

Integrating Islamic Texts, Arabic-English, and Academic Culture in Islamic Boarding School Curriculum

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Abstrak

This study aims to examine curriculum innovation in Islamic boarding schools in the digital era through the integration of traditional Islamic text studies, the development of Arabic-English language competencies, and the cultivation of students' academic culture at Al-Khoirot Islamic Boarding School, Malang. The study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, documentation, and an analysis of the implementation of the pesantren curriculum programs. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and verification, supported by source and methodological triangulation. The findings indicate that curriculum innovation is manifested through the development of hybrid learning, the utilization of digital library resources, the implementation of bilingual Arabic-English instruction, and the use of English-language Islamic literature to broaden students' global perspectives. In addition, the academic culture is strengthened through the habituation of academic writing, discussion forums, academic presentations, and research mentoring, which foster a sustained scholarly tradition within the pesantren environment. These innovations enhance the quality of the learning process, broaden students' academic literacy, and strengthen their communication, critical thinking, and collaborative skills. The study concludes that curriculum innovation can serve as an effective strategy for improving the quality of pesantren education by fostering synergy among Islamic scholarly traditions, global competencies, and a sustainable academic culture.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has encouraged Islamic educational institutions to pursue various forms of curriculum innovation aimed at improving the quality of learning while preserving the distinctive scholarly traditions of pesantren education (Subairi & Zaironi, 2025; Syifa et al., 2026; Zaironi, 2025, 2026; Zaironi & Rohman, 2026). Such innovation has become increasingly important because modern society requires graduates who not only possess a strong command of Islamic knowledge (Chande, 2023; Mujahid, 2021) but also demonstrate critical thinking (Cruz et al., 2020; Dumitru & Halpern, 2023; Thornhill-miller et al., 2025), intercultural communication (Klimova & Chen, 2024; Shonfeld et al., 2021;

Sonnenschein & Ferguson, 2020; Zhou et al., 2024), digital literacy (Morgan et al., 2026; Nasreen Khan, Abdullah Sarwar, Tan Boo Chen, 2022), and readiness to respond to global developments (Shliakhovchuk, 2021). In this changing context, pesantren are expected to develop creative, adaptive, and collaborative learning practices while maintaining the study of classical Islamic texts as an epistemological foundation of Islamic education (Islam et al., 2026). Accordingly, curriculum innovation should not be understood merely as the incorporation of technology into learning, but rather as a process of renewing pedagogical strategies, strengthening the academic environment, and improving the quality of students' learning experiences to produce graduates who achieve a balance between religious and global competencies.

Although various educational innovations have emerged within Islamic educational settings, the implementation of curriculum innovation in pesantren continues to face several challenges that warrant academic attention (Fahrurrosi et al., 2026; Fakhridana, Azizah, & Zaironi, 2026; Hasanah et al., 2026; Tirta & Zaironi, 2025). Some pesantren have adopted digital technology through the use of learning media, online platforms, and technological facilities (Alenezi, 2023; Huda, 2023; Sofi et al., 2023); however, such adoption has not always been accompanied by corresponding improvements in participatory learning practices or the systematic development of an academic culture. Consequently, learning processes tend to remain oriented toward content delivery and knowledge transmission, while the development of students' communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and academic skills has not yet become an integral component of the curriculum (FA et al., 2026; Fakhridana, Azizah, & Annisa, Annisa, 2026; Firghol et al., 2026; Sholihah et al., 2026; Zaironi & Hilar, 2026). This condition indicates that the central challenge facing pesantren in the digital era is not simply how to introduce technology, but how to develop curriculum innovations that integrate traditional Islamic text studies, Arabic-English language competencies, and academic culture as interconnected strategies for continuously improving the quality of learning.

