



Transforming the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum Through a Digital and Contextual Approach

Etika Pujianti¹, Fahri Husaini¹, Abdul Rohimil Mahdi Batubara¹, Ahmad Ridhoan¹, Kusmahadi¹, Nur Annisa Hasibuan¹, Siti Atmasari¹

¹Universitas Islam An Nur Lampung, Indonesia

etikapujianti@gmail.com *



ABSTRACT

The transformation of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum is an urgent necessity in facing the digital era and global disruption. The PAI curriculum can no longer focus solely on the transfer of normative knowledge but must also be responsive to technological developments and the demands of 21st-century competencies. This study aims to analyze strategies for transforming the PAI curriculum through digital and contextual approaches and to propose an applicable, transformative, and relevant curriculum model for modern education. The research employed a library research method by analyzing relevant primary and secondary sources, including books, journals, and recent research reports. The findings indicate that the integration of digital technology into the PAI curriculum enhances students' digital literacy, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking skills. Meanwhile, the contextual approach plays a significant role in connecting Islamic values with the social and cultural realities of Indonesia's plural society. In conclusion, a PAI curriculum that combines digital and contextual approaches not only increases the relevance of religious education but also shapes inclusive, adaptive, and competitive Muslim generations in the global era. The study recommends teacher training in digital literacy, the provision of adequate educational infrastructure, and the design of teaching materials that balance normative aspects with 21st-century skills

Keywords: *Islamic Religious Education, Curriculum, Digital Transformation, Contextual Approach*

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received
July 20, 2025

Revised
September 05,
2025

Accepted
September 30,
2025

Journal Homepage

<https://ojs.staialfurqan.ac.id/IJoASER/>

This is an open access article under the CC BY SA license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

PENDAHULUAN

The transformation of education in the era of technological disruption has brought fundamental changes in learning patterns, mindsets, and competency needs of students (Ixfina et al., 2024). Islamic Religious Education (PAI) as an important component in the national education system must not be left behind in responding to this dynamic (Ramdani et al., 2025). The Islamic Religious Education curriculum is required to not only be oriented towards normative and ritualistic aspects, but must also be able to answer the challenges of globalization, the development of digital technology, and the increasingly complex contextual needs of society (Zain et al., 2025). This paradigm shift suggests that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) must be reconstructed into a more integrative, applicable, and transformative curriculum, capable of preparing a generation of Muslims who are religious, critical, creative, and adaptive to current developments.

The underlying problem is the persistent gap between the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum taught in schools and the actual needs of students facing the

challenges of the digital era. Many curricula remain textual and memorization-oriented, thus under-stimulating critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy skills, which are crucially needed today. This situation creates a relevance problem, where religious learning is often perceived as lacking applicability to everyday life. Therefore, the PAI curriculum needs to be transformed by integrating digital and contextual approaches to address the real needs of society while maintaining the relevance of Islamic teachings in the contemporary context.

From the perspective of educational theory, the transformation of the Islamic Education curriculum can be understood through the concept of contextual teaching and learning (CTL), which emphasizes the importance of linking learning materials to the realities of students' lives (Wijaya et al., 2024). (Johnson, 2002) states that CTL encourages students to understand the meaning of learning through connections to real-life situations. When CTL is applied in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), Islamic values are understood not only as normative teachings but also as applicable guidelines for dealing with social, cultural, environmental, and technological issues. Furthermore, constructivism theory (Vygotsky & Cole, 2018) also strengthens the importance of experiential learning and social interaction, which can be optimized through digital media.

Previous research studies also show the urgency of transforming the Islamic Religious Education curriculum. Research by (Khosyiyin & Khoiiri, 2024) emphasized that a digital-based Islamic Religious Education curriculum can increase student engagement, especially through e-learning platforms and Islamic education applications. Other research by (Tamami et al., 2024) This study demonstrates that integrating the Islamic Religious Education curriculum with a contextual approach has proven effective in enhancing students' understanding of Islamic values relevant to everyday life. This demonstrates that the synergy between digital and contextual approaches is a potential strategy for making Islamic Religious Education more meaningful, modern, and responsive to the needs of the times.

