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Innovative Learning Strategies for Islamic Religious Education Based on *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum in Vocational High Schools

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ABSTRACT: *Innovative learning strategies for Islamic Religious Education are needed to improve cognitive abilities, including analysis, application, creation, presentation, and implementation; affective abilities, including appreciation and organization or characterization; and psychomotor abilities, with the perception of the Qur'an and Hadith, which can enrich the vocational needs of students. This qualitative case study research aims to describe and analyze innovative learning strategies for Islamic Religious Education at Mambaul Ulum Vocational High School based on the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. Data collection through interviews, observations, and documentation. Testing the validity of the collected data through triangulation, expert discussions, and member checking. Data analysis using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana methods with data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion. The study showed that the Islamic Religious Education teachers implemented three innovative learning strategies. First, problem-based learning integrates religious concepts with real issues to develop cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities. Second, inquiry-based learning through independent investigation and applying religious concepts in everyday life to deepen understanding. Third, flipped classroom combines independent learning at home with classroom discussion activities. Applying three innovative learning strategies has an impact on increasing learning motivation, knowledge of worship, and critical thinking skills. The value of this research lies in the application of learning strategies that connect religious concepts with actual practices to improve the quality of learning in vocational environments. The research findings strengthen constructivism through problem-based, inquiry-based, and flipped classroom theory by showing that active, collaborative, and interactive learning improves understanding and application of learning materials.*

Strategi pembelajaran inovatif Pendidikan Agama Islam diperlukan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan kognitif, meliputi analisis, aplikasi, kreasi, penyajian, dan implementasi; kemampuan afektif, meliputi apresiasi dan

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v8i3.r587

e-ISSN: 2599-3046 (online) | Volume 8, Issue 3 | July - September 2024
p-ISSN: 2657-1781 (print)

organisasi atau karakterisasi; dan kemampuan psikomotorik, dengan persepsi Al-Qur'an dan Hadits, yang dapat memperkaya kebutuhan vokasional peserta didik. Penelitian studi kasus kualitatif ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan dan menganalisis strategi pembelajaran inovatif Pendidikan Agama Islam di Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan Mambaul Ulum berbasis kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. Pengumpulan data melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Pengujian keabsahan data yang terkumpul melalui triangulasi, diskusi pakar, dan member checking. Analisis data menggunakan metode Miles, Huberman, dan Saldana dengan kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru Pendidikan Agama Islam menerapkan tiga strategi pembelajaran inovatif. Pertama, *problem-based learning* yang memadukan konsep agama dengan isu nyata untuk mengembangkan kemampuan kognitif, afektif, dan psikomotorik. Kedua, *inquiry-based learning* melalui penyelidikan mandiri dan menerapkan konsep agama dalam kehidupan sehari-hari untuk memperdalam pemahaman. Ketiga, *flipped classroom* menggabungkan pembelajaran mandiri di rumah dengan kegiatan diskusi kelas. Penerapan tiga strategi pembelajaran inovatif berdampak pada peningkatan motivasi belajar, pengetahuan tentang ibadah, dan keterampilan berpikir kritis. Nilai penelitian ini terletak pada penerapan strategi pembelajaran yang menghubungkan konsep-konsep keagamaan dengan praktik nyata untuk meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran di lingkungan kejuruan. Temuan penelitian memperkuat konstruktivisme melalui teori *problem-based, inquiry-based,* dan *flipped classroom* dengan menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran aktif, kolaboratif, dan interaktif meningkatkan pemahaman dan penerapan materi pembelajaran.

Keywords: *Innovative Learning Strategies, Islamic Religious Education, Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, Vocational High School*

Received: *March 30, 2024;* ***Revised:*** *Sept 3, 2024;* ***Accepted:*** *Sept 10, 2024*

I. INTRODUCTION

As a vocational education institution, Mambaul Ulum Vocational High School aims to shape students' character based on Islamic values. Islamic Religious Education learning in the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum aims to develop cognitive abilities such as analysis, presentation, and creativity; affective skills in the form of strengthening beliefs and applying religious values in everyday life; and psychomotor skills which include reading and memorising verses of the Qur'an and Hadith. This curriculum emphasises understanding, analysing, conveying, and applying religious concepts, as well as habituating behaviour by Islamic values, to form religious students, have a noble character, have religious competence, are ready to face the world of work, and master 21st-century skills (Taridala et al., 2023).

