

Innovation of Islamic Religious Education Learning Methods

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Abstract

This study aims to explore various innovations in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning methods that are relevant to the needs of students in the digital era. Using a library research approach, this study analyzes literature from multiple sources that discuss the development of integrative, contextual, and character- and technology-based learning methods. The findings reveal that innovations such as project-based learning, experiential learning, blended learning, and the integration of local culture make IRE more interactive, reflective, and meaningful. The study also emphasizes the crucial role of teachers as facilitators in creating a learning environment that supports students' spiritual, moral, and social development. These findings provide theoretical contributions to the development of IRE literature and practical insights for teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers in designing more adaptive and transformative learning practices.

Keywords: Innovation, Learning Method, Islamic Religious Education

I. INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a very important role in forming the character and morals of students, especially in providing them with knowledge and understanding of the true teachings of Islam (Judrah, Arjum, Haeruddin, & Mustabsyirah, 2024). Effective learning methods will greatly influence the success of this educational process. However, along with the development of the era and increasingly complex challenges, conventional learning methods are often considered less able to answer the needs of students who are increasingly critical and adaptive to technology.

Innovation in Islamic Religious Education learning methods is very important to create an interesting and effective learning experience (Millidar, 2024). Monotonous learning that only focuses on theory can reduce students' interest in understanding and applying Islamic teachings in everyday life. Therefore, this study aims to explore and analyze innovations in Islamic Religious Education learning methods that can improve the quality and effectiveness of Islamic religious education in schools, especially in Indonesia.

Although much research has been done on Islamic Religious Education learning methods, there are still some gaps that need to be filled. First, most previous studies tend to focus on evaluating traditional learning methods, without providing space for experimentation or the development of new methods that are more relevant to the dynamics of the times. Second, although technology has been widely used in education, the application of technology in Islamic Religious Education learning in schools in Indonesia is still limited. Many Islamic Religious Education teachers have not fully utilized technological devices as a means to improve teaching effectiveness. Third, learning methods that focus on students' cognitive aspects are more widely explored, while approaches that pay attention to students' affective and conative aspects in practicing religious teachings are often less noticed.

These gaps indicate the need for further research development that explores and identifies innovative methods in Islamic Religious Education learning that can address these challenges. Therefore, this study focuses on innovations in Islamic Religious Education learning methods that are able to integrate technology, support character development, and pay attention to students' spiritual aspects as a whole.

Various innovations in Islamic Religious Education learning methods have begun to be developed, both in the context of theory and practice. One important development is the use of digital technology, such as multimedia-based learning, learning applications, and online platforms, which allow students to learn in a more interactive and enjoyable way. Research by Saputra (2023) revealed that the application of PBL in Islamic Religious Education can help students better understand the relevance of religious teachings in everyday life. Another innovation is the application of character-based learning methods, which aim to instill moral and ethical values in students. According to Veriyanti, (2024), this method has succeeded in increasing discipline and appreciation of Islamic teachings among students. Several schools have also begun to implement more contextual learning methods, which adapt Islamic teaching materials to social problems faced by students, such as issues of religious tolerance and peace.

This study offers novelty by focusing on the development and application of Islamic Religious Education learning methods that integrate digital technology approaches and character development simultaneously. Another novelty is the application of spiritual experience-based methods, where students are not only taught religious theory, but are also given the opportunity to apply Islamic teachings through activities that can improve their spiritual quality, such as learning based on socio-religious activities and community service. In addition, this study will also explore creative ways to utilize technology in developing students' social and moral skills. Through a technology-based approach, it is hoped that students will not only gain broader religious knowledge, but also be able to integrate these values into their social lives in a more contextual and applicable way. This study also focuses on learning that emphasizes collaboration between students, teachers, and the community, as one of the keys to creating more holistic and impactful learning.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical basis

The theoretical basis in this study is related to the basic concepts underlying the development of innovation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning methods. Some relevant theories to support this study include learning theory, educational technology theory, and character and spiritual education theory.

1. Constructivism Learning Theory

Constructivism theory, developed by Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, emphasizes that learning occurs when students actively construct their knowledge through experiences and interactions with the surrounding environment. In the context of Islamic Religious Education learning, the constructivism approach is very important because it allows students to construct their understanding of Islamic teachings through real experiences. This can be applied in project-based learning methods, problem-based learning, and the use of technology to accommodate the needs of more diverse students (Habsy, et al. 2024).

