; it depends on the type of material."

In addition, innovative learning practices are evident in the application of modern models such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Project-Based Learning (PjBL), and collaborative discussions. Through PBL, students are encouraged to identify and solve real problems, such as analyzing common transactional practices to understand issues in fiqh muamalah. Meanwhile, PjBL is used to foster creativity and teamwork, for instance by assigning students to develop Islamic entrepreneurship simulations based on sharia principles.

The integration of digital technology has also become an essential part of the learning process. Teachers utilize interactive media such as videos, digital presentations, and e-learning platforms that facilitate access to learning materials. These tools make learning more engaging and relevant to students' everyday technological experiences. In certain activities, students are directed to search for credible online Islamic literature, helping them develop critical thinking skills and information literacy rooted in Islamic knowledge.

Figure 2. Implementation of PAI Learning Activities at SMAIT Nururrahman



In addition to instructional methods, teachers also emphasize religious habituation as a means of internalizing Islamic values in students' daily lives. Activities such as communal dhuha prayer, Qur'an recitation, student-led short sermons, and collective supplications serve as non-formal learning practices that effectively nurture students' religious character. Thus, Islamic Education learning does not take place solely within the classroom; it is integrated into the school's daily routines.

The learning strategies implemented by Islamic Education teachers reflect a deliberate effort to create meaningful learning experiences for students. Rather than relying solely on passive lecturing, teachers actively engage students through group discussions, contextual problem-solving activities, collaborative projects, and routine religious practices. This approach enables students to gain a deeper understanding of the material while simultaneously cultivating Islamic values in their everyday behavior.

Pedagogical innovation is evident through the variety of methods employed, the integration of digital technologies in delivering instructional content, and the reinforcement of a religious school culture embedded in daily activities. Students are encouraged to learn interactively, reflectively, and applicatively, making Islamic Education lessons more engaging and aligned with contemporary needs. These practices demonstrate the teacher's active role in continuously refining instructional strategies to remain responsive to student development and emerging challenges.

By implementing appropriate teaching methods, teachers are able to design effective cognitive strategies and formulate Islamic Education learning objectives more optimally. The position of teaching methods as a component of instructional strategy indicates that when methods are well-prepared, teachers have simultaneously structured an effective strategy for the Islamic Education learning process. (Setiawan, 2022)

1) Utilization of Technology

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly influenced curriculum innovation in Islamic Education (PAI) in the digital era. In this context, both challenges and opportunities emerge and are highly relevant to examine. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has transformed learning practices by encouraging the use of more interactive and digital-based instructional methods (Hastini, 2020).

The school has adopted various digital media to support Islamic Education learning. Teachers utilize projectors, PowerPoint presentations, Learning Management Systems (LMS), Google Forms, and online quiz applications as tools for assessment. These digital platforms enhance the learning process by making it more interactive, efficient, and aligned with the characteristics of digital-native students. The use of mobile devices is also permitted when needed for specific tasks, such as searching for references, accessing supplementary materials, or completing online quizzes. However, during regular learning activities, students' phones are collected to maintain focus.

The integration of technology in Islamic Education learning at this school represents an important form of innovation that strengthens both effectiveness and instructional quality.

Teachers employ digital media such as LMS platforms, instructional videos, and interactive quizzes to enrich students' learning experiences. Through these technological tools, students not only grasp conceptual knowledge but also develop essential digital literacy skills relevant to 21st-century competencies. This approach fosters active participation, independence, and the ability to relate Islamic values to modern, technology-driven life. By utilizing digital platforms, teachers can deliver PAI content in ways that are more engaging and easily accessible, thereby increasing students' learning motivation.

2) Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities are non-academic programs designed to support the learning process and enrich specific dimensions of the curriculum. These activities provide students with opportunities to develop their potential, broaden their perspectives, explore their talents and interests, and enhance skills related to various subject areas. Munajat, citing Hadi and colleagues, explains that extracurricular programs constitute an integral part of school initiatives that aim to help students deepen and expand their knowledge, express their abilities, and cultivate their personality in a more holistic manner (Munajat, 2021). Curriculum innovation in Islamic Education (PAI) at SMAIT Nururrahman is reflected in both intracurricular and extracurricular activities rooted in religious development. Intracurricular activities include PAI lessons, Tahfiz, and Arabic language classes, which are designed not only to transfer knowledge but also to internalize Islamic values. Meanwhile, extracurricular programs such as the weekly *muhadharah* on Fridays serve as platforms for students to practice public speaking on religious themes. As one student shared: *"Besides learning in class, we also have muhadharah every Friday, so we practice public speaking about religion. It's not only the teachers giving lectures we also get to present."*