Islamic Religious Education learning at Mambaul Ulum Vocational High School could be more optimal, as indicated by low learning motivation and learning outcomes. The implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum offers opportunities to develop

DOI: https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v8i3.r587

innovative learning strategies. Innovative learning strategies to build reading, memorisation, analysis, presentation, and application of Islamic jurisprudence skills, as well as moral development, are needed so that Islamic Religious Education is more relevant and exciting, according to students' vocational needs (Mattar, 2018; Nouri, 2016; Seibert, 2021). Innovative learning strategies are in line with the school's vision to produce individuals who are noble, intelligent, creative, competent, productive, competitive, and able to communicate globally, both verbally and digitally (Nawi et al., 2020).

According to Bloom's Taxonomy, Bruner's discovery learning supports cognitive abilities such as information analysis and problem-solving, emphasising active discovery (Previts & Bauer, 2016). Contextual teaching and learning support presentation or application capabilities related to applying concepts that connect theory with the natural world (Tari & Rosana, 2019). Constructivism by Vygotsky influences the ability to create, which encourages collaboration. The ability to apply knowledge in a practical context is guided by problem-based learning (Pande & Bharathi, 2020). Bandura's Social Learning Theory supports the ability to believe or judge through observation, while Thorndike's Habit Formation Theory supports the ability to habituate including organisational and characterisation abilities (Kemp et al., 2021). Schmidt's motor learning theory and Skinner's behaviourism are the basis for developing psychomotor skills such as reading the Qur'an or perception (Machado & Staddon, 2023).

If implementing the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum runs effectively, it will enrich Islamic Religious Education learning and strengthen the development of students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities (Harlanu et al., 2024). As stated by John Dewey, the educational curriculum should focus on improving and developing students' full potential from various aspects, not just in one field of knowledge (Sadovnik et al., 2017).

Several previous studies have shown that e-problem-based learning is as effective as conventional problem-based learning in improving students' knowledge and skills (Jaiprakash et al., 2019). Innovative learning methods increase student motivation, activity and learning achievement (Jayanegara et al., 2024). Previous studies analysed generative learning strategies, including summarising, mapping, drawing, imagination, and teaching, to enhance students' cognitive engagement in designing effective learning. Application of flipped learning strategy on independent learning skills of prospective Islamic education teachers with a project-based approach. The results showed that 79% of participants responded positively to the flipped learning strategy, which positively impacted their independent learning skills. This study highlights the importance of innovative preparation programs and practices to enhance teacher self-efficacy in the context of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum (Alkandari & Alabdulhadi, 2023; Ardiansyah & Bagus Cahyanto, 2022; Jasiah et al., 2024).

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyse innovative strategies for Islamic Religious Education based on the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum at Mambaul Ulum Vocational High School with a focus on developing cognitive abilities including analysis, presentation, creation; affective skills including belief, habituation of religious values; and psychomotor skills including reading and memorising verses of the Qur'an and Hadith. The research problem is formulated as how to plan and implement innovative Islamic Religious Education learning strategies in alignment with the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, aiming to influence students' cognitive abilities, including

DOI: https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v8i3.r587

e-ISSN: 2599-3046 (online) | Volume 8, Issue 3 | July - September 2024
p-ISSN: 2657-1781 (print)

understanding, analysing, presenting, and applying religious concepts; affective skills, including cultivating attitudes and behaviours based on Islamic values; and student's psychomotor skills including reading the Qur'an and Hadith.

II. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach to describe and analyse innovative learning strategies for Islamic Religious Education based on the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum and its impact on student learning outcomes at Mambaul Ulum Vocational High School (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The subjects of this study were Islamic Religious Education teachers and students. The reason for choosing Islamic Religious Education teachers is because they are the implementers of Islamic Religious Education learning. The reason for selecting students as individuals who experience the learning process is so that they can tell about the learning experiences applied by teachers. The object of the study is innovative Islamic Religious Education learning strategies based on the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum and its impact on student learning outcomes. The study was conducted for three months, from February to April 2024, by paying attention to the institution's and teachers' readiness.

