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Managing Curriculum Innovation to Enhance Education Quality at MA Tahfidz Al-Qur'an Banyuwangi

Khabib Syarifudin[1]
[1] KH Mukhtar Syafaat University, Blokagung, Banyuwangi, Jawa Timur, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study examines the management of curriculum innovation aimed at improving the quality of education at MA Tahfidz Al-Qur'an Sumbermulyo Pesanggaran Banyuwangi, focusing on the integration of the national curriculum with tahfidz programs.

Methodology: A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Analysis followed the Miles and Huberman interactive model, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

Main Findings: The study revealed two key findings: (1) successful integration of the national curriculum with the tahfidz program, resulting in a balanced model of academic and spiritual education; and (2) the influence of transformative leadership in fostering a culture of innovation and collaboration. These elements significantly enhance educational quality and institutional identity.

Novelty/Originality: This research introduces a distinctive model of curriculum integration that aligns national education standards with tahfidz programs in Islamic schools. It proposes a practical framework demonstrating how visionary leadership and contextual innovation can synergistically advance both academic excellence and spiritual character development.

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Corresponding Author:
Khabib Syarifudin,
KH Mukhtar Syafaat University, Blokagung, Banyuwangi,
Jl. KH. Mukhtar Syafaat PP. Darussalam Blokagung, Jawab Timur, Indonesia
Email: syarifudinkhabib23@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

In the In the context of education in Indonesia, especially in faith-based institutions such as Madrasah Aliyah (MA) at MA Tahfidz Al-Qur'an Sumbermulyo in Pesanggaran District, Banyuwangi, there is a social phenomenon that shows the need for a more innovative curriculum transformation. The social fact that emerges in the field is that there is a gap between the national curriculum and the specific needs of tahfidz institutions that integrate general and religious education in a balanced manner. This creates challenges in terms of learning effectiveness, material relevance, and achievement of education quality standards [1]. As an Islamic educational institution that has a vision to produce a generation that memorizes the Qur'an and excels in science, MA Tahfidz Al-Qur'an Sumbermulyo faces social demands to remain relevant amidst changing times and the demands of educational globalization.

The social conditions of the surrounding community, which are religious and have a strong orientation towards education based on Islamic values, encourage madrasas to innovate in their curriculum management. Curriculum innovation is not only an internal effort to improve the quality of learning, but also a form of social response to the community's need for educational institutions that are able to produce graduates who excel

spiritually, academically, and socially. This social reality shows that the curriculum must be adaptive, contextual, and able to accommodate the needs of students holistically.

Furthermore, the role of madrasah heads, teachers, and institutional managers forms part of significant social dynamics in this innovation process. They are not only policy implementers, but also agents of change who are directly confronted with social realities, such as limited facilities, demands from students' guardians, and policies from the central and regional governments. Therefore, curriculum innovation management cannot be separated from the social context in which the madrasah is located. The innovations successfully implemented at MA Tahfidz Al-Qur'an Sumbermulyo reflect how Islamic educational institutions can adapt to the development of the times without losing their religious identity. This social fact confirms that curriculum innovation is a strategic necessity based on the real conditions of society and future challenges.

Research on curriculum innovation management has been carried out extensively, especially in the context of religious-based educational institutions. One relevant study is by Supriyadi [2], entitled Implementation of Curriculum Innovation in Tahfidzul Qur'an-Based Madrasah in Improving the Quality of Education. This research shows that Islamic educational institutions that integrate tahfidz programs with the national curriculum require innovative managerial strategies, ranging from planning, implementation, to curriculum evaluation. Supriyadi found that the success of curriculum innovation is greatly influenced by the leadership of the madrasah head, teacher collaboration, and the support of parents and the surrounding community.

In addition, research by N. Hidayah [3] in her thesis *Curriculum Innovation Strategies in Islamic Boarding School-Based Madrasah Aliyah in Increasing Graduate Competitiveness* is also relevant. This research highlights the importance of curriculum innovation that is tailored to the needs of students and the demands of the times. She emphasized that madrasas must be able to harmonize Islamic values and mastery of general science so that their graduates are able to compete in universities and the job market. This research supports the idea that the curriculum must be managed creatively and strategically to improve educational quality.