This phenomenon can be observed in the educational practices of Al-Khoirot Islamic Boarding School, Malang, which has developed various curriculum innovations to strengthen the quality of pesantren education. These innovations are manifested in the implementation of hybrid learning, the utilization of digital library resources, the use of Arabic and English in learning activities and academic communication, and the incorporation of English-language Islamic literature to broaden students' intellectual perspectives. In addition to strengthening instructional practices, the pesantren has cultivated an academic culture through the systematic development of academic writing, discussion forums, academic presentations, and research mentoring as integral components of students' learning experiences. These practices demonstrate that curriculum innovation not only generates greater diversity in teaching and learning methods but also creates an educational environment that

encourages students to participate actively in the construction of knowledge. Thus, curriculum innovation at Al-Khoirot Malang represents an ongoing effort to enhance students' academic literacy, communication skills, collaborative abilities, and intellectual capacity.

Previous studies have demonstrated that pesantren have increasingly developed innovative learning practices in response to advances in digital technology and the growing demand for improved Islamic educational quality (Halimah et al., 2024; Rohmatulloh et al., 2022). Several studies have examined the use of digital technology, hybrid learning, information technology-based learning systems, and digital libraries as strategies for expanding access to learning resources and enhancing instructional effectiveness (Kučera, 2025; Luo et al., 2024). Other studies have investigated innovations in Arabic and English language learning as efforts to strengthen communication skills and expand students' access to Islamic literature and international academic references (Muthoifin & Elbanna, 2025). In addition, research on the academic culture of pesantren has largely focused on literacy development, academic writing, and scholarly activities as instruments for strengthening students' intellectual capacities. Although these studies have made important contributions, they generally examine educational innovation from specific and relatively separate perspectives and therefore do not fully explain how different components of innovation can be interconnected within an integrated pesantren curriculum framework.

At the same time, research on curriculum innovation in pesantren still leaves considerable room for further development, particularly in explaining the relationship among traditional Islamic text studies, Arabic-English bilingual competencies (Zulfan Syahansyah, 2026), and academic culture as an integrated strategy for improving learning quality (Acetylena & Zaironi, 2026; Anwar et al., 2026; Maulidia et al., 2025; Syarifuddin et al., 2026). Most previous studies have focused separately on the effectiveness of learning digitalization (Azaim et al., 2026; Azizah et al., 2026; Maqfiroh et al., 2025; Rohmah et al., 2026), the implementation of language programs (Zulfan Syahansyah, 2026), or the strengthening of literacy culture, while the potential synergy among these components has received comparatively limited comprehensive analysis. In response to this gap, the present study adopts a different position by examining how various innovative practices at Al-Khoirot Islamic Boarding School, Malang, interact with one another to enhance the quality of learning. This study contributes to the broader scholarship on pesantren education by demonstrating that hybrid learning, digital libraries, Arabic-English bilingual instruction, and academic culture can function as mutually reinforcing elements in strengthening students' scholarly literacy, academic competencies, and global readiness.

Based on the conceptual review and previous research, the state of the art of this study lies in its analysis of pesantren curriculum innovation as a strategy for

renewing learning practices through the integration of traditional Islamic text studies, Arabic-English language competencies, and students' academic culture within an educational ecosystem that is responsive to the digital era. Unlike previous studies that tend to examine learning digitalization, language development, or academic culture separately, this study conceptualizes these three dimensions as synergistic forms of innovation that collectively contribute to improving the quality of learning. The novelty of the study also lies in its analysis of hybrid learning practices, the utilization of digital library resources, the use of English-language Islamic literature, and the development of students' academic activities as innovative strategies for expanding learning experiences. This integration contributes to strengthening students' academic literacy, critical thinking, academic communication, and collaborative skills within the context of contemporary pesantren education.