2. Educational Technology Theory

Educational technology theory refers to the use of various technological devices to enhance the quality of learning. In the context of Islamic Religious Education learning, technologies such as multimedia, learning videos, learning applications, and online platforms can enrich students' learning experiences. This theory supports the use of technology as a tool to make learning

more interactive and interesting, which can help students understand abstract Islamic religious concepts.

Their theory of educational technology states that technology has great potential to enhance the effectiveness of learning, not only in terms of delivering material, but also in creating learning environments that support the development of students' critical and creative skills (Mokalu, et al., (2022). In the context of Islamic Religious Education, technology can help overcome time and space constraints, as well as provide students with access to a wider and more varied range of learning resources.

3. Character Education Theory

Character education is a process to instill moral, ethical, and spiritual values in students. According to Lickona (1991), character education focuses on developing students' attitudes and behaviors that reflect the values of goodness and virtue. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, character education is very relevant because Islamic teachings themselves emphasize the formation of noble morals.

Character-based learning methods in Islamic Religious Education aim to develop values such as honesty, tolerance, respect, and discipline. The application of this theory can be done through learning activities that not only focus on teaching religious material, but also involve students in activities that can strengthen their character, such as community service or learning based on socio-religious activities.

4. Spiritual Education Theory

Spiritual education is related to the process of developing the spiritual dimension in students, which allows them to understand and experience religious teachings more deeply. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, spiritual education not only aims to provide religious knowledge, but also to shape students' personalities who are sensitive to religious values and spirituality in everyday life. This theory supports the application of learning methods that pay attention to the balance between the cognitive, affective, and conative aspects of students in applying Islamic teachings.

Spiritual education in Islam is the process of fostering and developing a person's spiritual aspects so that they have a strong relationship with Allah SWT and are able to realize the values of faith in everyday life. This education not only teaches aspects of religious rituals, but also instills awareness of the purpose of life, the meaning of worship, and the formation of noble morals that originate from divine values. According to Zakiyah Daradjat (2004), spiritual education in Islam is: "Education which aims to foster deep religious awareness so that a person is able to distinguish between right and wrong and direct his life based on religious values."

5. Technology and Character Based Learning Theory

Innovative approaches that combine technology with character development are increasingly being discussed in today's educational literature. Technology-based learning allows students to have a more engaging learning experience, while character-based approaches ensure that religious and moral values are embedded in the learning process. Methods such as video-based learning, online collaborative learning, and interactive learning applications are examples of the application of this theory in the context of Islamic Religious Education.

Technology-based learning that integrates aspects of student character is able to create a more comprehensive and sustainable learning experience. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, this allows students to learn while developing a more applicable and character-based understanding of religion.

6. *Social and Collaborative Theory in Learning*

Social theory in learning, which focuses on interactions between students in the learning process, is also relevant to innovations in Islamic Religious Education learning methods. This theory underlies the use of learning methods that involve collaboration between students, for example through group discussions, joint assignments, and community-based learning. Vygotsky emphasized that learning that occurs in a social context will be more meaningful because students can share knowledge and experiences with each other, and build a shared understanding of Islamic religious teachings (Arafah, Sukriadi, & Samsuddin, 2023).

Islamic Religious Education learning that adopts this social theory can enrich students' learning process with direct experience, both in the form of discussions about religious values and through social activities that are relevant to their lives. The theoretical basis presented shows the importance of an approach that integrates learning theories such as constructivism, educational technology, character education, spirituality, and social in creating innovations in Islamic Religious Education learning methods. By combining these various approaches, it is hoped that a learning method can be created that is not only effective in delivering Islamic religious material, but also able to develop students' character and spirituality holistically.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a qualitative research with a library research approach. This research was conducted by collecting, reviewing, and analyzing data and information sourced from various relevant literature, such as books, scientific journals, articles, previous research reports, and trusted online sources. The main objective of this method is to explore and understand various innovations in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning methods based on the thoughts of experts, previous research results, and current trends in the development of Islamic education.