One of the most impactful intracurricular and extracurricular activities in shaping students' religious character is the *ubudiyah tausiah* program. Conducted weekly, this activity provides students with structured opportunities to practice delivering Islamic messages in front of their peers. Through *tausiah*, students are encouraged to understand religious teachings not only at the theoretical level but also through reflection and communication, thereby internalizing Islamic values more deeply. This program also functions as an effective medium for leadership development and spiritual communication. Students are responsible for selecting themes, identifying Qur'anic and Hadith references, and preparing their own speech scripts. Islamic Education teachers act as mentors and evaluators, ensuring that the content aligns with moderate, contextual, and accurate Islamic principles.

Figure 2. Ubudiyah Activity Documentation



Such activities function as a medium for developing Islamic character and strengthening students' moral values through direct practice. Thus, *tausiah* is not merely a rhetorical exercise but also a means of cultivating righteous behavior and moral reflection that instills sincerity, responsibility, and the courage to speak the truth. In addition, *tausiah* activities foster a communication culture grounded in Islamic values within the school environment. Each student is given the opportunity in turn to deliver moral messages to their peers, thereby encouraging a spirit of mutual advice in goodness (*ta'awun 'ala al-birr wa al-taqwa*). This process helps cultivate courage, self-confidence, and moral awareness qualities that form an essential part of the Pancasila Student Profile characterized by faith and noble character. PAI teachers and dormitory supervisors also play an active role in providing guidance and feedback on the content delivered by students. Through this mentoring, students are directed to understand the principles of wise and contextual *dakwah* that are appropriate for adolescents. This practice reflects the application of the *learning by doing* principle, where direct experience becomes a more effective means of internalizing religious values than theoretical instruction alone.

b. Religious Value Habituation

The habituation of religious values is an educational process aimed at instilling religious teachings through repeated behaviors and activities that embody those values. When carried out consistently, these practices gradually develop into habits and attitudes that become an integral part of an individual's character and are reflected in their daily life. Through this continuous process, learners are expected not only to understand but also to internalize and practice their religious teachings more deeply, thereby forming a religious character that benefits both themselves and their surrounding environment (Sari, 2023).

At SMAIT Nururrahman, the habituation of religious values serves as the core of the school's character-building efforts. The school views Islamic values not merely as cognitive knowledge, but as essential life habits that must be cultivated continuously. Through various activities such as *mabit*, *tahsin-tahfiz*, *dauroh*, and *halaqah*, students are accustomed to performing worship and engaging in spiritual reflection on a regular basis. This habituation functions as a medium for developing good morality, discipline, and sincerity foundation elements of an Islamic personality.

The implementation of religious habituation is carried out through structured routines from morning until afternoon. Students are accustomed to reading the Qur'an daily, performing *shalat dhuha* and obligatory prayers in congregation at the school mosque, and reciting prayers together before going home. The Qur'an memorization program is conducted three times a week, with a target of at least two *juz* within three years.

Other activities, such as *mabit* and *dauroh santri*, enrich students' spiritual experiences beyond regular class hours, enabling them to internalize Islamic values in their everyday lives. Through these programs, character development is not limited to cognitive instruction but is strengthened through direct practice that fosters love for worship and Islamic etiquette. One of the flagship programs consistently implemented at SMAIT Nururrahman is *Malam Bina Iman dan Taqwa* (MABIT). This program aims to instill spiritual values and moral responsibility through two days of intensive religious guidance.

Figure 3. MABIT Activities



The program brings in a range of competent speakers, including medical specialists and academics, to provide students with balanced insights that integrate physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being. Through activities of this kind, students not only gain religious knowledge but also develop a holistic Islamic character that is relevant to the realities of modern adolescence. Another significant activity is the *Dauroh*, which invites expert instructors to strengthen students' *tahsin* and *tahfiz* abilities while instilling proper etiquette and deep affection for the Qur'an. In this program, students are trained not only to improve their recitation in accordance with the rules of *tajwid*, but also to understand the spiritual meaning behind the verses they memorize. The *Dauroh Tahsin* serves as an intensive spiritual formation space in which students are guided to make the Qur'an a life compass rather than mere verbal memorization.

