

ADAPTATION TRANSFORMATION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ISLAMIC SCHOOLS: LEARNING INNOVATION IN SMP IT AL-FITYAH AND MTS AL-MUNAWWARAH

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Abstract: This study aims to identify the elements of innovation in learning, discern differences and similarities, and identify the potential for innovation in learning Islamic Religious Education within two Islamic schools in Binjai City. The research methodology employed a qualitative approach. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The data underwent descriptive analysis involving data reduction, presentation, and conclusion. The results revealed that innovation in Islamic Religious Education learning in both Islamic schools in Binjai City is demonstrated through curriculum enrichment, encompassing enrichment, remedial, and coaching programs. At SMP IT Al-Fityah, the array of learning methods has expanded beyond lectures to incorporate discussions, exercises, assignments, homework, and presentations. Learning materials span from manual to digital, including LKS to e-learning, and encompass settings from traditional classrooms to laboratories. The assessment of learning in both schools employs both testing and non-test methods. Despite differences in the class grouping system - where SMP IT Al-Fityah employs small groups and MTs Al-Munawwarah adopts a package system - the commonality lies in utilizing the National Curriculum as the foundation for enriching Islamic Religious Education learning.

Keywords: Islam Islamic Religious Education, Learning Innovation, Islamic Schools

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education is a mandatory subject at all education levels within the national system. This subject encompasses abstract concepts crucial for students to comprehend, fostering the development of religious conduct within their social lives. Consequently, the pedagogy of Islamic Religious Education places a significant emphasis on practical implementation. The overarching objective is to ensure that the knowledge acquired can be effectively employed in everyday circumstances, religious observances, and actions aligned with religious precepts (Rahman, 2022). In Islamic educational institutions, the teaching of Islamic Religious Education is structured across various academic disciplines, a departure from public schools that typically offer a single academic domain dedicated to Islamic Religious Education. On the other hand, within pesantren institutions, the educational framework is characterized by a more multifaceted and intricate approach to learning Islamic Religious Education.

Comprehensively studying various facets of Islamic Religious Education provides students with a well-rounded understanding. However, this endeavor could become burdensome if the teacher's learning management falls short of optimal. Within the educational context, the learning process stands as a pivotal component. Learning ensues from the interaction between students and their environment, culminating in constructive behavioral alterations. Teaching and learning activities form intrinsic components of this dynamic, inherently intertwined (Sateemae et al., 2022). Learning constitutes a deliberate stride, yielding behavioral transformations, including assimilating fresh knowledge and competencies and cultivating constructive attitudes and values (Trigiyatno & Sutrisno, 2022).

Educational development requires innovation. Innovations include ideas, practices, methods, and transformations that give individuals or groups a new outlook. Innovation is a variety of changes deliberately created to achieve system goals (Beemsterboer, 2022). Islamic religious education teachers also need to be creative in developing learning methods. In this case, Islamic education teachers' innovation includes embracing the mind's potential into new ideas and combining existing concepts into more interesting ones (Hastasari et al., 2022). Therefore, Islamic religious education teachers must be innovative (Kultsum et al., 2022). The main aspects mastered by teachers are proficiency in utilizing learning media, teaching methods, and classroom management strategies (Selim & Abdalla, 2022; Sulistianingsih et al., 2022). Islamic religious education is important in developing school teaching skills and improving human resources.

In education, the core elements of the learning process are the communication strategies teachers use to convey information and appropriate learning methods, media, and assessments (Selim

& Abdalla, 2022). Although various learning techniques can be applied in teaching Islam, the lecture method is still widely used because it is considered efficient and supports the creation of teaching materials. Evaluation is also important in learning, providing a basis for teachers to measure student achievement (Trigiyatno & Sutrisno, 2022). However, most evaluations focus only on cognitive aspects and do not consider affective or psychomotor abilities (Hastasari et al., 2022). As a result, a situation can occur where non-objective judgments arise when cognitive assessment results are used as the basis for overall assessment. This can result in students who are diligent in worship or observe sunnah, such as fasting, being considered less accomplished than students who only fulfill basic worship obligations (Rahmat & Yahya, 2022). This problem arises due to the lack of understanding of religious teachers regarding evaluation techniques in Islamic religious education.