Data was collected through interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers, principals, deputy heads of curriculum, and students to obtain information about innovative learning strategies according to the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum. The observation activities were conducted by researchers directly observing the Islamic Religious Education learning process, focusing on the activities and interactions of teachers and students. Documentation activities involve analysing documents such as the *Kemendikbud* website, syllabus, lesson plans, and teaching materials (Sugiyono, 2018).

Test the validity of the data through several techniques: *First*, source triangulation, namely validating findings by using various data sources such as interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers and students. *Second*, method triangulation by combining data collection methods such as interviews, observations, and documentation to compare and confirm the results. *Third*, discuss with experts by testing data and discussing it with experts in Islamic Religious Education and curriculum to strengthen the validity of the findings. *Fourth*, members check by consulting the analysis results with the research subjects teachers and students to ensure the conformity of data interpretation with reality (Sugiyono, 2018).

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana method, with the data condensation process including filtering and summarising information from interviews, observations, and documentation on innovative Islamic Religious Education learning strategies. The results of the data analysis are then displayed in tables or diagrams to facilitate the visualisation of the main patterns and themes. Concluding involves checking the consistency and validity of the data, ensuring that the research results reflect the reality of innovative Islamic Religious Education learning strategies according to the achievements of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum at Mambaul Ulum Vocational High School (Miles et al., 2014).

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III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the interview with the Principal, Mambaul Ulum Vocational High School began implementing the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum in 2023. The school implemented this curriculum in stages, starting from grades X and XI, with the first evaluation on July 3, 2023. By the direction of the director general, the school decided that the acceleration of the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum would cover grades X, XI, and XII and would begin in January 2024.

The Islamic Religious Education teaching team of five members consulted with the deputy head of curriculum to plan innovative learning strategies. The Islamic Religious Education Vocational High School curriculum focuses on the impact of learning on cognitive, moral, and productive skills. So, teachers must apply creative and innovative learning strategies to support learning outcomes that align with the institution's and government's vision. Islamic Religious Education teaching team decided to use innovative learning strategies, problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning and flipped classroom to improve the quality of student learning outcomes in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects by the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum guidelines.

Cognitive Aspect

The cognitive aspects of Islamic Religious Education learning consist of the following. *First*, students can analyse various aspects of Islamic teachings, including verses of the Qur'an and Hadith related to competition in goodness, work ethic, and the prohibition of free association and adultery. *Second*, students explore the meaning of *syu'ab al-īmān*, the benefits of avoiding *mażmūmah* morals, and the application of *mu'āmalah* fiqh and *al-kulliyyāt al-khamsah*. *Third*, students analyse the history of scholars who spread Islam in Indonesia, as well as topics related to critical thinking, science, and etiquette in using social media, as well as the provisions of sermons, *da'wah*, and the concept of *ijtihad*.

Fourth, students can present content about the invitation to compete in goodness, work ethic, and the prohibition of free association and adultery. *Fifth*, students present the meaning of *syu'ab al-īmān*, including the definition, evidence, types, and benefits. *Sixth*, the student can compile an explanation of fiqh *mu'āmalah* and *al-kulliyyāt al-khamsah* and create a timeline chart of the history of Islamic scholars who spread Islam in Indonesia.

Seventh, students can produce work that includes the advantages of avoiding the *mażmūmah* attitude and creating a timeline chart of the history of Islamic scholars in Indonesia. Students can present the messages of the Qur'an and Hadith on various topics, such as the meaning of the branches of faith, theology, the provisions of *fiqh*, and the contributions of Islamic scholars in Islamic history. Students show how to overcome social problems, such as fights, alcohol use, and drugs.

Eighth, students can apply the rules of sermons, *tabligh*, *da'wah*, and marriage in Islam and *ijtihad* daily, ensuring that religious teachings are integrated into tangible actions.