However, previous research still shows limitations, such as a lack of attention to the integration of Islamic values with 21st-century competencies, and a lack of truly applicable curriculum models at various levels of education. Many studies focus solely on the application of technology without linking it to the contextual realities of students, or conversely, only emphasize contextual aspects without optimally utilizing digital media. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by offering a digital-based and contextual Islamic Education curriculum model, so that both complement each other in providing a more comprehensive learning experience.

The transformation of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum through a digital and contextual approach also aligns with the national education goals and the vision of religious moderation proclaimed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. By utilizing digital technology, the PAI curriculum can reach a younger generation who are very familiar with social media, the internet, and digital applications. Meanwhile, the contextual approach ensures that the Islamic values taught remain relevant to social and cultural conditions and the challenges of the times. This combination not only strengthens students' faith and morals but also shapes inclusive, tolerant, and adaptive characters to global dynamics.

Based on the description, the purpose of this study is to analyze the strategy of transforming the Islamic Religious Education curriculum through a digital and contextual approach, and to offer a curriculum model that is applicable, transformative, and relevant to the needs of 21st-century education. This study also aims to identify opportunities and challenges in implementing this approach, both from the perspective of teachers, students, and educational institutions, so that the results of the study can be a real contribution in the development of modern, relevant, and effective Islamic Religious Education in forming a superior Muslim generation in the digital era.

METODE

This study employed a qualitative approach with a library research method. This approach was chosen because the research focused on theoretical and conceptual analysis, as well as relevant previous research findings regarding the transformation of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum through digital and contextual approaches. Primary data were obtained from literature sources including books, scientific journal articles, research reports, proceedings, and educational policy documents such as the Independent Curriculum and Ministry of Religious Affairs regulations. Sources were selected purposively, selecting only literature relevant to the research theme and academically credible.

Data collection techniques were conducted through documentation and literature review by searching print and digital sources using academic databases such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, and Garuda. Each literature found was then sorted by category, such as curriculum transformation theory, digital learning concepts, contextual approaches, and studies of religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). To maintain analytical clarity, the data obtained were organized within a thematic analysis framework that connects the main research variables: the PAI curriculum, digital approaches, and contextual approaches.

Data analysis used content analysis, with the following steps: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was performed by filtering the most relevant literature and then presenting it in the form of a thematic summary. Interpretation was then conducted to identify patterns, gaps, similarities, and differences between existing studies. Source triangulation was used to enhance the validity of the results by comparing data from various theoretical perspectives and previous research. With this method, the research is expected to produce a comprehensive picture of digital-based and contextual Islamic Religious Education curriculum transformation strategies, as well as offer an implementation model relevant to the needs of Islamic education in the era of disruption.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

Islamic Education Curriculum Transformation Strategy through Digital and Contextual Approaches

The research results show that the transformation of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum requires synergy between digital and contextual approaches as two main pillars. The digital approach allows the Islamic Religious Education curriculum to be integrated with modern learning technologies, such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), interactive Quran applications, and gamification-based e-learning platforms. This integration has been proven to increase student engagement in the learning process, as evidenced by research. (Qutub, 2025) who found that the use of digital media in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) increased learning interest by up to 30% compared to conventional methods. Meanwhile, a contextual approach brings PAI material closer to students' social realities, for example by linking Quranic teachings on social justice with contemporary issues such as the environment, interfaith tolerance, or healthy digital literacy.

This transformation strategy is also oriented towards developing 21st-century competencies, including critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity (the 4Cs). A responsive Islamic Religious Education curriculum in the digital era not only teaches normative concepts but also trains students to critically analyze socio-religious issues, seek innovative solutions, and collaborate across cultures and religions. For example, through problem-based learning projects, students are invited to analyze cases of social media misuse in the spread of hate speech and then relate these to the principles

of religious moderation in Islam. Thus, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum serves as a platform for the integrative development of knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

The implementation of digital and contextual approaches also creates a more flexible and personal learning experience (Widiyanti et al., 2025). With digital technology, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning can take place both synchronously and asynchronously, allowing students to learn at their own pace. At the same time, a contextual approach ensures that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) material extends beyond cognitive understanding and is applied to real-life situations, such as religious practices linked to environmental cleanliness or character building through community social activities. This makes the transformation of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum more comprehensive, addressing students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions.