Building on this novelty, the study seeks to answer the following questions: how is curriculum innovation in pesantren implemented through the integration of traditional Islamic text studies, Arabic-English bilingual learning, and the strengthening of students' academic culture at Al-Khoirot Islamic Boarding School, Malang? Furthermore, how does the synergy among these innovations contribute to improving the quality of learning? This study argues that improving the quality of pesantren education in the digital era cannot be achieved solely through technology adoption or isolated pedagogical reforms. Rather, it requires curriculum innovation capable of connecting diverse learning components within an integrated framework. Accordingly, this study makes a theoretical contribution to the development of scholarship on curriculum innovation in pesantren-based Islamic education and a practical contribution to educational institutions and policymakers in designing adaptive, collaborative, and quality-oriented strategies that strengthen students' academic competitiveness in the digital era.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design (Gammelgaard, 2017; Priya, 2021) to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of curriculum innovation in pesantren education in the digital era. This approach was selected because it enables the researcher to explore the processes, practices, and meanings underlying educational innovation within the natural context of the institution. The case study design allowed the researcher to examine the interrelationships among hybrid learning, the use of digital technology, the development of Arabic-English language competencies, and academic culture as integrated dimensions of curriculum innovation aimed at improving the quality of learning within the pesantren environment.

The study was conducted at Al-Khoirot Islamic Boarding School, Malang, which was purposively selected because of its development of various pesantren-

based curriculum innovations through the integration of traditional Islamic text studies, digital technology, and students' global competencies. The pesantren implements hybrid learning, provides digital library resources, develops a bilingual Arabic-English environment, and fosters an academic culture through academic writing, discussion forums, and research mentoring. These characteristics make the institution a relevant research setting for examining curriculum innovation as a strategy for improving the quality of learning.

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Eppich et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2025). Observations were conducted to examine learning activities, the use of digital media, bilingual practices, and students' academic culture. In-depth interviews were conducted with the pesantren leader, curriculum administrators, teachers, language program coordinators, academic writing mentors, and students involved in the innovative programs. The documentation included curriculum documents, learning program plans, academic guidelines, records of scholarly activities, and other supporting documents relevant to the implementation of curriculum innovation.

Data analysis was conducted interactively through data condensation, data display, and verification or conclusion drawing (Im et al., 2023; Mezmir, 2020). Data condensation was used to select, focus, simplify, and categorize information according to the research focus on curriculum innovation. The condensed data were subsequently presented in descriptive narratives and thematic matrices to facilitate the identification and interpretation of relationships among the findings. Data credibility was ensured through source triangulation, methodological triangulation, prolonged and persistent observation, and member checking with informants. These procedures were employed to enhance the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the research findings.

Table 1. Characteristics and Roles of Research Informants

Code	Informant	Rationale for Selection
IF-01	Pesantren Leader	Responsible for establishing policies related to curriculum innovation in the pesantren.
IF-02	Director of Education/Head of Curriculum	Responsible for coordinating the implementation of curriculum innovations.
IF-03	Head of Madrasah Diniyah	Responsible for implementing innovative approaches to traditional Islamic text studies.
IF-04	Arabic-English Language Program Coordinator	Responsible for developing bilingual instruction and maintaining the language-learning environment.
IF-05	Traditional Islamic Text Studies Teacher	Responsible for implementing digitally supported innovations in Islamic text-based learning.

IF-06	English Teacher	Responsible for integrating English-language Islamic literature into learning activities.
IF-07	Digital Library Manager	Responsible for developing digital literacy services and providing electronic learning resources.
IF-08	Academic Writing/Academic Culture Mentor	Responsible for mentoring students in academic writing, scholarly discussions, and research activities.
IF-09	Student in the Bilingual Program	Directly experiences the implementation of bilingual learning innovations.
IF-10	Student Actively Involved in Academic Activities	Directly experiences the implementation of academic culture and student research activities.

Source: Field Data, 2026

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Integrating Islamic Texts, Arabic-English, and Academic Culture in Islamic Boarding School Curriculum

In this study, curriculum innovation in pesantren education is defined as the renewal of various learning practices designed to improve the quality of the educational process without altering the fundamental characteristics of pesantren education. These innovations are manifested through the development of hybrid learning, the utilization of digital library resources, the integration of Arabic-English bilingual instruction, the use of English-language Islamic literature, and the strengthening of academic culture through academic writing, discussion forums, academic presentations, and research mentoring. At Al-Khoirot Islamic Boarding School, Malang, these innovations are implemented in an integrated manner as a strategy for improving learning quality. Consequently, students are expected not only to master Islamic knowledge but also to develop digital literacy, academic communication, critical thinking, and collaborative skills in response to the demands of education in the digital era.