SMP IT Al-Fityah and MTs Al-Munawwarah share a common goal of enhancing education through integrating faith, science, and benevolence in alignment with their overarching vision. From an academic standpoint, both institutions have achieved an exceptional feat with a 100% pass rate among students in the National Examination. Furthermore, both schools actively commit to nurturing a religious ethos through classroom Quranic recitations, collective Dhuha prayers in the mosque, and Islamic recitations. Alongside these efforts, the schools proactively expand students' horizons beyond conventional classrooms by offering a range of extracurricular activities, including drum band, scouts, MTQ (Quranic recitation competition), and English camp. These offerings have garnered popularity among non-academic students, effectively enriching their educational experiences.

SMP IT Al-Fityah and MTs Al-Munawwarah accommodate a larger student population than other educational institutions. The teaching staff's motivation is driven not solely by financial incentives but also by their dedication to imparting knowledge and nurturing students' growth. A pivotal initial stride in motivating educators, particularly within Islamic religious education, to propel students towards excellence in multifaceted dimensions lies in establishing a moral bedrock for students—a fundamental prerequisite for effective learning. This objective is achieved through a structured regulation framework that governs all students' conduct. The curricular offerings in these institutions deviate from conventional educational setups as they intricately interweave religious and general subjects. Furthermore, the academic activities extend beyond the classroom, encapsulating the entire span of students' presence at school, with learning sessions spanning from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily.

Special learning often occurs in subjects such as Aqidah and Akhlak. For example, teachers invite students to play volleyball while explaining Allah SWT's obligatory and jazz attributes. The Islamic history teacher also changed his approach by organizing learning on the classroom terrace.

Before the game starts, students are given time to read and listen to the teacher's explanation. This diverse approach involves entertainment in learning. Teachers apply various learning models, methods, and strategies, encouraging co-teachers to create successful learning through new ideas. Teachers should avoid monotonous lectures and use daily activities to measure student progress. In grade promotion, the focus is given to morals and ethics. It is important to recognize that grade progression depends on general studies and good morals and behavior. Regarding the previous information, this research will investigate the learning innovation of Islamic Religious Education in these two schools. The research context in these schools is strengthened by the strong academic achievements, teacher competencies, learning models and strategies adopted, and learning innovations implemented in both institutions.

METHODS

The research method used in this study is qualitative research with the type of case study. This approach was chosen to understand in-depth innovations in Islamic religious education learning in two schools in Binjai City. The data used as the main sources of information in this research include in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data collection process was conducted through interviews with key informants, namely Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, principals, and students from the two schools that became the research subjects. The data generated from these interviews provided comprehensive information about the aspects that became the focus of the research, as well as a basis for evaluation in dealing with the problems studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The informants involved in this study totaled ten people, consisting of two principals, six teachers, and two students. Furthermore, observation was conducted directly at SMP IT Al-Fityah and MTs Al-Munawwarah in Binjai City, North Sumatra, to understand better implementation of learning innovations in both schools. In addition, the documentation process was also carried out by collecting data from various documents related to learning innovations in both schools. Data and theory triangulation techniques were used to analyze the data (Miles et al., 2014). This approach allows information from various sources and perspectives to be combined to gain a richer and deeper understanding of innovations in Islamic religious education learning in these schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Learning Media Technology Innovation

A comfortable learning environment is crucial in building students' passion for learning. The school context is one of the significant elements in shaping students' interest in learning (Jamilah, 2021). The school environment has several important aspects in this framework, including teachers' presence, administrative staff's role, and interactions with classmates. However, more than that, the school's physical environment is also a crucial element in shaping students' learning experiences. This physical aspect includes a variety of factors, such as the available classroom facilities, the condition of the school building, and the organization of facilities and infrastructure supporting learning in the classroom. In this context, the hardware implemented in schools also plays a vital role in producing an adequate environment that supports the teaching-learning process effectively (Hanafi et al., 2020).

Based on the findings obtained from field observations, it can be identified that both schools have adopted classroom organization and arrangement innovations. This innovation is implemented to create a different learning atmosphere from the usual one. Data from the field observation process indicates that SMP IT Al-Fityah has implemented innovations in rearranging classrooms using rugs covering the entire floor. This step allows students to learn while sitting comfortably on the rug. In addition, in this room, chairs are provided that are directly connected to the desks, allowing flexible arrangements according to learning needs. The classroom is also equipped with technological devices such as LCDs and computers, which aid in the delivery of learning materials by the teacher. The presence of this technology helps teachers in presenting subject matter more interactively and dynamically. Furthermore, as a further form of innovation, both Islamic schools have also set high standards for laboratory facilities, especially in science and religion subjects. This makes the two schools an example that can be used as a reference in education development and as a core class with higher quality standards.