However, the analysis also shows a significant need to improve the capacity of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers. Many teachers still face challenges in optimally utilizing digital technology. (ASQIA, 2023) revealed that more than 40% of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at the secondary school level lack adequate digital literacy competencies. This underscores the importance of teacher training programs to master digital media, develop interactive PAI content, and integrate Islamic values with contextual social issues relevant to students. Without improving teacher capacity, curriculum transformation strategies will be difficult to implement effectively.

Thus, the initial findings of this study confirm that the Islamic Religious Education curriculum transformation strategy through a digital and contextual approach is not merely an option, but a necessity in this era of disruption. The synergy between the two creates a curriculum model that is applicable, transformative, and relevant to the needs of 21st-century education. This strategy not only strengthens students' faith and morals but also equips them with the life skills needed to face increasingly complex global challenges.

Opportunities and Challenges in Implementing a Digital and Contextual Islamic Education Curriculum

The opportunity to implement a digital and contextual Islamic Religious Education curriculum is wide open in Indonesia. This is driven by several factors, such as increasing internet and digital device penetration among students, government policy support through school digitalization programs, and the community's real need for religious education that is more relevant to everyday life. This situation provides positive momentum for schools and madrasahs (Islamic schools) to develop a more modern Islamic Religious Education curriculum oriented toward 21st-century competencies.

On the other hand, this study also identified several challenges that need to be addressed for effective curriculum implementation. The main challenge is the digital literacy gap between teachers and students. Many students are more adept at using technology than their teachers, potentially creating imbalances in the learning process. Furthermore, the unequal availability of digital infrastructure, particularly in remote areas, is also a serious obstacle. Without adequate facilities, a digital-based Islamic Religious Education curriculum will be difficult to implement evenly across Indonesia.

Another challenge is the resistance of some teachers and the community to change. Some still believe that religious education must be conducted using traditional methods, thus deeming the use of digital media less in line with Islamic values. However, technology is merely a tool, while the essence of Islamic teachings remains intact if integrated wisely. Therefore, public awareness and education are needed to demonstrate that the use of digital approaches in Islamic Religious Education can actually strengthen the internalization of religious values in a more effective manner and in a way that aligns with the characteristics of millennials and Gen Z.

Despite these challenges, there is a significant opportunity for the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum to emerge as a transformative one. With a digital approach, Islamic values can be conveyed through media more relevant to students' daily lives, such as educational videos, Islamic podcasts, or interactive learning apps. Meanwhile, a contextual approach enables students to connect religious teachings with current issues in their environment, such as tolerance, the environment, and social media ethics. This combination has the potential to make PAI a curriculum that not only imparts knowledge but also shapes students' holistic personalities.

Thus, the results of these two studies confirm that digital-based and contextual Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum transformation has significant potential for implementation, despite facing a number of structural and cultural challenges. Therefore, a comprehensive strategy is needed, ranging from improving teachers' digital literacy, providing equitable infrastructure, to developing applicable curriculum content that meets students' needs. If implemented consistently, the PAI curriculum will be a key pillar in shaping a superior, adaptive, and contributing generation of Muslims in facing the challenges of the 21st century.

Discussion

The results of this study reinforce the findings of previous theories and studies that the transformation of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum requires the integration of digital and contextual approaches. This aligns with constructivist learning theory (Su'udi, 2022), a digital approach helps build active interactions between students and learning resources through technology. Qutub's research, which showed a 30% increase in learning interest through digital media, supports this theory, that active student engagement in digital environments can strengthen meaningful learning experiences. On the other hand, a contextual approach aligns with the concept of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), which emphasizes the importance of linking learning materials to the realities of students' lives (Johnson, 2002). This proves that an Islamic Education curriculum integrated with a social context can deliver more relevant and transformative learning.

