Islamic Education in the 21st Century: Trends in Curriculum Innovation and Sustainable Management for Holistic Learner Development

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Islamic education in the 21st century faces significant challenges in adapting to rapid social and technological developments. This study aims to examine how curriculum innovation and sustainable management can be effectively integrated to shape holistic learners within Islamic educational institutions, particularly at SMA Nurul Jadid. Using a qualitative approach and case study method, the research explores the implementation of project-based learning, teacher competence development through continuous workshops, and character building through a curriculum integrated with Islamic values. The findings indicate that the integration of curriculum innovation and sustainable management enhances students' academic competence, character, and spirituality in a balanced manner. However, challenges remain, such as limited facilities, diverse perspectives among educators, and resistance from the community. The study recommends inclusive and collaborative strategies to optimize the implementation of relevant, progressive, and sustainable Islamic education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in the 21st century faces significant challenges in adapting to social change, technological advances, and the increasingly complex needs of students (Kusuma & Muharom, 2025; Wang et al., 2023). Although the theoretical framework of Islamic education emphasizes the importance of character-building and spiritual values, a clear gap exists between the concept and implementation practices in the field (Putri, 2024; Rahim et al., 2025). The traditional curriculum, which tends to be more structured, has not been fully able to accommodate a holistic learning approach that integrates intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects (Nurachadijat & Selvia, 2023). In addition, Islamic education management practices have not fully implemented the principle of sustainability optimally, so that the innovations made often have less long-term impact (Rodin et al., 2025). This condition raises critical questions about how Islamic education can be revitalized so that it remains relevant and effective in facing the demands of the modern era. Various previous studies have examined curriculum

innovation in the context of Islamic education, including the use of digital technology, the application of competency-based learning, and character development (Hasmiza, 2025). On the other hand, studies on sustainable management in Islamic educational institutions emphasize the need for a management model that is adaptive and responsive to socio-economic dynamics (Taali et al., 2024). However, most of these studies are still focused on partial aspects and have not comprehensively explored the synergy between curriculum innovation and sustainable management in forming holistic learners. This study aims to fill this gap with a multidimensional approach that integrates both aspects simultaneously.

This study focuses on answering the question: How can the trends of curriculum innovation and sustainable management be integrated to develop holistic learners in Islamic education in the 21st century. In addition, this study also identifies supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of these innovations and their impact on the quality of education as a whole.

The hypothesis proposed is that the integration of curriculum innovation and sustainable management is an effective strategy to answer contemporary challenges while forming learners who have a balance of academic, character, and spiritual competencies. Thus, the synergy of these two aspects becomes a strategic foundation for realizing progressive, relevant, and sustainable Islamic education.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to examine the implementation of curriculum innovation and sustainable management in Islamic education at SMA Nurul Jadid, with the aim of developing learners holistically. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with the principal, teachers, and curriculum managers accompanied by participant observation to gain a direct understanding of the implementation process of curriculum innovation and management. In addition, policy documents and reports related to the curriculum and management at SMA Nurul Jadid were also analyzed as supporting data.

Data analysis was carried out thematically by grouping information based on main themes related to curriculum innovation, sustainable management practices, and comprehensive student development. To maintain data validity, this study applied triangulation of sources and methods and confirmed data through member checks with informants. In addition, the ethical aspects of the study were maintained by ensuring participant consent and maintaining data confidentiality during the research process.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3. 1 Project-Based Learning Approach

The Project-Based Learning Approach at SMA Nurul Jadid is a learning method that places students at the center of learning activities through the implementation of projects that are relevant to real conditions and contain Islamic values. This approach invites students to actively explore, collaborate, and solve problems in an organized manner so that the development of abilities is not only limited to intellectual aspects but also includes social and spiritual skills. At SMA Nurul Jadid, this approach is implemented as part of a curriculum that aims to produce holistic learners who are able to apply knowledge and religious values responsibly and sustainably in everyday life.

The principal of SMA Nurul Jadid explained that the project-based learning approach is implemented through project assignments that link subject matter with Islamic values, such as local wisdom, sustainable lifestyle, Voice of democracy, Entrepreneurship, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, Build your soul and body, Engineering and technology to build the Republic of Indonesia based on Islamic principles (Husna, 2024). This approach aims for students to not only master theoretical concepts, but also to be able to implement this knowledge in everyday life while honing their critical thinking, collaboration, and responsibility skills. Students' responses to this method are quite positive, marked by high enthusiasm and active involvement during the learning process, even though there are obstacles in the form of limited time and supporting facilities. In addition, this approach also plays a role in strengthening students' character and spiritual aspects, because the projects worked on always

contain Islamic values, thus supporting the formation of holistic learners who are balanced between intellectual and spiritual aspects.