Affective Aspect

The affective aspect of Islamic Religious Education learning has two dimensions namely believing and getting used to it. *First*, by assuming (valuing), students can understand and accept that a competitive attitude toward goodness, a high work ethic, and avoiding free association and adultery are religious commands. Students must know

DOI: https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v8i3.r587

e-ISSN: 2599-3046 (online) | Volume 8, Issue 3 | July - September 2024
p-ISSN: 2657-1781 (print)

that faith includes various branches morality *mażmūmah* is a prohibition and morality *mahmūdah* is a command. Students believe that the provisions of *fiqh mu'amalah* and *al-kulliyyāt al-khamsah* are religious teachings that students must accept. At the same time, the development of civilisation in Indonesia is considered as *sunnatullah*. Students believe that polite, moderate, and wise preaching methods are commands of Allah SWT. Students understand religious teachings in the context of critical thinking, science, technology, tolerance, and organisational ethics.

Second, getting used to organisation or characterisation focuses on getting used to positive attitudes in everyday life. Students are expected to get used to having a competitive attitude and good work ethic while avoiding free association and adultery by maintaining self-respect. Students are also likely to prevent *mażmūmah* morals and apply *mahmūdah* morals in everyday life. In addition, fostering an entrepreneurial spirit, social concern, an attitude of simplicity, sincerity in seeking knowledge, perseverance, peace, and a spirit of respecting customs and differences of belief is essential. These attitudes reflect religious values such as curiosity, critical thinking, responsibility, love of peace, tolerance, and respect for differences of opinion.

Psychomotor Aspects

The psychomotor aspect of Islamic Religious Education learning focuses on the ability to read the Al-Qur'an in *tartil*, namely with correct pronunciation and full of appreciation. Students are expected to be able to memorize the verses of the Qur'an and Hadith fluently relating to the commandment to compete in goodness and work ethics and stay away from the dangers of promiscuity and adultery.

Innovative Learning Strategy for Islamic Religious Education

The implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum at Mambaul Ulum Vocational High School Bondowoso in Islamic Religious Education adopts innovative learning strategies such as problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and flipped classroom. This learning strategy is in line with the principles of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, which encourages students' independence, creativity, and critical thinking and has improved the quality of learning (Al Mamun & Lawrie, 2023; Góes & Alliprandini, 2019; Light, 2014).

Problem-based learning is used to develop cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills. The use of inquiry-based learning focuses on cognitive aspects, while the use of flipped classroom can be used to assess cognitive and affective elements. Problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and flipped-classroom learning strategies are applied alternately to increase student motivation in Islamic Religious Education learning. The application of learning strategies according to learning outcomes is illustrated in figure 1 below.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v8i3.r587

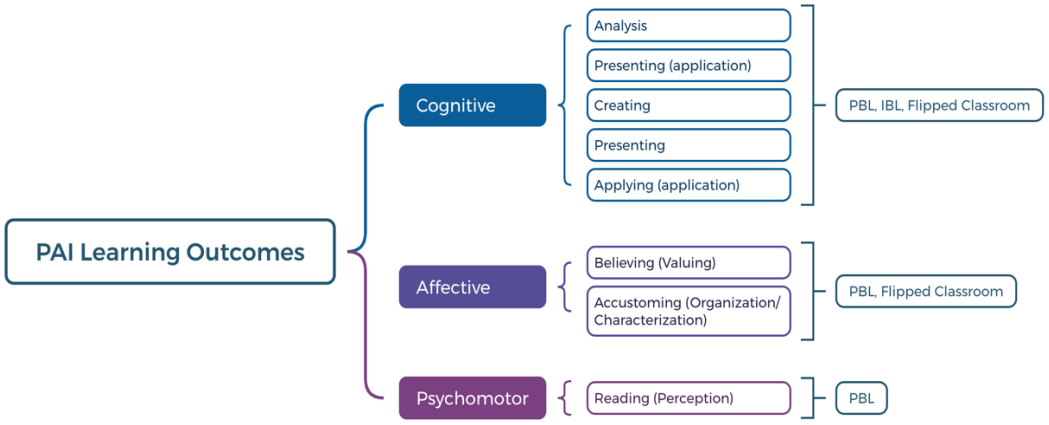

Figure 1. *Innovative Learning Strategies According to Islamic Religious Education Learning Outcomes*

Problem-Based Learning

Problem-based learning at Mambaul Ulum Vocational High School integrates religious concepts with real issues and aims to increase the relevance of learning materials and student participation. Problem-based learning is rooted in constructivism theory, emphasising active, contextual, and practical learning in developing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills in Islamic Religious Education (Putri & Suwono, 2023). Problem-based learning helps students hone their analytical, presentation, and application skills in religious concepts, such as analysing verses of the Qur'an and Hadith and presenting their findings on Islamic work ethics, while producing meaningful work such as a chart of Islamic history (Aswan et al., 2018).