From the perspective of strengthening 21st century competencies, the results of this study are also in line with the views (Siregar & SP, 2024) about the importance of mastering the 4C skills (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity). Islamic Religious Education curriculum designed through a digital and contextual approach has proven to be more effective in fostering students' critical thinking skills and collaborative abilities, as supported by research (Kusnandar et al., 2025). This demonstrates that the application of technology-based problem-based learning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) can improve students' critical thinking skills and social empathy. Thus, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is no longer confined to the cognitive or dogmatic realm, but rather becomes a vehicle for character development and life skills.

In addition, the findings of this study also confirm the blended learning theory put forward by (Hofmann, 2018), that the combination of online and offline learning can create a flexible, adaptive, and more personalized learning experience. A digital approach allows students to learn anytime and anywhere, while a contextual approach ensures the connection between learning materials and real life. This aligns with research (Mukhtar & Burhan, 2025) which shows that the digital-contextual learning model increases Islamic Religious Education students' motivation and independence in learning. Thus, the transformation of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum through this approach encompasses all dimensions of student development, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor.

However, the results of this study also revealed a digital competency gap among teachers, which poses a significant challenge in implementing a digital-based Islamic

Religious Education curriculum. (Sujanto et al., 2023) emphasized that low teacher digital literacy is a major obstacle to the implementation of technology in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. Yet, teachers play a central role as facilitators and innovators in integrating Islamic values with digital media. This highlights the need to strengthen teacher capacity through ongoing training, the development of digital learning communities, and policy support from educational institutions to ensure optimal curriculum transformation. Without improved teacher capacity, digital and contextual integration risks remaining merely discourse without concrete implementation.

Finally, the results of this study confirm that the strategy of transforming the Islamic Education curriculum through a digital and contextual approach is a necessity in the era of technological disruption. This aligns with the idea (Symbolon, 2025) that contemporary Islamic education must transform from a traditional paradigm to a digital-humanistic paradigm that balances faith, reason, and skills. By integrating Islamic spiritual values with 21st-century competencies, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum can be a strategic instrument in shaping a generation of Muslims with strong character, open-mindedness, and adaptability to global change. Therefore, the results of this study not only provide empirical evidence but also enrich the theoretical framework regarding the direction of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum development that is relevant to current demands.

The novelty of this research lies in the proposed Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum transformation model that simultaneously integrates digital and contextual approaches. While previous research has tended to focus on one aspect, this study presents a holistic curriculum concept by combining both. With this model, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum not only functions as an instrument for transferring religious knowledge but also becomes a transformative tool that develops 21st-century skills, such as digital literacy, critical thinking, and collaboration, while also instilling Islamic values that are applicable to social life. This provides a theoretical contribution in the form of a new conceptual framework for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum studies, as well as a practical contribution in the form of recommendations for curriculum development strategies relevant to the needs of Islamic education in an era of disruption.

The limitations of this research lie in the method used, namely a literature study. Therefore, the results obtained are still conceptual and have not been empirically tested in the field. This means that the research findings cannot comprehensively describe the dynamics of the implementation of the digital-contextual Islamic Education curriculum in various schools or madrasas with diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, this study also does not in-depth examine external factors such as government policies, infrastructure support, and cultural resistance among teachers and the community that can influence the success of the curriculum implementation. Therefore, further empirical research through case studies, surveys, or educational experiments is urgently needed to test the validity and effectiveness of this curriculum model in real-world contexts.