Previous studies on curriculum innovation in Islamic educational institutions have predominantly examined large, urban-based madrassas or well-established Islamic boarding schools with ample resources and institutional networks [2], [3]. These studies highlight the importance of integrating religious and general education but rarely address the operational and managerial challenges faced by rural or small-to-medium-sized institutions. Moreover, much of the existing literature tends to focus on either enhancing religious learning outcomes or improving academic performance in isolation, leaving limited empirical exploration of integrative approaches that harmonize both aspects. As a result, there is insufficient understanding of how curriculum innovation is practically implemented in rural contexts—particularly in tahfidz-based institutions that must balance national education standards with religious memorization programs—despite their significant role in Indonesia's educational landscape.

This study fills that gap by specifically investigating curriculum innovation management at MA Tahfidz Al-Qur'an Sumbermulyo Pesanggaran Banyuwangi, a rural-based institution with limited resources yet strong community support for tahfidz education. The novelty lies in its integrative managerial model that bridges the national curriculum with the tahfidz program, ensuring a balanced development of students' academic competence and spiritual character. Unlike previous research that isolates one domain over the other, this study demonstrates a contextual strategy where visionary leadership, community engagement, and adaptive curriculum design work synergistically to sustain educational quality. The urgency of this research stems from the pressing need for faith-based institutions in similar socio-cultural settings to remain relevant and competitive in an era of educational globalization, while safeguarding their religious identity and meeting national education standards.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research with the title "Curriculum Innovation Management in Improving the Quality of Education at MA Tahfidz Al Qur'an Sumbermulyo Pesanggaran Banyuwangi" employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, which is considered the most suitable method for exploring in depth the managerial processes and dynamics of curriculum innovation implementation within the madrasah environment, particularly in its distinctive local social and cultural context [4]. The case study design was selected to allow for a holistic and contextual understanding of curriculum innovation management practices in a single educational institution—MA Tahfidz Al-Qur'an Sumbermulyo—that uniquely integrates the national curriculum with the tahfidzul Qur'an program.

The research subjects consist of the madrasah head, vice principal for curriculum affairs, tahfidz program coordinators, subject teachers, and representatives of students' guardians, all of whom are directly involved in or impacted by curriculum innovation. The data collection techniques include in-depth semi-structured interviews to capture participants' perspectives [5], participant observation to document real-time practices in teaching and curriculum management [6], and document analysis of curriculum plans, lesson schedules, and policy guidelines [7].

The data analysis technique follows Miles and Huberman's interactive model [8], which involves three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Triangulation of sources and

techniques is employed to ensure validity and credibility, while member checking is conducted to confirm the accuracy of findings with key participants [9]. This design enables a comprehensive and nuanced portrayal of the institution's curriculum innovation management within its authentic socio-cultural setting.

The main purpose of this study is to describe and analyze in depth how curriculum innovation management is applied in an effort to improve the quality of education at MA Tahfidz Al Qur'an Sumbermulyo, Pesanggaran, Banyuwangi. This goal is based on the strong argument that the quality of education in madrasas, especially tahfidz-based ones, is highly dependent on the ability of institutions to manage their curriculum creatively, contextually, and adaptively to the changing times [10]. In this context, the curriculum is not only seen as a mere administrative document, but as a system that lives and continues to evolve along with the needs of students, societal demands, and the advancement of science and technology [11]. MA Tahfidz Al Qur'an Sumbermulyo is a clear example of an Islamic educational institution that not only focuses on strengthening religious values, but also tries to present curriculum innovations to achieve higher educational quality standards.
Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation [5]–[7]. Interviews were conducted with madrasah heads, deputy heads of curriculum, teachers, and several students and guardians to obtain complete information on how curriculum innovations are designed, implemented, and evaluated. Observation is used to see firsthand learning activities, teaching methods, and interactions between teachers and students in the context of curriculum integration [6]. Documentation includes a study of curriculum planning documents, syllabus, learning schedules, and archives of educational activities that show the forms of innovation that have been implemented [7].