The steps in problem-based learning at begin with analysis. At this stage, students analyse verses of the Qur'an and Hadith related to work ethic, free association, adultery, branches of religion, *fiqh mu'amalah*, and scholars' role in spreading Islam. Cognitively, they explore a deep understanding of these concepts. While affective, they strengthen their belief in the importance of religious values such as competing in goodness and good morals. In the psychomotor aspect, students read the Qur'an with *tartil* and memorize related verses while internalizing religious teachings in everyday life. The next stage is information gathering, where students collect and analyse religious texts such as the Qur'an, Hadith, and sources of Islamic *fiqh*. They deepen their understanding of *ijtihad* and *fiqh mu'amalah*. Affectively, students strengthen their belief in behaving according to religious teachings, maintaining ethics, and developing tolerance. In the psychomotor aspect, they routinely practice reading the Qur'an with *tartil* and memorising related verses.

Following the analysis stage, student's progress to the hypothesis development stage. Here, students use their cognitive skills to formulate hypotheses about the practical application of religious concepts, such as work ethic and morality in real life. This process also encourages critical thinking about Islamic history. In the affective aspect, students develop hypotheses about the influence of religious beliefs on competitive attitudes, work ethic, and tolerance. In the psychomotor aspect, students design techniques to enhance their ability to read and memorize the Qur'an and Hadith.

The problem-solving stage is a pivotal part of the learning process. Here, students engage in discussions about solutions to the application of Islamic law and values in a

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e-ISSN: 2599-3046 (online) | Volume 8, Issue 3 | July - September 2024
p-ISSN: 2657-1781 (print)

social context. This not only deepens their understanding but also fosters tolerance. In the affective aspect, students discuss behavioural habits according to religious teachings and the impact of beliefs on social attitudes. In the psychomotor aspect, students practice techniques for reading and memorizing verses of the Qur'an and Hadith that have been studied.

The next stage is presentation and evaluation, where students present the results of their analysis of work ethic, competing in goodness, and Islamic jurisprudence and present the chronology of the history of scholars. Affectively, they reflect on daily behavior by religious teachings, such as maintaining ethics and social interactions. Meanwhile, in the psychomotor aspect, students' ability to read the Qur'an with *tartil* and memorise hadith is evaluated.

The last step is reflection and improvement, where students reflect on their understanding and application of religious concepts and strive to improve the material they have learned. Affectively, they evaluate the impact of religious teachings on their attitudes and seek to strengthen their faith and spiritual values in daily life. In the psychomotor aspect, students assess their progress in reading and memorising the Qur'an and plan to improve their psychomotor abilities.

Problem-based learning strategies are evaluated based on three main aspects cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. In the cognitive aspect, assessment is carried out to measure students' abilities in analysing, presenting, and applying religious concepts. This is assessed through written exams, group discussions, and presentations in class. In the affective aspect, assessment focuses on students' beliefs and attitudes, including how they value and practice good attitudes. Observations during the learning process and students' personal reflections on their behaviour and attitudes are used as measuring tools. Meanwhile, in the psychomotor aspect, assessment is carried out to assess students' abilities in reading the Qur'an and memorizing verses. This evaluation is done through direct demonstrations and memorization tests assessing students' practical skills.

Problem-based learning integrates religious concepts with real contexts and has an impact on increasing the relevance of learning materials and student participation. This impact aligns with the theory of constructivism; problem-based learning encourages active, contextual learning and effectively develops cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills (Pratiwi et al., 2019). Problem-based learning strategies support information analysis skills through discovery learning, the ability to apply concepts in the real world supported by contextual teaching and learning, and the ability to create through collaboration supported by constructivism theory (Previts & Bauer, 2016; Tari & Rosana, 2019). According to Bandura's social learning theory, the affective ability to believe (valuing) through observation. At the same time, habituation uses Thorndike's habit formation theory. Schmidt's motor learning theory and Skinner's behaviorism both support the development of psychomotor abilities, such as the skill of reading the Qur'an (Kemp et al., 2021; Machado & Staddon, 2023; Pande & Bharathi, 2020).