Table 2. Findings on Curriculum Innovation in Pesantren Education in the Digital Era

Interview Excerpt	Indicator	Informant
<i>"We have developed hybrid learning so that students can continue to strengthen their understanding of Islamic texts through face-to-face instruction and digital learning resources."</i>	Hybrid learning innovation	IF-02 (Director of Education/Head of Curriculum)
<i>"The digital library makes it easier for students to access Islamic texts, journals, and supporting literature from a wider range of sources."</i>	Utilization of digital library resources	IF-07 (Digital Library Manager)

<i>"Arabic and English are used as part of the learning process, allowing students to become accustomed to engaging with various scholarly sources."</i>	Arabic-English bilingual instruction	IF-04 (Language Program Coordinator)
<i>"We have begun using several English-language Islamic references to broaden students' academic perspectives."</i>	Global literacy through English-language literature	IF-06 (English Teacher)
<i>"Students are encouraged to write articles, participate in discussion forums, and present the results of their studies as part of developing an academic culture."</i>	Strengthening academic culture	IF-08 (Academic Writing Mentor)
<i>"Learning has become more engaging because we do not only study Islamic texts but also discuss ideas, search for digital references, and present the results of our studies."</i>	Impact of innovation on learning experiences	IF-09 (Student in the Bilingual Program)

Source: Field Data, 2026

The data presented in Table 2 indicate that curriculum innovation at Al-Khoiroh Islamic Boarding School, Malang, is not manifested through structural changes to the curriculum but through the renewal of learning practices that enrich students' educational experiences. The informants consistently emphasized that these innovations are intended to improve the quality of the learning process through the utilization of digital technology, the development of a bilingual learning environment, and the strengthening of academic culture. The findings demonstrate that each innovation serves a complementary function. Hybrid learning increases learning flexibility, digital library resources broaden access to references, bilingual instruction strengthens communication skills and global literacy, while academic culture develops critical thinking and scholarly skills. Thus, curriculum innovation is understood as a practical strategy for enhancing learning effectiveness without diminishing the substance of traditional Islamic text studies as the core of pesantren education.

A deeper interpretation indicates that curriculum innovation not only generates greater variety in learning methods but also creates a more active, collaborative, and competency-oriented learning experience. The use of digital literature and English-language references broadens students' intellectual horizons, while discussion forums, academic presentations, and academic writing encourage the development of a participatory learning culture. Collectively, these innovations indicate a shift from learning centered primarily on content delivery toward a learning process in which students become active participants in constructing knowledge. Therefore, the effectiveness of curriculum innovation in this study lies in its capacity to improve the quality of the learning process through the integration of diverse

innovative practices while maintaining traditional Islamic text studies as the defining foundation of pesantren education.

Field observations demonstrated that curriculum innovation at Al-Khoirot Islamic Boarding School, Malang, is clearly reflected in students' daily learning activities. The researcher observed that Islamic text studies were no longer conducted exclusively through conventional approaches but were enriched by the use of digital devices, access to digital library resources, and various electronic reference materials. During several academic activities, students used Arabic and English in discussions and academic presentations, while teachers served as facilitators who guided the learning process interactively. In addition, article writing, internal seminars, scholarly discussions, and research mentoring had become regular academic activities that strengthened the learning culture. These observations indicate that curriculum innovation not only provides greater variety in teaching methods but also creates a more active, collaborative, reflective, and competency-oriented learning environment.

The findings demonstrate that curriculum innovation at Al-Khoirot Islamic Boarding School, Malang, constitutes a series of interconnected improvements in learning practices aimed at enhancing educational quality. Hybrid learning expands learning flexibility, digital library resources increase access to scholarly literature, bilingual instruction strengthens academic communication skills, while academic culture develops critical thinking through discussions, academic writing, and presentations. In other words, curriculum innovation in this study is not understood as a structural transformation of the curriculum but as the development of learning strategies that enhance the effectiveness of the educational process. These innovations reinforce one another in creating more meaningful learning experiences, broadening students' scholarly literacy, and strengthening their academic and global competencies without diminishing the central position of traditional Islamic text studies within pesantren education.