The data sources in this study include two types. First, primary sources consisting of primary literature that directly discusses innovations in learning methods, learning theories, Islamic religious education, and educational technology. Second, secondary sources including supporting documents such as textbooks, opinion articles, education policy reports, and other scientific publications that are related to the topic of discussion.

Data were collected through a systematic literature review. This process begins with identifying relevant literature through academic search engines such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, and national and international journal databases such as Garuda, Sinta, and Scopus. After that, selection of these sources was carried out based on the level of relevance, quality, and recency of their publications. Important information from each source was then recorded for analysis and synthesis in order to support the research findings.

Data analysis was conducted descriptively-qualitatively. Information from various sources was classified based on main themes such as types of innovation, learning approaches, utilization of technology, and challenges faced in the Islamic Religious Education learning process. Through a content analysis approach, the content of each source was interpreted critically and in depth. The results of this process were then synthesized to formulate a new theoretical understanding of how innovation in learning methods can improve the quality of Islamic religious education.

The validity of the data is maintained through a source triangulation strategy, namely by comparing information from various scientific references. In addition, critical evaluation of the contents of the literature is carried out carefully so that only sources that have scientific authority are used as the basis for arguments in this study.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research Scope and Results

This research includes an in-depth study of various innovations in learning methods applied in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at various levels of education, both formal and non-formal. The main focus is on approaches, strategies, and learning models that are considered capable of increasing effectiveness, active participation, and students' spiritual and moral understanding. The innovations studied include technology-based innovations, collaborative approaches, project-based learning, and integration of Islamic character values through contextual and applicable methods.

In this study, it was found that innovation in Islamic Religious Education learning is not only limited to the use of digital technology such as interactive videos, learning applications, and online platforms, but also includes the development of more humanistic and participatory learning methods. For example, the project-based learning (PjBL) method in Islamic Religious Education allows students to relate religious material to real life through social projects based on Islamic values, such as sharing activities, zakat management, or anti-bullying campaigns from a religious perspective (Nababan, Marpaung, & Koresy, 2023).

In addition, the implementation of blended learning also emerged as an innovative solution that answers the challenges of the digital era, especially in distance learning conditions. This model combines online and offline learning to maintain the continuity of teacher and student interaction, while utilizing the flexibility of technology in delivering PAI material more interestingly.

Other findings show that the use of Islamic storytelling methods, worship simulations, and problem-based learning can simultaneously foster students' religious awareness and critical thinking. These methods encourage students' emotional involvement in understanding Islamic teachings more comprehensively and meaningfully.

In terms of evaluation, learning innovation is also seen in the way teachers assess student learning outcomes. Evaluation is not only in the form of written tests, but also through attitude assessments, observations of worship practices, reflective journals, and creative assignments that display student understanding in the form of religious vlogs, digital preaching posters, and podcasts about Islamic values.

In general, the results of the study indicate that innovation in learning methods in Islamic Religious Education is very important to respond to the needs of the times and the development of student character. Innovations based on Islamic values and supported by the use of technology and appropriate pedagogical strategies are able to make Islamic Religious Education a subject that is alive, fun, and relevant to the daily lives of students.

In addition to previous findings, the results of the study also show that innovation in Islamic Religious Education learning methods can strengthen active student engagement cognitively, affectively, and psychomotorically. In the literature reviewed, teachers who apply open discussion methods and spiritual reflection have succeeded in creating a healthy dialogue space between students and teachers in understanding Islamic values contextually. This approach also encourages students to think critically about the socio-religious phenomena around them.

Then, there is also innovation based on a scientific approach in Islamic Religious Education, which encourages students to observe phenomena, formulate questions, explore information from the Qur'an and Hadith, and then conclude the wisdom of the learning ((Rusadi, Widiyanto, & Lubis, 2019). This scientific approach helps to combine faith values with scientific thinking, so that Islamic Religious Education does not seem dogmatic, but open and dialogical.

One of the interesting findings is the application of experiential learning methods in religious activities (Pinasti, 2023). For example, students are invited to actively engage in social practices such as visits to orphanages, blessed Friday programs, or hajj ritual simulations.

These activities not only improve students' understanding of Islamic Religious Education materials, but also strengthen their sense of empathy, social concern, and moral responsibility.