Data analysis was carried out descriptively with the Miles and Huberman interactive model [8] which included three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn/verification. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time to ensure that the findings obtained truly reflect the reality in the field [9]. Through this method, the researcher hopes to describe in detail and accurately how the management of curriculum innovation in this madrasah has an impact on improving the quality of education. This method also allows researchers to capture the local, religious, and social values that underlie each curriculum policy and strategy implemented, so that the research results have a deep meaning and can be used as a reference for similar institutions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In This research produced two major findings regarding curriculum innovation at MA Tahfidz Al-Qur'an Sumbermulyo Pesanggaran Banyuwangi, which directly answer the research problem: (1) how the integration of the national curriculum with the tahfidz program is implemented, and (2) how leadership contributes to sustaining curriculum innovation.

3.1 Integration of the National Curriculum and the Tahfidz Program

One of the core challenges in tahfidz-based educational institutions is aligning the demands of the national academic curriculum with the spiritual requirements of Qur'an memorization. The data show that MA Tahfidz Al-Qur'an successfully addresses this through a systematic and context-based integration strategy.
Integrative Practice Observations and curriculum documents confirm that tahfidz sessions are scheduled every morning for 90 minutes before formal academic classes. This arrangement prevents cognitive overload, preserves learning stamina, and creates a seamless combination of religious and academic formation.
A teacher, Mrs. Latifah, noted that this arrangement increases student enthusiasm because "their daily learning experience blends both religious and general knowledge," while a parent observed that their child became "more disciplined" and better prepared for academic study.

Theoretical and Empirical Link This model aligns with Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory [12] which states that successful innovations must be culturally compatible and simple to adopt. In this case, integration reflects local Islamic values and community aspirations for balanced education. The findings also confirm earlier studies by [13]–[15], which found that integrated curricula in Islamic schools can improve academic performance, discipline, and character development. However, unlike those studies that mostly focus on urban contexts, this research shows that similar success is possible in rural, resource-limited settings.

3.2 Transformational Leadership of the Madrasah Head

The second finding answers the leadership aspect of the research problem. Data reveal that the madrasah head's role goes beyond administration, embodying transformational leadership that inspires, empowers, and fosters collaboration. Leadership Practices and Evidence In interviews, the madrasah head, Ahmad Jafarudin, emphasized that "the curriculum is not just a document; it is the soul of our education." Teachers reported feeling more valued, encouraged to innovate, and supported in professional development activities such as national webinars and trainings.

These practices align with Bass's Transformational Leadership Model [16], which includes idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Building a Culture

of Innovation Collaboration is evident through intersubject curriculum teams that embed Qur'anic values into general subjects like Mathematics and Science. This approach enhances teacher creativity and reinforces the school's spiritual identity. The findings support studies by Yusri et al. (2022) and Rahman & Ningsih (2024) [17], [18], which concluded that Islamic schools with transformational leaders demonstrate stronger institutional performance, healthier work environments, and greater stakeholder commitment. Together, these findings show that curriculum innovation at MA Tahfidz Al-Qur'an is not an isolated initiative but the result of strategic integration and effective leadership. The results not only answer the research problem but also contribute theoretically by extending innovation and leadership models to rural, tahfidz-based education settings, an area underrepresented in prior literature.

Tabel 1. Summary of Research Findings

No	Research Finding	Key Description	Supporting Evidence
1	Integration of National and Tahfidz Curriculum	Early morning 90-minute tahfidz sessions followed by structured academic learning; avoids cognitive overload and fosters balance between religious and academic goals.	Classroom observations, teacher & parent interviews, curriculum documents.
2	Transformational Leadership	The madrasah head fosters innovation culture through inclusive dialogue, professional development opportunities, and shared decision-making.	Teacher interviews, leadership meeting records, school activity archives.