In addition to technical training in reading the Qur'an with *tartil*, the facilitators also emphasize the importance of maintaining pure intention, sincerity, and discipline in preserving memorization. The warm interactions between teachers and students foster a strong sense of brotherhood and nurture a deep love for Qur'anic knowledge. Consequently, this activity becomes one of the school's strategic efforts in shaping

religious character and strengthening students' spiritual development in a sustainable manner.

The positive impact of the *dauroh* and other religious habituation programs is directly experienced by the students. Interview findings reveal that these programs have formed new spiritual routines that many students did not practice in their previous schools. One student shared, "Back in junior high, I rarely performed *shalat dhuha*, but here we read Qur'an every day, do *shalat dhuha*, and pray in congregation. I became used to it— even during holidays, I still remember to do it." This testimony reflects how religious habituation at SMAIT Nururrahman has successfully internalized Islamic values to the point where they become part of the students' lifestyle. Practices that initially emerged from instruction gradually transform into intrinsic spiritual awareness. This indicates that the school's habituation process not only establishes behavioral routines but also builds spiritual resilience—an inner strength that motivates students to maintain positive religious practices even outside the school environment.

Further interview data show that students experience noticeable character changes after participating in the school's curriculum innovations. They reported becoming more disciplined in worship, more motivated in their studies, and more religious compared to before attending the school. A grade XI student stated, "The routine programs like *tilawah*, congregational prayers, and *muhadharah* make us more diligent in worship and more enthusiastic about studying. These routines did not exist in my previous school." This statement reinforces the finding that the curriculum innovations significantly contribute to students' character development. The success of PAI curriculum innovation at SMAIT Nururrahman can be assessed through the observable transformation in students' conduct. Indicators of success extend beyond academic achievement and include changes in attitudes, habits, and daily expressions of religious character. As one student expressed, "*Since studying here, I perform prayers more regularly, my Qur'an memorization is progressing, and I'm more motivated to learn because of the daily routines.*"

This illustrates that the religious habituation programs implemented at the school foster discipline, responsibility, and learning motivation among students. Thus, the curriculum's objective of producing graduates with Islamic character and noble conduct has been achieved in tangible form. The formation of students' religious character stands as strong evidence of the successful implementation of PAI curriculum innovation at SMAIT Nururrahman. Religious habituation at SMAIT Nururrahman remains the core framework of student character formation. The school emphasizes that Islamic values are not merely knowledge but life practices that must be continually nurtured. Through activities such as *mabit*, *Tahsin tahfiz*, *dauroh*, and *halaqah*, students are trained to engage in worship and spiritual reflection consistently. These practices serve as the foundation for cultivating morality, discipline, and sincerity key components of an Islamic personality.

c. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The innovation of the Islamic Education (PAI) curriculum at SMAIT Nururrahman is supported by various aspects that strengthen its implementation. In terms of infrastructure, the school provides adequate facilities such as a mosque, an auditorium, laptops, and a Learning Management System (LMS), all of which can be utilized for both instructional needs and religious activities. The school's policy support is also evident through teacher training programs conducted internally and externally as well as Focus Group Discussion (FGD) forums that serve as platforms for sharing professional experiences. In addition to this, the school has developed distinctive religious habituation programs, including morning Qur'an recitation (tilawah), duha prayer, congregational prayers, mentoring sessions, and tahfiz activities. These programs help cultivate a religious culture that aligns with the goals of the curriculum. Another important supporting factor is the teachers' commitment to implementing the program. Despite certain limitations, teachers continue to make efforts to adapt their teaching methods, utilize technology, and create a conducive learning environment.

On the other hand, several challenges hinder the implementation of the PAI curriculum innovation. One of the main obstacles is the limited technological proficiency among some senior teachers, resulting in suboptimal use of digital media in teaching. As stated by Ms. Ida: *"There are actually many technological tools available. However, to be honest, we have not fully mastered them yet. But we are currently learning."* Another obstacle is the difficulty in maintaining students' focus during the early afternoon period after the zuhur prayer, when their energy levels typically decrease. Teachers must therefore employ special strategies to keep students motivated and engaged. The innovation process is influenced by both internal and external factors. In the context of SMAIT Nururrahman, internal factors include teacher commitment, individual readiness to master technology, and students' motivation to actively participate in learning. Meanwhile, external factors encompass school policy support, the availability of facilities, and the religious culture built through continuous spiritual habituation. In conclusion, these supporting and inhibiting factors indicate that the innovation of the PAI curriculum is running effectively due to strong structural and cultural support, although challenges remain in technical aspects and classroom management.