In some literature, teachers also develop local culture-based learning (local wisdom approach) which combines Islamic teachings with the local wisdom of the local community (Emda, & Hanim, 2024). For example, the use of Islamic folklore, traditional games that contain ethical values, or local cultural symbols associated with the values of monotheism and morals. This approach has proven effective in grounding Islamic values so that they are easier for students to understand and accept.

Finally, innovation is also seen in curriculum design and the development of learning modules. Modules developed independently by teachers with an integrated thematic approach between Islamic Religious Education and other subjects, for example the integration of Islamic Religious Education with Indonesian or Social Studies, provide a more holistic learning space. This module not only delivers religious material textually, but also teaches life skills and character building.

With these various innovations, the results of this literature study conclude that PAI has great potential to continue to be developed methodologically. As long as teachers have creativity, technological support, and a strong pedagogical understanding, PAI learning can be more dynamic, contextual, and have a positive impact on the formation of student character in the modern era.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that innovation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning methods is a necessity amidst the dynamics of the changing era. Religious education is no longer sufficient to be delivered through lecture and memorization methods alone. The development of technology, the characteristics of the digital generation, and the demands of learning that is oriented towards values and life practices encourage educators to adopt a more contextual, applicable approach that touches the spiritual dimensions of students as a whole.

Innovations such as project-based learning, blended learning, experiential learning, and integration of local culture have given new colors to the teaching and learning process of Islamic Religious Education. These strategies not only increase student motivation and participation, but also strengthen the connection between religious teachings and the social realities they face every day. Thus, students not only learn about Islam as knowledge, but also internalize its values in real actions.

Reflective and dialogical Islamic Religious Education learning is also the key to the success of innovation. Through discussion activities, religious reflection, and assignments that invite students to explore moral, spiritual, and social issues, students are invited to become individuals who think critically and empathize. This shows that learning innovation not only strengthens cognitive aspects, but also forms a complete religious personality.

In the framework of 21st century education, Islamic Religious Education must be able to answer the challenges of literacy, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. Innovation in learning methods is a strategic way to make Islamic Religious Education not only academically relevant, but also morally and socially transformative. The results of this study strengthen the view that Islamic Religious Education teachers are not only as transmitters of material, but also as agents of change who facilitate the process of character formation through meaningful pedagogical innovation.

This research provides significant contributions both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research enriches the literature in the field of developing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning methods by presenting a synthesis of various innovative approaches that have been applied and scientifically studied. The synthesis is a solid theoretical foundation

for researchers and academics who are interested in the development of Islamic education, especially in the contemporary era full of challenges and changes.

From a practical perspective, this study provides inspiration and concrete references for teachers and education practitioners regarding the application of innovative learning methods in the context of Islamic Religious Education classes. Descriptions of various learning models and approaches that have been successfully applied in various educational environments enable teachers to adjust the strategies used to the characteristics and needs of their students. The findings of this study also have important relevance for curriculum development. The information presented can be used as a consideration for curriculum designers and policy makers in the field of Islamic education to design a curriculum that is more responsive to developments in the era and the needs of students. Thus, the resulting curriculum is not only academically relevant but also contextual and applicable. In addition, this study opens up opportunities for further research with a more in-depth approach, such as quantitative, experimental, or case studies in certain school environments. By mapping various existing innovations, this study provides direction for subsequent researchers to test the effectiveness of each method more specifically.

V. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that innovation in learning methods in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is a strategic step that is greatly needed in responding to the challenges of the development of the times, the dynamics of student character, and the demands of meaningful and contextual learning. Innovative methods such as project-based learning, experiential learning, blended learning, and integration of local culture have proven to be able to enliven the PAI learning process, making it more interactive, reflective, and touching the spiritual dimension of students. PAI is no longer just a medium for transferring knowledge, but rather a place for forming character and religious values that are in accordance with the challenges of the 21st century.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that Islamic Religious Education teachers continue to improve their competence in pedagogy and technology, and be more open in implementing participatory and reflective learning approaches. Educational institutions need to provide support in the form of training, facilities and infrastructure, and school culture that supports contextual religious learning. In addition, curriculum developers and policy makers are expected to reform the Islamic Religious Education curriculum to be more adaptive to the needs of today's students. Further researchers are expected to conduct more specific studies to test the effectiveness of these innovations in various different educational settings.

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