The Project-Based Learning Approach at SMA Nurul Jadid is an innovative step in Islamic education that places students at the center of an active learning process that is oriented toward real contexts. Through this approach, students do not just receive theory but are also invited to apply Islamic values directly through projects that are relevant to everyday life, so that learning becomes more meaningful and applicable. This approach also contributes to the development of 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking skills, collaboration, and responsibility, while strengthening students' spiritual aspects and character. Although there are several obstacles such as limited time and facilities, the implementation of this method at SMA Nurul Jadid illustrates efforts to manage a holistic and sustainable curriculum, which is able to produce Islamic learners with a balance between academic abilities and religious values.

Table 1. Project-Based Learning Approach

Aspect	Description
Definition	Learning methods that place students at the center by working on relevant projects that contain Islamic values.
Objective	Develop critical thinking skills, collaboration, responsibility, and strengthen students' spiritual and character aspects.
Implementation	Real-world context-based projects, such as environmental management according to Islamic principles and presentation of Islamic historical values.
Teacher Role	Facilitators and mentors in the project process, providing direction and feedback.
Student Role	Actively exploring, collaborating, and solving problems in a structured manner in the given project.
Benefits for Students	Increase learning engagement, deeper understanding of concepts, and holistic Islamic character formation.
Challenges	Limited time for in-depth projects and inadequate technology facilities.
Strategies to Overcome Challenges	Thorough planning, teacher training, and optimal utilization of existing resources.

Project-Based Learning Approach is a learning method that places students as the main focus in the learning process through the implementation of projects that are relevant to teaching materials and Islamic values (Abdurahman et al., 2024; OK et al., 2023; Wulan et al., 2024). This approach aims to develop students' critical thinking skills, cooperation, and sense of responsibility while strengthening spiritual aspects and character formation. In its implementation, the teacher acts as a facilitator who provides direction and support, while students actively explore and collaborate in a structured manner. Although there are constraints in the form of limited time and facilities, this approach has proven effective in increasing student engagement and understanding, while supporting the formation of holistic and balanced learners between academic aspects and religious values through careful planning and optimization of resources.

3.2 Teacher Competency Development Through Continuous Workshops

Teacher competency development through continuous workshops at SMA Nurul Jadid refers to systematic and continuous efforts to improve the professional capacity of educators through periodic training and workshops. This program aims to strengthen teachers' mastery of pedagogical aspects, curriculum content, and the application of innovative learning strategies that are in line with Islamic educational values and the challenges of the 21st century. Through this approach, teachers are encouraged to continue to adapt to the dynamics of education, improve the quality of learning

management, and be able to design and implement a curriculum that is contextual and relevant to the needs of students.

SMA Nurul Jadid h eld a continuous workshop with the theme "Strengthening Teacher Competency in 21st Century Learning Innovation". This activity took place in the SMA Nurul Jadid Hall and was attended by all subject teachers. This workshop presented speakers from academics and education practitioners who discussed strategic topics such as project-based learning, integration of Islamic values in the curriculum, and adaptive classroom management. During the activity, participants were actively involved in discussions, learning simulations, and practices in compiling innovation-based teaching materials. Documentation of this activity includes interactive photos during the workshop, the results of teacher group work, and participant testimonials stating that this activity was very helpful in improving their understanding and ability to apply learning methods that are relevant to the needs of the times.

This workshop is part of the school's commitment to building a culture of continuous teacher learning. The implementation of continuous workshops in developing teacher competencies at SMA Nurul Jadid reflects the institution's seriousness in improving the quality of education in an integrated manner. This activity not only acts as a forum for improving technical skills, but also becomes a place for teachers to reflect on learning practices, renew professional insights, and deepen the integration of Islamic values in the teaching process. Through an ongoing approach, teachers are encouraged to adapt to changes in the curriculum and the demands of 21st century learning. The findings show that teachers are increasingly ready to apply innovative learning methods, especially project-based learning and integration of Islamic characters which have an impact on creating more contextual, meaningful, and comprehensive learning.

3.3 Character Development Through Curriculum

Character strengthening through the curriculum at SMA Nurul Jadid is a structured and comprehensive educational approach that is directed at forming students' personalities integrally. This process does not only emphasize the achievement of knowledge aspects, but also prioritizes the instillation of ethical, spiritual, social, and nationalistic values. The curriculum is designed in an integrated manner by integrating Islamic values into all learning activities, both through subjects, co-curricular activities, and extracurricular activities. Each element of the curriculum is used as a means of developing students' character, such as forming an attitude of honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, and caring for others. Thus, the curriculum at SMA Nurul Jadid not only plays a role in academic development but also as an important instrument in producing a generation of characters who are ready to face the dynamics of modern life wisely and morally.

The results of observations conducted at SMA Nurul Jadid show that character values have been comprehensively integrated into the implementation of the curriculum. The learning process in the classroom does not only focus on cognitive aspects, but is also directed at fostering positive attitudes such as honesty, responsibility, and collaboration. Teachers actively connect subject matter with Islamic values and real-life situations. Curricular activities, such as student leadership training and regular religious programs, serve as a means of fostering discipline, good character building (PKB), empathy, and social skills in students. The school atmosphere with a religious nuance, coupled with positive habits such as congregational prayer, also supports character-building through education. This reflects that SMA Nurul Jadid has a strong commitment to forming students who are not only academically superior but also have a character based on moral and spiritual values. Strengthening character through the curriculum at SMA Nurul Jadid reflects an educational approach that does not only emphasize academic achievement but is also oriented towards the formation of a complete personality. The integration of Islamic values in every aspect of learning shows that the school strives to create an educational environment that encourages students to understand and practice moral, spiritual, and social principles consistently.