More in-depth, the research results regarding innovations in the software field include a series of learning programs known as religious material assistance programs. This innovative program has been designed and developed based on the relevant curriculum. The program mainly considers students' preferences, interests, and readiness to participate in learning activities. Within this innovation's framework, students can choose subjects that suit their interests and abilities (Lafrarchi, 2020). With this approach, students are expected to be more engaged in learning, allowing them to choose the areas of study that interest them personally.

Innovation in Islamic Religious Education learning methods

Innovation in learning methods implies the adaptation of methods that are appropriate to the ongoing learning context. Combining various methods in one learning session creates a more dynamic learning atmosphere (Rissanen, 2020). This approach encourages students' active and creative participation while prioritizing enjoyable learning experiences. Method innovation also plays a role in stimulating students' interest in learning materials (Demirel Ucan & Wright, 2019). Therefore, at SMP IT Al-Fityah and MTs Al-Munawwarah, teachers collaborate to reinforce aligned views towards a more student-centered learning paradigm, especially through program evaluation in their meetings. This finding is in line with the results of the interviewees who revealed:

"In this 21st-century learning era, it is necessary to continue to innovate in learning so that the atmosphere in the classroom remains fresh and interactive. This aims to ensure students' active participation in every learning activity. This effort requires collaboration from various parties to achieve a mutual understanding of perception and goals. If there are differences in perceptions and goals among teachers, achieving these goals can be hampered" (interview with Islamic Religion teacher of MTs Al-Munawwarah).

The Head of MTs, Al-Munawwarah, also expressed a similar view. He emphasized that in the context of achieving institutional goals, alignment and joint work of all members involved are essential to achieve these goals. In it, every element must collaborate and provide support. To achieve this goal, having a unified view among teachers is important. Through this consistency of views, efforts to achieve the institution's goals can be realized optimally. This isn't easy to achieve if each element within the school has a different vision without considering the institution's overall goals. In dealing with the technical aspects of achieving learning objectives, this responsibility is placed on the individual creativity of each teacher. In this case, using methods, learning media, and other steps becomes an integral part of efforts to realize these goals (Miskiah et al., 2019).

In the context of learning innovation, teachers have the main role as actors who control managing learning in the classroom, and their creativity is a key factor in achieving learning objectives (Andriyandi et al., 2020). This creativity involves various aspects, including classroom management skills, using learning technology, and adapting learning methods to the material. However, not all teachers have the same creativity skills, even though this is an essential requirement in the teaching profession. At SMP IT Al-Fityah and MTs Al-Munawwarah, teachers develop traditional approaches emphasizing teacher creativity. Method innovation also emphasizes the variety of methods used, avoiding monotonous and instant methods. This approach aligns with Ibn Maskawih's view of the method as a link to improvement and change. This understanding is also

reinforced by Abudin Nata, who links the progress of change with an understanding of the method, which in this context is referred to as moral (Saada, 2020).

Ibn Jamaa'ah, in line with Ibn Miskawaih, revealed that Islamic teaching methods should focus on an efficient and attractive environment to stimulate students' creativity in learning (Suyadi et al., 2020). Like teachers, students are also expected to be responsible for their learning by developing a positive attitude. Innovations from the creative approach of teachers at SMP IT Al-Fityah and MTs Al-Munawwarah create a variety of learning methods. These methods are used according to the learning context and aim to encourage active student participation (Rahmat & Yahya, 2022). Observation data shows that Islamic religion teachers in both schools use various methods such as demonstration, lecture, group discussion, and question and answer. These methods are adapted to the material being taught.

"Learning methods affect learning outcomes. Monotonous methods can make students bored. Therefore, teachers must combine several methods in one lesson, at least three, to maintain students' interest. The use of methods is adjusted to the context of the material. I also conduct learning outside the classroom by analyzing school phenomena" (Interview with Islamic Religion teacher at SMP IT Al-Fityah).

Differing slightly from the account provided by the Islamic studies instructor at MTs Al-Munawwarah, concerning the instructional approaches employed, he elucidated that:

"I concur with the significance of learning methodologies as they underpin the attainment of learning goals. I amalgamate one or two methodologies within Islamic religious education with appropriate instructional media. Despite the array of possibilities, I confine the selection to three methodologies per lesson, complemented by mediums like audio-visual aids or visual aids. This approach imbues the learning process more dynamically than relying solely on a single method" (Interview with Islamic Religious Education teacher at MTs Al-Munawwarah).