Table 3. Findings from the Perspectives of Research Informants

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
Pesantren Leader	<i>"We implement innovation so that the pesantren can continue to develop without abandoning traditional Islamic text studies as the spirit of education."</i>	Direction of curriculum innovation policy
Director of Education/Head of Curriculum	<i>"Hybrid learning, the digital library, and bilingual instruction are designed to improve the quality of students' learning."</i>	Integration of learning innovations
Head of Madrasah Diniyah	<i>"The methods used to teach Islamic texts have been updated so that students can engage more actively in understanding and discussing the content of the texts."</i>	Innovation in traditional Islamic text learning

Arabic-English Language Program Coordinator	<i>"The bilingual environment broadens students' ability to access both classical and international literature."</i>	Strengthening bilingual competencies
Traditional Islamic Text Studies Teacher	<i>"Digital media help enrich learning references, making the study of Islamic texts more contextual."</i>	Utilization of educational technology
English Teacher	<i>"English-language Islamic references broaden students' academic perspectives on developments in global scholarship."</i>	Global academic literacy
Digital Library Manager	<i>"Students can more easily access digital Islamic texts, journals, and scholarly resources through the digital library."</i>	Strengthening digital literacy
Academic Writing Mentor	<i>"Academic culture is developed through regular writing activities, seminars, discussions, and research."</i>	Strengthening academic culture
Student in the Bilingual Program	<i>"Learning has become more engaging because we study Islamic texts while also developing our language skills."</i>	Innovative learning experience
Student Actively Involved in Academic Activities	<i>"Scholarly forums make us more confident in presenting our ideas in an academic manner."</i>	Impact of innovation on academic competencies

Source: Field Data, 2026

Table 3 demonstrates that curriculum innovation at Al-Khoirot Islamic Boarding School, Malang, is developed through collaboration among various institutional stakeholders who perform different yet complementary roles. The pesantren leader establishes the strategic direction of innovation policy, while the Director of Education translates these policies into integrated learning programs. At the implementation level, the Head of Madrasah Diniyah, traditional Islamic text studies teachers, English teachers, and language program coordinators develop various instructional strategies that enrich students' learning experiences. Meanwhile, the digital library manager and academic writing mentor provide an academic ecosystem that supports the learning process. The involvement of students as primary participants in learning demonstrates that curriculum innovation extends beyond changes in teaching methods and develops into a more active, collaborative, and academically oriented learning culture.

A deeper interpretation shows that the effectiveness of curriculum innovation is not determined by the presence of a single flagship program but by the integration of various innovative practices implemented consistently. Hybrid learning expands access to learning resources, digital library services strengthen information literacy, the bilingual environment enhances academic communication competencies, while

academic culture develops critical thinking through academic writing, discussions, and presentations. The relationship among these components produces a more dynamic learning process than conventional instruction because students actively participate in searching for, processing, discussing, and communicating knowledge. Thus, curriculum innovation functions as a pedagogical strategy for improving learning quality by fostering learning experiences that are more contextual, reflective, and participatory.

The pattern emerging from the findings indicates that curriculum innovation develops through mutually reinforcing relationships among traditional Islamic text studies, educational technology, Arabic-English language competencies, and academic culture. These components do not operate independently; rather, they form an integrated learning ecosystem that promotes improvements in the quality of the educational process. Traditional Islamic text studies remain at the core of learning and are subsequently strengthened through hybrid learning, access to digital library resources, the use of English-language Islamic literature, and the systematic cultivation of scholarly activities. This integration contributes to improvements in students' scholarly literacy, communication skills, critical thinking, collaboration, and academic confidence. Accordingly, the curriculum innovation model identified in this study is characterized by an integrative and collaborative orientation toward improving learning quality while preserving the distinctive characteristics of pesantren education.