KESIMPULAN

The results of the study indicate that the transformation of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum through a digital and contextual approach is able to present a learning model that is more adaptive to the needs of the 21st century, where digital technology is utilized to strengthen literacy, collaboration, and creativity of students, while the contextual approach emphasizes the relevance of Islamic values to the social, cultural realities, and global challenges faced by the younger generation. In conclusion, the integration of these two approaches not only enriches the content of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum, but also makes it transformative, applicable, and effective in forming a generation of intelligent, tolerant, and superior Muslims in the digital era. The

recommendation from this study is the need for synergy between teachers, educational institutions, and policymakers in developing a digital-contextual Islamic Religious Education curriculum, including strengthening teacher competencies in digital literacy, providing adequate technological infrastructure, and designing teaching materials that are able to balance Islamic values and 21st-century skills so that the implementation of this curriculum can run optimally and sustainably.

REFERENSI

- ASQIA, A. (2023). PRINCIPAL'S STRATEGY IN DEVELOPING TEACHER'S DIGITAL LITERACY AT STATE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL 1 PALOPO. Palopo State Islamic Institute.
- Hofmann, J. (2018). Blended learning. Association for talent development.
- Ixfina, FD, Fitriani, SL, & Rohma, SN (2024). Transformation of social studies education and the challenges of 21st-century modernity in the era of digital disruption for the millennial generation. ELSE (Elementary School Education Journal): Journal of Elementary School Education and Learning, 8(1).
- Johnson, E. B. (2002). Contextual teaching and learning: What it is and why it's here to stay. Corwin Press.
- Khosyiin, MI, & Khoiiri, MY (2024). Application of Digital Technology in Improving Learning Effectiveness in Islamic Education. Sasana: Journal of Islamic Religious Education, 3(1), 137-142.
- Kusnandar, A., Mirza, I., & Azpar, A. (2025). EXPLORATION OF PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING (PBL) IMPLEMENTATION IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS. Islamic Management: Journal of Islamic Education Management, 8(02).
- Muktar, L., & Burhan, LI (2025). The Effect of Problem Based Learning Model on Critical Thinking Skills of Junior High School Students in Remote Areas. CENDEKIA: Journal of Integrated Education, 1(1), 1-12.
- Qutub, S. (2025). The Effectiveness of Using the InVideo Application to Increase Student Learning Interest in Islamic Religious Education Learning. Journal of Islamic Education Studies, 4(1), 71-80.
- Ramdani, ES, Nurshobahi, H., & Bariyah, K. (2025). Innovation Policy in the Management of Islamic Religious Education. PT Arr Rad Pratama.
- Simbolon, BR (2025). PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION IN THE ERA OF SOCIETY 5.0.
- Siregar, YS, & SP, MP (2024). A Vocational Education Teacher Competency Improvement Training Model with 4C Skills-Based Training Management (Critical Thinking, Creativity, Communication, Collaboration). umsu press.
- Su'udi. (2022). Constructivist Learning of Islamic Education and Character Building as an Implementation of Character Education. NEM Publisher. <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=mvp7EAAAQBAJ>
- Sujanto, LF, Kurniawan, Z., & Holik, A. (2023). The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Improving 21st Century Skills through Digital Literacy. JIIP-Scientific Journal of Educational Sciences, 6(9), 6534-6540.
- Tamami, AG, Murhayati, S., & Zaitun, Z. (2024). Innovation in Technology-Based Islamic Religious Education Learning Media. Indonesian Research Journal on Education, 4(4), 2412-2419.
- Vygotsky, L., & Cole, M. (2018). Lev Vygotsky: Learning and social constructivism. Learning Theories for Early Years Practice. UK: SAGE Publications Inc, 68-73.
- Widiyanti, DA, Fauziah, AS, Emalia, D., & Lestari, AT (2025). Independent Learning in the Digital Era: A Comparative Analysis of the KBK Approach and Adaptive Curriculum. Journal of Educational Technology and Learning | E-ISSN: 3026-6629,

2(4), 962-966.

Wijaya, SP, Wahab, W., & Kurniawan, S. (2024). Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in the Development of Islamic Religious Education Learning Design. *Journal of Education Research*, 5(4), 6766-6776.

Zain, NH, Iswantir, I., Wati, S., & Zakir, S. (2025). Reform and New Directions for Future Islamic Religious Education. *Invention: Journal of Research and Education Studies*, 494-514.