Interpretative Analysis

1. Contextualized Curriculum Integration

   This study challenges the assumption that religious and academic curricula must remain separate. Instead, it demonstrates that well-structured integration can simultaneously foster both intellectual and spiritual excellence, in line with Putri's findings [19], which emphasize the importance of harmonizing religious values and academic achievement in Islamic education.
2. Leadership as a Key Enabler

   Curriculum innovation does not emerge from purely top-down regulations but rather from visionary leadership that supports collaboration and professional development among teachers. This aligns with Ismail and Wulandari [20], who found that transformational leadership fosters a school climate conducive to sustainable innovation.
3. Community Participation

   The active involvement of all stakeholders—teachers, students, and parents—is evident in the curriculum innovation process. This is consistent with the principles of School-Based Management, which emphasize autonomy, accountability, and participation [21]. Community engagement ensures the sustainability of innovations while tailoring curriculum policies to local needs.

The integration of the national curriculum with the tahfidz program at MA Tahfidz Al-Qur'an has proven effective in improving educational quality both academically and spiritually. This success is reinforced by the madrasah head's transformational leadership, which fosters a culture of collaboration, openness, and continuous improvement. The novelty and contextual contributions of this research lie in its demonstration of a culturally responsive integration model and the critical role of leadership in sustaining innovation.

For madrasah management, the implications include:

a. Adopting a curriculum integration model tailored to the socio-cultural characteristics of the local community.
b. Strengthening transformational leadership practices to drive innovation and institutional adaptability.
c. Encouraging active community participation to enhance the relevance and sustainability of programs.

These findings reinforce that context-based curriculum innovation and visionary leadership are essential in building resilient and adaptive Islamic education ecosystems [22].

The novelty of this research lies in the application of a model integrating the national curriculum with the Quran memorization program, which emphasizes not only improving academic achievement but also prioritizing the development of students' spiritual qualities. This approach presents a culturally responsive model of educational innovation, involving the transformational leadership of the madrasah principal and the active participation of the school community. This contextual contribution demonstrates that the success of curriculum innovation depends not only on national regulations but also on local adaptation that takes into account the socio-cultural characteristics of the community.

The results of the study indicate that integrating the national curriculum with the Quran memorization program can improve educational quality holistically. This is reflected in the maintained balance of student academic achievement, as well as the strengthening of religious values through Quran memorization activities [23]-[25]. Which emphasizes the importance of harmonizing religious values and academic achievement in Islamic education [26]-[28]. Therefore, this integration model can serve as a reference for other madrasahs seeking to develop a curriculum based on spiritual values without sacrificing academic quality.

Furthermore, the successful implementation of curriculum integration is inseparable from the transformational leadership of the madrasah principal, who is able to create a collaborative, open, and sustainable improvement oriented climate [29]-[30]. who stated that visionary leadership plays a crucial role in supporting an innovative school climate. Furthermore, the active involvement of all school members, from teachers and students to parents, is a determining factor in the program's sustainability. This is consistent with the principles of School community participation and accountability maintain the relevance and adaptability of educational innovation to local needs.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that curriculum innovation at MA Tahfidz Al-Qur'an Sumbermulyo Pesanggaran Banyuwangi is effectively managed through two main pillars: the integration of the national curriculum with the tahfidz program, and the implementation of transformational leadership by the madrasah head. The integration strategy successfully creates a balanced and contextual curriculum structure that promotes both academic achievement and spiritual development. Furthermore, the head of the madrasah plays a key role as a transformative leader who inspires collaboration, fosters teacher professionalism, and strengthens the culture of innovation within the institution.

These findings emphasize that quality improvement in Islamic education requires both adaptive curriculum design and visionary leadership. Therefore, this research contributes to the broader discourse on how Islamic educational institutions can respond effectively to 21st-century challenges by embracing integrative and participatory models of curriculum management.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen Professional Development: Provide ongoing training for teachers to develop competencies in integrated curriculum delivery and innovative pedagogical practices.
2. Enhance Stakeholder Engagement: Foster deeper collaboration with parents, alumni, and community leaders to sustain curriculum innovations and ensure relevance to local needs.
3. Institutionalize Collaborative Leadership: Develop formal structures, such as curriculum innovation teams, to maintain shared decision-making and continuous improvement.
4. Leverage Technology: Integrate digital tools to support both academic and tahfidz learning, expanding access to resources and enhancing student engagement.
5. Replicate Best Practices: Share the MA Tahfidz Al-Qur'an model with other Islamic schools to inspire broader adoption of integrative and adaptive curriculum management.

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