Based on the overall findings, curriculum innovation at Al-Khoirot Islamic Boarding School, Malang, can be understood as a strategy for renewing learning practices by connecting Islamic scholarly traditions with the educational demands of the digital era. The innovations are not intended to alter the substantive foundations of the pesantren curriculum but to improve the quality of its implementation through the integration of technology, Arabic-English bilingual learning, and the strengthening of academic culture. The synergy among these components produces a more effective learning process, broadens students' academic literacy, and develops their communication, critical thinking, and collaborative competencies. These findings affirm that improving the quality of pesantren education can be more effectively achieved through sustained innovation in learning practices than through the fragmented addition of individual programs. Such an approach enables pesantren to preserve their scholarly identity while simultaneously responding to the demands of global education

DISCUSSION

Innovation in Traditional Islamic Text Studies as a Strategy for Improving the Quality of Pesantren Learning

The findings indicate that curriculum innovation at Al-Khoirot Islamic Boarding School, Malang, is manifested through the renewal of learning practices that

integrate traditional Islamic text studies with digital technology without altering the substantive foundations of pesantren scholarship. These innovations are reflected in the implementation of hybrid learning, the utilization of digital library resources, the use of electronic references, and the enrichment of more interactive learning approaches. The findings demonstrate that curriculum innovation is not directed toward restructuring the curriculum but toward improving the quality of students' learning experiences. Through these strategies, the study of Islamic texts becomes more contextual, access to learning resources is expanded, and academic interaction becomes more active. Accordingly, curriculum innovation functions as an instrument for improving learning quality while preserving the intellectual traditions of pesantren as a fundamental foundation of Islamic education.

These findings are consistent with previous research on curriculum innovation in pesantren, which suggests that the use of digital technology can enhance learning effectiveness without undermining the distinctive identity of Islamic education (Halimah et al., 2024; Islam & Nur, 2024). Studies of curriculum innovation in modern pesantren indicate that combining traditional approaches with student-centered learning strategies can improve the quality of the learning process and increase students' engagement (Baharuddin, 2023; Bhardwaj et al., 2025; Martin-alguacil et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the present study demonstrates a distinctive feature: innovation is not limited to the use of technology but also encompasses the integration of digital library resources, enriched Islamic text references, and complementary academic activities. Curriculum innovation can therefore be understood as an integrated renewal of pedagogical practices that enhances the quality of learning in a more comprehensive manner.

The findings further demonstrate that the digitalization of learning in pesantren functions as a means of strengthening the learning process rather than replacing traditional Islamic text studies. This condition is consistent with previous studies emphasizing that technology integration within pesantren curricula should serve as a supporting instrument for expanding access to knowledge (Chande, 2023; Mujahid, 2021), improving learning effectiveness, and strengthening students' digital literacy (Morgan et al., 2026; Nasreen Khan, Abdullah Sarwar, Tan Booi Chen, 2022). However, the present study offers a distinct emphasis because digital innovation at Al-Khoirot Islamic Boarding School does not operate independently but is combined with the strengthening of Islamic literature and academic activities. Consequently, learning innovation not only improves the efficiency of the educational process but also enriches students' intellectual experiences through access to more diverse learning resources.

From the perspective of curriculum innovation theory, these findings reinforce the view that innovation constitutes a process of renewing educational practices to improve learning effectiveness without necessarily altering the fundamental

objectives of the curriculum (Chandra et al., 2020; Ellis et al., 2019; Schröder & Krüger, 2019; Supriani et al., 2022). In Islamic education, innovation can be achieved through the refinement of instructional strategies, the development of learning media, and the creation of an academic environment that is more responsive to developments in knowledge. The findings demonstrate that curriculum innovation at Al-Khoirot Islamic Boarding School reflects these characteristics through the integration of hybrid learning, digital library resources, and technology-supported learning materials. Thus, curriculum innovation should not be positioned as a form of modernization that displaces tradition, but rather as an effort to improve learning quality through pedagogical renewal that remains rooted in the values and scholarly traditions of pesantren education.