Based on the explanations from the two informants above, the conclusion is that learning methods in Islamic religious education apply modern principles that prioritize innovation by combining various approaches to create practical, technical, and tactical learning approaches. The informants also apply, appreciate, and give meaning to this learning method.

Islamic Religious Education Learning Media Innovation

Related to learning innovation in the use of media, it is found that both schools apply various types of learning media. This diversity of media has an impact on a more dynamic learning atmosphere. Among the various choices of learning media, audio-visual media has an important role

and has become students' favorite (Selim & Abdalla, 2022). In addition to its attractive appearance, learning delivered through audio-visual media is easily understood by students. Statements from grade VIII students of SMP IT Al-Fityah about learning media confirm this:

"In our school, materials are often delivered through projectors and laptops. In addition, teachers also use teaching aids occasionally. We think this method is interesting. Learning by watching films or videos makes understanding faster. Although sometimes learning can become monotonous. The point is, using the projector makes learning more fun." (Interview with a student of SMP IT Al-Fityah).

However, information obtained from interviews with Islamic religion subject teachers regarding the use of various learning media shows that:

"Learning media plays an important role in teaching. It can improve students' motivation and learning outcomes. Therefore, as teachers, we must master various types of learning media, especially in today's digital era. One commonly used media is audio-visual, which is attractive to students. In addition, we also combine media with props; for example, in the lesson on ablution, students can see a video of the procedure for ablution and then practice directly using props such as bucket ablution (interview with SMP IT Al-Fityah teacher).

From the interviews above, it appears that the school's teachers can keep up with technological developments in learning. The role of technology in a teacher's life is very important because teachers who do not keep up with technological developments can be left behind. Teachers' skills in using learning media indirectly affect students' creativity and achievement (Hastasari et al., 2022). Therefore, teachers' mastery of technology-based learning media is very important. Regarding technology-based learning media, MTs Al-Munawwarah also applies the same principles as SMP IT Al-Fityah. Technology-based learning media is an important part of learning, even considered mandatory for teachers. Teachers must prepare students for the digital era by utilizing knowledge of materials, learning, and technology to enhance student's learning experiences through creativity and innovation in face-to-face and virtual learning situations (Kultsum et al., 2022). This view was also corroborated by the Head of MTs Al-Munawwarah, who stated:

"In this technological era, educational institutions are central in introducing students to technological developments. Learning in this institution mostly uses technological media, such as LCD projectors and laptops, which I make mandatory for every teacher. This aims to encourage the development of learning that is more dynamic and not monotonous. Educational institutions have an important purpose in developing learners' potential, and this responsibility

lies with the teachers. The more teachers contribute, the greater the potential students can develop." (Interview with the head of MTs Al-Munawwarah).

Evaluation of Islamic Religious Education Learning Innovations

Evaluation comes from the word "value," which means value. The basic evaluation principles include measurement, judgment, and decision-making (Beemsterboer, 2022). Evaluation is considered effective if it can reflect the condition being evaluated. In this context, students' understanding of learning materials is important. From field observations, SMP IT Al-Fityah applies various evaluation techniques involving tests and non-tests, piloting, and mastery learning. Test techniques include structured assignments, quizzes, independent assignments, practice questions, and end-of-semester exams, while non-test techniques include observation and question and answer. Tryouts before the National Examination and MTQ competitions are also conducted. Interview data with the Islamic religious education teacher at SMP IT Al-Fityah corroborates the observation findings.

"Assessment is an important aspect at the end of learning. Assessment ensures that grades are given to students with careful consideration. It not only assesses knowledge but also considers other factors. The type of assessment chosen also has an impact on the final outcome. Various test instruments are used, including tests and non-test assessments such as interviews, observations, structured tasks, portfolios, and trials for final grade students or those who will participate in competitions such as MTQ" (Interview teacher at SMP IT Al-Fityah).

Similar to the statement of the Islamic religion teacher at SMP IT Al-Fityah, the opinion expressed by the Islamic religion teacher at MTs Al-Munawwarah aligns with this view. He explained that he applies various learning evaluation approaches, which are adjusted to the context and characteristics of the material to be assessed. He is aware that not all types of material can be assessed with uniform tools. For example, written test instruments cannot be used to assess process skills. Therefore, in choosing assessment tools, she must consider the material to assess. She revealed that in practice, she often uses various assessment tools, including written and oral tests, interviews, observation, portfolios, and assignments, according to the characteristics and demands of the learning material (Interview with the head of MTs Al-Munawwarah).