The curriculum is not positioned only as an instrument for delivering material but becomes a strategic means of instilling noble values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and caring. Based on the observation results, this approach has proven effective in forming a religious and humanist school culture, as well as creating students who are not only intellectually intelligent but also emotionally and spiritually mature. This shows that the character-based curriculum at SMA Nurul Jadid plays an important role in producing a generation that is ready to face the challenges of the times with integrity and strong values of goodness.

Table 2. Character Development Through Curriculum

Character Strengthening Aspects	Implementation in Curriculum	Examples of Activities/Programs	Impact on Students
Integration of Islamic Values	Integrated religious subject matter and activities	Thematic learning with Islamic values, good character building (PKB), congregational prayer	Strengthening understanding and practice of Islamic values
Positive Attitude Development	Instilling values of honesty, responsibility, and cooperation	Class discussions, group work, collaborative project assignments	Increasing student discipline, responsibility, and cooperation
Curricular Activities	Character development through religious organizations and activities	OSIS, da'wah activities, leadership training	Forming leadership, empathy, and social sense
School Environment	Religious and humanist culture in schools	Congregational prayer, regular religious studies, culture of mutual respect	Creating an environment that supports positive character growth
Character Strengthening Results	Combination of academic and character aspects in the curriculum	Evaluation of learning and attitudes	Students who are intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually mature

The table above comprehensively shows how character building at SMA Nurul Jadid is implemented through a curriculum that integrates Islamic values and religious activities. Various components, such as the insertion of Islamic values in learning, the development of positive attitudes such as honesty and responsibility, and character building through co-curricular activities such as student organizations and da'wah programs, are designed to shape students' personalities as a whole. The religious and humanist school atmosphere also strengthens this process through congregational habits and attitudes of mutual respect. This integrated approach produces students who not only excel academically but also have emotional and spiritual maturity so that they are ready to face the challenges of the times with integrity and strong moral values.

The views of educators regarding character building through the curriculum show quite significant diversity. This diversity has a dual impact, on the one hand, differences of opinion can spur constructive discussions and innovation in the learning process. However, on the other hand, this disagreement has the potential to cause inconsistencies in implementation and misalignment in instilling character values in students (Nasrul, 2025; Yuliah et al., 2025). These differences in views are influenced by educational background, teaching experience, and teachers' understanding of the

concept of character building, which is exacerbated by the lack of coordination and continuous training in the school's organizational structure.

In addition, there is also rejection from some members of the community towards the implementation of a character-based curriculum which has an impact on the effectiveness of school programs. This rejection serves as a form of social control that reminds schools to be more sensitive to the needs and values of the local community (Taali et al., 2024). However, if not handled properly, this rejection can reduce parental support and hinder their involvement in the education process. The main causes of this rejection are the lack of adequate socialization and differences in cultural views regarding the integration of Islamic values into the curriculum, which causes a distance in communication between schools and the community.

The academic results of students who follow the character-strengthening curriculum show quite wide variations. This condition indicates that the curriculum approach allows for the development of individual student potential, but also poses challenges in evaluating the success of the program as a whole. This variation in academic results is influenced by factors such as socio-economic conditions, family support, student learning styles, and their level of acceptance of the character values taught. In addition, limited personal learning facilities and lack of teacher training in dealing with student diversity also contribute to the irregularity of these results, so adjustments to learning strategies are needed to be more inclusive and in accordance with the needs of each student.
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4. CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes the importance of character building through the integration of Islamic values in the curriculum as a strategy for forming holistic learners at SMA Nurul Jadid. The main findings show that the implementation of an integrated curriculum can improve not only students' academic achievement but also their moral and spiritual aspects, thus producing a generation that is ready to face the challenges of the modern era with strong integrity. A valuable lesson from this study is that character building needs to be implemented comprehensively and involve all components of the school, including educators and the surrounding community.

From a scientific perspective, this study contributes by presenting a new perspective on the development of a character-based curriculum in the context of contemporary Islamic education. This study emphasizes the importance of synergy between curriculum innovation and sustainable management as a foundation for forming students who are intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually balanced. The use of qualitative methods also allows for a deeper understanding of the dynamics of curriculum implementation, thus producing useful insights for further research.

However, this study has limitations, especially because it only focuses on one location, namely SMA Nurul Jadid, and the research subjects are limited to students and teachers without considering wider gender and age variations. Therefore, further studies with a survey approach involving various locations and considering gender factors and a more diverse age range are needed to obtain a more complete and representative picture. This approach is expected to be the basis for making more effective and targeted education policies.

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