Innovation in Arabic-English Language Competencies for Strengthening Students' Global Literacy

The findings have theoretical implications for understanding curriculum innovation in pesantren as an effort to enhance the quality of educational practices rather than merely as the adoption of digital technology. This study extends scholarship on curriculum innovation in Islamic education by demonstrating that successful innovation depends on the integration of instructional methods, technological resources, enriched learning materials, and a supportive academic environment. Practically, the findings provide a foundation for pesantren administrators and Islamic education policymakers to develop innovations oriented toward improving the quality of learning through selective and purposeful technology integration without compromising the depth of traditional Islamic text studies as a defining feature of pesantren education. This perspective suggests that sustainable innovation is more effective than innovation focused exclusively on technological development.

The findings further demonstrate that curriculum innovation at Al-Khoirot Islamic Boarding School, Malang, extends beyond the renewal of instructional methods and develops into an integrated learning experience that connects traditional Islamic text studies, Arabic-English language competencies, and academic culture. This condition is consistent with international scholarship on Islamic education emphasizing the importance of developing global competencies while maintaining Islamic scholarly identity (Bukhori Muslim et al., 2024; Malizal, 2025). Previous studies have indicated that bilingual education can enhance academic communication skills (Chande, 2023; Morgan et al., 2026; Nasreen Khan, Abdullah Sarwar, Tan Booi Chen, 2022), broaden access to international sources of knowledge, and strengthen students' preparedness for participation in global society (Xu et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the present study demonstrates a distinctive characteristic: the development of bilingual competencies does not occur independently but is

integrated with traditional Islamic text studies and the systematic cultivation of scholarly activities, enabling these innovations to reinforce one another in improving learning quality.

The findings also demonstrate that the use of Arabic and English as languages of instruction is not intended merely to improve students' linguistic proficiency but also serves as a bridge for expanding their scholarly literacy. Arabic strengthens students' ability to engage with the classical Islamic intellectual tradition, while English provides access to contemporary developments in Islamic studies and international scholarship. The integration of these two languages creates broader learning experiences because students can connect primary Islamic sources with contemporary academic references. This condition indicates that curriculum innovation not only enhances language competencies but also strengthens students' academic capacity to develop more critical, comparative, and open perspectives toward global developments in knowledge while maintaining their commitment to the scholarly traditions of pesantren education.

Strengthening Academic Culture as a Pesantren-Based Curriculum Innovation

In addition to strengthening bilingual competencies, academic culture represents an important dimension distinguishing curriculum innovation at Al-Khoirot Islamic Boarding School from conventional learning practices. Regular academic writing, discussion forums, academic presentations, and research mentoring create a learning environment that encourages students to develop ideas based on scholarly reasoning and evidence. These findings broaden the understanding of academic culture by demonstrating that it should not be regarded merely as an extracurricular activity outside the learning process but as an integral component of curriculum innovation. The close relationship among traditional Islamic text studies, digital literacy, bilingual learning, and scholarly activities produces a more reflective, collaborative, and problem-oriented learning process, thereby substantially enriching students' learning experiences.

The practical implications of this study indicate that the development of pesantren education in the digital era requires curriculum innovation policies oriented toward comprehensive improvements in learning quality. The strengthening of educational technology needs to be accompanied by teacher capacity development, the provision of digital learning resources, the establishment of a bilingual learning environment, and the sustained cultivation of academic activities. For pesantren administrators, these findings demonstrate that successful innovation is determined not merely by the availability of technological facilities but by the institution's capacity to integrate all learning components into mutually supportive educational practices. Such an approach enables pesantren to produce graduates who possess a strong foundation in Islamic knowledge, digital literacy, international communication skills,

and academic competencies relevant to the demands of twenty-first-century education.