d. Strengths of the Islamic Education Curriculum Innovation at SMAIT Nururrahman

Based on the research findings, the innovation of the Islamic Education (PAI) curriculum at SMAIT Nururrahman demonstrates several notable strengths, which can be examined through three major dimensions: teacher creativity, student participation, and institutional support. These three elements serve as key drivers in shaping PAI instruction that is dynamic, contextually relevant, and transformative in cultivating the students' religious character.

Munandar defines creativity as the ability to generate original and useful ideas or products (Munandar, 2009). Within the educational context, teacher creativity is reflected not only through the use of innovative media and instructional methods but also through the skillful integration of learning materials with students' lived experiences. Meanwhile, John Dewey emphasizes that effective learning occurs through *learning by doing*, where students actively participate in meaningful learning experiences. This principle underpins the student-centered learning approach, positioning learners as active agents who construct their own understanding. This view is further strengthened by Vygotsky (1978), who argues that optimal learning takes place through social interaction and collaboration between teachers and students within the *zone of proximal development*. Therefore, students' active participation becomes a crucial indicator of the success of PAI curriculum innovation.

Beyond these two dimensions, Fullan asserts that the effectiveness of educational innovation largely depends on *school capacity*, referring to the collective ability of the institution to support change (Fullan, 2007). Such capacity may include school policies, teacher professional development, provision of learning facilities, and a collaborative climate that encourages sustained innovation. Hoy and Miskel further note that institutional support reflects an organizational climate that fosters the growth of both teachers and students (Wayne, 2013).

The innovation of the Islamic Education curriculum at SMAIT Nururrahman exhibits strong characteristics in promoting a learning process that is creative, participatory, and collaborative. The school positions PAI not merely as a cognitive subject but as a medium for shaping students' religious character, spiritual discipline, and social awareness. The innovations introduced aim to create learning experiences that are responsive to contemporary challenges while retaining Islamic values as the moral and ethical foundation of education. Based on observations and interview data, SMAIT Nururrahman implements PAI curriculum innovation through strengthened integration of Islamic values across all learning activities, enhanced teacher professionalism, and the establishment of a religious culture within the school environment. These innovations are manifested in intracurricular activities, extracurricular programs, and continuous self-development initiatives. The strengths of this curriculum can be reviewed through three interrelated aspects: teachers' creative instructional practices, students' active engagement, and the school's consistent institutional support for educational transformation.

1) Teacher Creativity

Teacher creativity refers to the educator's ability to design, develop, and implement new ideas within the learning process to make instruction more engaging, meaningful, and effective. Although some Islamic Education (PAI) teachers still rely predominantly on lecture-based methods, there have been deliberate efforts to explore more participatory approaches such as discussions, case studies, and the use of digital technology. Teachers

strive to align instructional methods with the characteristics of the learning material, ensuring that students not only receive knowledge but are also encouraged to think critically and engage in problem-solving activities. These innovations help create a more dynamic learning environment in which students are not merely passive listeners but active participants in the learning process. The teachers' willingness to continuously adapt to technological developments also reflects a growth mindset within their professional practice. Moreover, collaborative planning among teachers—particularly in designing thematic and cross-disciplinary learning—serves as an additional pedagogical innovation that enriches students' learning experiences. Thus, teacher creativity at SMAIT Nururrahman is evident not only in their teaching strategies but also in their ability to cultivate an inclusive, student-centered learning environment. In this regard, teachers act as agents of change who continuously enhance the quality of instruction.

2) Student Participation

Student participation refers to the level of physical, emotional, and intellectual engagement of learners throughout the learning process. At SMAIT Nururrahman, the level of student participation in Islamic Education (PAI) has shown significant improvement following the implementation of a student-centered learning model. Students are not only expected to answer teachers' questions but are also provided space to express their opinions, conduct religious reflections, and relate Islamic values to social phenomena around them. For instance, in project-based learning activities, students initiate social programs such as community service or environmental cleanliness campaigns as a practical implementation of moral values. Weekly activities such as *muhadharah* and *tahsin-tahfiz* further contribute to strengthening students' self-confidence and their ability to communicate religious messages effectively. Through this active form of participation, Islamic Education learning does not merely produce cognitive understanding. Rather, it becomes a transformative process that cultivates religious character, social awareness, and a deeper internalization of Islamic ethical values.