The application of this evaluation is applied after students receive learning materials. This type of evaluation helps measure students' understanding of the material, especially in religious subjects. One of the advantages of this assessment is its ability to measure the extent of the achievement of learning objectives (Rahman, 2022). In addition, another form of evaluation is through assignments. In this approach, the focus is more on the process than the result. Teachers design activities that

students must complete outside of lesson time and report on in writing or orally. In some cases, the assessment technique is through portfolios, where students are asked to compile various work they do. The religion teacher at SMP IT Al-Fityah explained the use of portfolio-based assessment:

"Portfolio assessment is used according to the needs of the skills to be evaluated in the learning process. In this assessment, students observe and record the surrounding phenomenon in the portfolio provided." (interview with Islamic Religion teacher of SMP IT Al-Fityah).

The next evaluation is the mid-semester exam, which evaluates students from half a semester of study. The results are converted into semester grades on the report card. The implementation has a schedule, and the questions are more objective (A. Saefudin, 2019; Sulistianingsih et al., 2022). The semester exam also evaluates students' learning during one semester; the results are reported in the report card. These evaluation techniques are regulated by education law and national standards. Evaluation techniques in core classes differ from regular ones, including summative and formative evaluations at the end-of-semester exam. This is based on school administrative requirements. Muhaimin supports learning evaluation, including competency standards, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor evaluation tools, and the principles of responsibility, evidence, and accountability.

The next evaluation is a tryout to prepare for MTQ competitions and national exams. It applies the mastery learning system and helps teachers understand student preparation. Tryouts also follow competition standards, helping the school to achieve at various levels. The concept of evaluation describes the success of learning in the classroom according to the school's results. In line with Muhaimin, school curriculum evaluation can use various models. This model produces four components: context, input, process, and product. The effects include acceptance into favorite schools, popularity, and community trust.

The results of this study have significant links with educational theories on Islamic religious education and previous research (Alzaareer & Abdalla, 2023; Maemonah et al., 2023). In the context of Islamic religious education theory, the findings underline the importance of innovation in learning as a way to enrich the Islamic religious education curriculum. The concept of an enriched curriculum with enrichment, remedial, and guidance classes aligns with the principles of Islamic religious education that emphasize deep understanding and inclusiveness. In addition, expanding learning methods from lecture models to discussions, exercises, assignments, and presentations at SMP IT Al-Fityah aligns with the varied approach upheld by Islamic religious education to provide students with a holistic understanding. This aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of variation in learning methods to improve students' understanding of religious material.

In addition, the similarity in the application of the National Curriculum as the basis for enriching Islamic religious education learning in both schools is also related to the concept of Islamic religious education that recognizes universal values in developing religious understanding (Kosim et al., 2023; Saefudin et al., 2023). However, the difference in the class grouping system in the two schools reflects the variation in approach strategies in Islamic religious education. Implementing the small group system at SMP IT Al-Fityah suggests a more personalized and interactive approach. In contrast, the package system at MTs Al-Munawwarah may have a more efficient orientation in managing larger classes.

By analyzing the findings in the context of Islamic religious education theory and comparisons with previous research, it can be concluded that innovations in Islamic religious education learning in the two schools in Binjai City reflect efforts to integrate Islamic religious education principles with creative and diverse learning approaches. However, this research also reveals the expansion of learning concepts that need to be considered and explored through further research to enrich students' learning experiences in Islamic religious education.

CONCLUSION

Learning innovations in the Islamic Education model of religious schools involve enriching the Islamic education curriculum. Methods for teaching Islamic Religious Education also incorporate an active student-centred approach, combining activity, creativity, enjoyment, and Islamic principles. The instructional media for Islamic Religious Education also includes IT-based tools, taking into account the context, input, process, and outcomes. Similarities in the Islamic Religious Education learning approach between SMP IT Al-Fityah and MTs Al-Munawwarah relate to curriculum standards set by the National curriculum. The primary distinction lies in class grouping, as SMP IT Al-Fityah employs small groups while MTs Al-Munawwarah adopts a packaged system. The innovation in Islamic Religious Education learning at SMP IT Al-Fityah is forward-looking, grounded in rational and empirical strategies drawn from teachers' months or years of experience. This discovery indicates that the innovation in the Islamic Religious Education Model at SMP IT Al-Fityah originates from teachers' ingenuity and is implemented to enhance the quality of school learning.

In conclusion, this bottom-up innovation model encourages teachers to be more progressive as novel ideas arise from their personal experiences. However, it's important to note the limitations in data presentation within this study. The readers are invited to develop this research further to address these limitations.

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