Conceptually, this study contributes to the development of scholarship on curriculum innovation in pesantren by demonstrating that effective innovation is not constructed through isolated programs but through the synergy of traditional Islamic text studies, Arabic-English language competencies, learning digitalization, and academic culture within a unified educational ecosystem. This synthesis enriches the perspective on curriculum innovation in Islamic Religious Education by positioning the improvement of learning quality as the central orientation of educational renewal. Accordingly, curriculum innovation in pesantren should not be understood as an attempt to replace established educational traditions but as a pedagogical strategy for strengthening learning quality, expanding scholarly literacy, and enhancing students' academic competitiveness. These findings provide a conceptual foundation for the future development of curriculum innovation in pesantren across diverse institutional contexts.

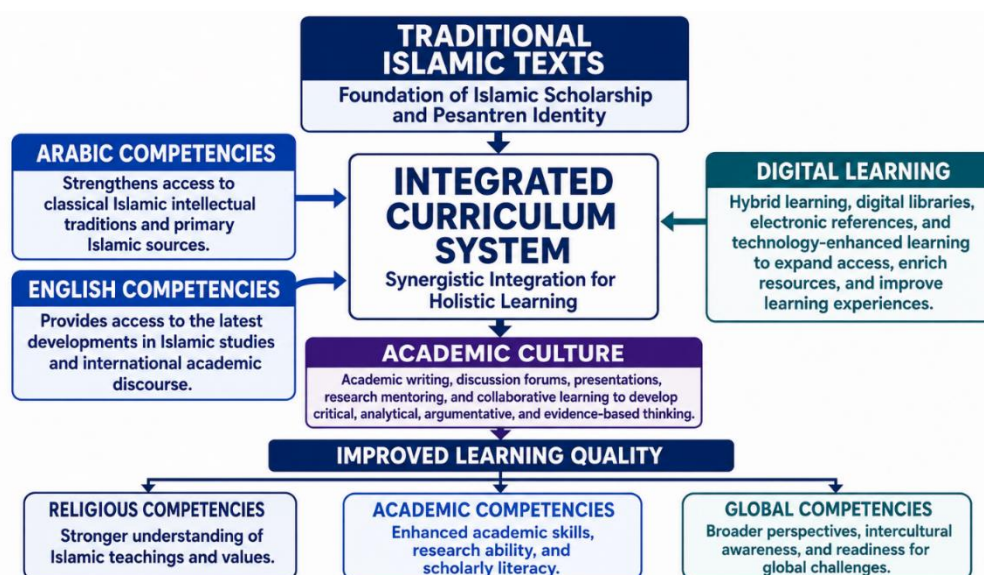


Figure 1. Integrated Pesantren Curriculum Innovation Model

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that curriculum innovation in pesantren education in the digital era constitutes an important strategy for improving learning quality through the integration of traditional Islamic text studies, Arabic-English language competencies, and the strengthening of students' academic culture. The key insight derived from this study is that pesantren do not need to abandon their traditional scholarly identity in order to adapt to contemporary developments. Instead, they can enhance the quality of learning through selective, contextual, and purposeful innovation. The use of hybrid learning, digital library resources, English-language Islamic literature, and academic activities can create learning experiences that are

more active, comprehensive, and conducive to critical thinking. Thus, curriculum innovation serves as a bridge between the preservation of pesantren traditions and the demands of global competencies.

The strength of this study lies in its scholarly contribution to expanding research on curriculum innovation in pesantren-based Islamic Religious Education. The study offers the perspective that curriculum innovation is not limited to the use of technology but encompasses the synergy among pedagogy, digital literacy, international language proficiency, and the development of academic culture. Theoretically, this study enriches the discourse on improving the quality of pesantren education through innovative learning practices while preserving the distinctive identity of Islamic scholarship. Practically, the findings can serve as a reference for pesantren administrators in designing learning strategies that are responsive to changes in the global educational landscape.

This study has several limitations. It was conducted at a single research site using a case study approach; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all pesantren with different institutional characteristics. In addition, the study primarily focused on the implementation of curriculum innovation and students' learning experiences and did not examine in depth its long-term effects on students' academic outcomes. Future research could expand this inquiry through comparative studies across pesantren, quantitative analyses of the effectiveness of innovative learning practices, and the development of a digital-based curriculum innovation evaluation model that can be applied across a broader range of pesantren educational context.

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