According to Vygotsky, problem-based learning allows students to face real problems relevant to their lives, thereby deepening their understanding of the learning material (Acharya, 2024; O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015). This finding aligns with Ikhram' research, which shows that problem-based learning improves critical thinking and problem-solving skills and motivates students to learn (Ikhram et al., 2023).

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Inquiry-Based Learning

Applying inquiry-based learning at Mambaul Ulum Vocational High School in Islamic Religious Education focuses on cognitive aspects to strengthen students' understanding of religious values through independent investigation and discovery. For example, students explore the topic of Islamic ethics in a modern social context to better understand Islam's teachings and their relevance in everyday life. Inquiry-based learning is an appropriate strategy for cognitive development, especially regarding the analysis, presentation, creation, presentation, and application of religious concepts (Saad, 2022).

In inquiry-based learning strategies, the steps begin with problem identification, where students analyse the verses of the Qur'an and Hadith about work ethics, promiscuity, and adultery. They also understand the meaning of the branches of faith, the benefits of avoiding *mażmūmah* morals, and the application of *fiqh mu'āmalah* and *al-kulliyyāt al-khamsah*. This process is by Bloom's Taxonomy, which emphasizes analysis as a critical cognitive ability, and Bruner's discovery learning, which supports active discovery (Previts & Bauer, 2016). Evaluation at this stage is carried out by assessing students' abilities in analysing religious texts and social issues and their application in authentic contexts.

The next step is information collection, where students collect data from the Qur'an, Hadith, and other literature to present information about work ethics, branches of religion, *fiqh*, and the history of scholars. Contextual learning and teaching supports the link between theory and practice (Tari & Rosana, 2019), and evaluation is carried out by assessing students' ability to organize and present information systematically. Then, students continue with hypothesis development, where they develop hypotheses from the information collected, including the benefits of avoiding moral *mażmūmah* and compiling a timeline of the history of ulama, which is supported by Vygotsky's Constructivism theory that emphasises creativity and collaboration (Pande & Bharathi, 2020; Previts & Bauer, 2016; Tari & Rosana, 2019). At this stage, evaluation is done by assessing students' creativity and accuracy in formulating hypotheses.

Next, students carry out problem-solving, presenting solutions to identified problems by emphasising the application of knowledge in authentic contexts (Pande & Bharathi, 2020). Evaluation is done by assessing their ability to convey analysis and presentations clearly and persuasively. Finally, in the implementation stage, students apply religious concepts in real situations such as sermons, *tabligh*, *da'wah*, and marriage. Evaluation is carried out by assessing students' ability to apply knowledge practically and the relevance of its application in everyday life.

Inquiry-based learning is an innovative strategy in Islamic Religious Education learning, which is based on the principle that effective learning occurs when students can explore and investigate relevant questions (Aditomo & Klieme, 2020). Inquiry-based learning strategies encourage students to actively acquire knowledge by identifying problems, gathering information, developing hypotheses, and applying problems. Bruner emphasised that curiosity and exploration in learning enable students to achieve deeper understanding (Stapleton & Stefaniak, 2019). O'Flaherty, J., & Phillips also found that inquiry-based learning was influential in developing scientific investigation skills and deep conceptual understanding, as well as showing improvements in critical and analytical thinking skills in students involved in this method (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016; Şimşek & Kabapınar, 2010).

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e-ISSN: 2599-3046 (online) | Volume 8, Issue 3 | July - September 2024
p-ISSN: 2657-1781 (print)

Teachers act as facilitators and guides who provide learning materials, exploration resources, guide, and provide feedback during the learning process. Inquiry-based learning develops critical, creative, and logical thinking skills, which can improve communication, collaboration, and evidence-based decision-making (Aditomo & Klieme, 2020). Inquiry-based learning also increases students' motivation and interest in learning because students feel actively involved in learning (Gajić et al., 2021; Irwandi et al., 2022).