3) School Support

Keberhasilan inovasi kurikulum PAI di SMAIT Nururrahman tidak lepas dari peran manajemen sekolah yang responsif terhadap kebutuhan guru dan siswa. Sekolah menyediakan berbagai program pendukung seperti *teacher development program*, pelatihan penggunaan media digital, hingga penguatan kompetensi literasi keagamaan. Fasilitas seperti ruang multimedia, masjid sekolah yang representatif, serta sistem LMS internal memudahkan guru dalam menyampaikan materi dan melakukan evaluasi pembelajaran secara efektif. Selain itu, adanya budaya refleksi melalui *forum guru penggerak PAI* dan *coaching clinic* memperkuat praktik kolaboratif antarguru. Dukungan kebijakan sekolah yang mendorong inovasi dan memberikan ruang eksperimen bagi guru menjadi faktor utama yang menjaga kesinambungan perubahan positif dalam implementasi kurikulum PAI.

The successful implementation of the Islamic Education (PAI) curriculum innovation at SMAIT Nururrahman is strongly supported by a responsive and progressive school management system that continuously addresses the needs of both teachers and students. The school provides various professional development initiatives, including teacher development programs, training on digital media integration, and capacity building activities aimed at strengthening religious literacy competencies.

In addition to human resource development, the school offers adequate facilities such as a multimedia room, a well-equipped mosque, and an internal Learning Management System (LMS) that assists teachers in delivering instruction and conducting assessments more effectively. These facilities enable the integration of diverse learning resources and promote a more interactive, technology-enhanced learning environment. Furthermore, the school cultivates a culture of pedagogical reflection through platforms such as the PAI teacher collaboration forum and coaching clinics, which encourage continuous improvement and peer learning. Supportive school policies that promote innovation and allow teachers the flexibility to experiment with new pedagogical approaches serve as a crucial factor in sustaining positive educational transformation. Collectively, these institutional supports contribute significantly to the effectiveness and continuity of the PAI curriculum innovation at SMAIT Nururrahman.

The innovation of the Islamic Education curriculum at SMAIT Nururrahman can be observed in the way the school systematically and continuously organizes students' learning experiences. The creativity of teachers, the active participation of students, and the strong institutional support provided by the school together form a coherent sequence of learning activities ranging from mastery of classroom material to character development through religious practices and collaborative projects. Islamic Education teachers strive to deliver engaging lessons by integrating theoretical understanding with practical application, such as linking fiqh material with daily worship activities or designing da'wah projects that encourage student collaboration. These learning experiences extend beyond cognitive outcomes to cultivate students' spiritual awareness and social responsibility. In addition, the integration of educational technology, regular teacher training, and student involvement in the evaluation process serve as concrete evidence of the school's commitment to continuous improvement in Islamic Education instruction. These efforts make the PAI curriculum at SMAIT Nururrahman more adaptive to contemporary educational needs while remaining firmly rooted in Islamic values.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that the curriculum innovation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMAIT Nururrahman has been implemented comprehensively through curriculum development, instructional practices, religious habituation, and institutional support. The integration of the *Merdeka Curriculum* with Islamic education principles has succeeded in creating a learning process that is more adaptive, contextual, and character-oriented.

PAI teachers employ various innovative methods such as discussions, case studies, PBL, PJBL, and the use of digital technology which effectively enhance student participation and understanding.

Religious habituation through daily, weekly, and special programs such as *tahfiz*, *mabit*, and *dauroh* plays a significant role in fostering students' worship discipline, spiritual growth, and moral character. Supporting factors include teacher commitment, adequate school facilities, a strong religious culture, and policies that encourage creativity and professional development among educators. Challenges remain, particularly regarding limited technological proficiency among some senior teachers and difficulties in maintaining student focus during certain periods of the school day. Nevertheless, these challenges do not diminish the overall effectiveness of the innovation, as the school continues to implement ongoing improvement strategies. In conclusion, the curriculum innovation in Islamic Religious Education at SMAIT Nururrahman has successfully improved learning quality, strengthened students' religious character, and enhanced their learning motivation. These findings highlight the importance of integrative, contextual, and habituation-based curriculum innovation in reinforcing Islamic education at the secondary school level.

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