Inquiry-based learning helps students understand and analyse religious material and develop cognitive skills such as analysing, presenting, creating, and applying concepts in real-life contexts (Chu et al., 2017; Tambak & Sukenti, 2023). Inquiry-based learning strategy uses the innovation used by teachers to support the learning process and achieve quality learning outcomes in the five elements of Islamic education. This strategy emphasises student-centred learning, directing students to develop the ability to ask questions, analyse, and solve problems related to their learning. Meanwhile, the role of the teacher is to help, supervise, motivate, and inspire (Fikriyati et al., 2023).

Overall, inquiry-based learning provides a robust framework for independent exploration, which supports deep understanding and practical application of the concepts learned. Thus, inquiry-based learning becomes a very effective strategy in developing the cognitive domain of learners, especially in the context of Islamic learning that requires critical analysis and deep reflection.

Flipped Classroom

Flipped classroom combines independent learning at home with collaborative activities in the classroom. Based on constructivism theory, flipped classroom strategy allows students to construct initial understanding individually and deepen that understanding through discussion and interaction in the school (Al-Samarraie et al., 2020; Radianti et al., 2020).

The stages of the flipped classroom learning strategy begin with the preparation of learning materials, where students study the material independently through videos, articles, and quizzes given by the teacher before class begins. At this stage, the teacher provides online materials that include verses of the Qur'an, Hadith, work ethic, and Islamic jurisprudence. Students are asked to take notes or ask questions about the material at home to develop their cognitive and affective aspects while emphasising religious values. In this process, students learn independently with parental supervision, which is expected to motivate the internalization of spiritual values (Voet & De Wever, 2019).

The next stage is classroom learning activities, where students discuss, solve problems, and work on in-depth projects on the topics that have been studied. The teacher facilitates discussions, guides practical activities, and provides feedback. Then, in the analysis and discussion stage, students analyse topics such as the meaning of the branches of religion, the benefits of avoiding *mażmūmah* attitudes, and the history of scholars. They explore the material studied at home through discussions and group activities in class. The teacher directs group discussions and assignments and provides feedback to help students understand the material more deeply (Duran & Dökme, 2016). After that, students proceed to the presentation stage, where they present the analysis results as a presentation or report, such as a timeline chart of scholars or an explanation of the meaning of *syu'ab al-īmān*. The teacher evaluates the students' presentations and provides feedback. In the concept application stage, students apply the knowledge they

DOI: https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v8i3.r587

have learned in real situations, such as through sermons or religious projects. The teacher assesses students' ability to use the concept practically and provides suggestions for improvement.

The evaluation of flipped classroom learning includes cognitive and affective aspects. Cognitively, the assessment consists of students' ability to analyse religious texts, present systematic materials, and create and present works such as timeline charts. The evaluation focuses on clarity, creativity, and application of concepts. In the affective aspect, the evaluation measures how students internalise religious values and practice positive attitudes such as curiosity and responsibility. Teachers carry out assessments through behavioural observations, value reflections, and applying positive attitudes in daily activities. WhatsApp groups also provide feedback to monitor student progress at home and school (Gillette et al., 2018; Yılmaz, 2020).

Implementing flipped classroom allows students to learn basic concepts of Islam independently through online materials before class. This model increases student engagement and understanding because students come to class with a basic understanding. Research shows flipped classroom effectively increases student-teacher interaction and learning flexibility (Gillette et al., 2018). In the cognitive domain, students analyse verses of the Qur'an and Hadith and prepare independent presentations, while class time is used for discussion and feedback. In the affective aspect, this method strengthens students' beliefs and supports the habituation of positive attitudes through practical activities in class (Asril et al., 2023).

The flipped classroom steps involve independent learning at home and collaborative activities in class (Al-Samarraie et al., 2020; Steen-Utheim & Foldnes, 2018) by the constructivist approach, which allows students to build initial understanding before deepening it through class discussions (Radianti et al., 2020).

The Impact of Innovative Learning Strategies for Islamic Religious Education

Implementing innovative learning strategies such as problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and flipped classroom positively impacted students, especially in developing religious character. Students experienced an increase in understanding of spiritual practices, as well as awareness of ethics and morality. Problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and flipped classroom use a constructivist approach to increase motivation and involvement or active participation of students in understanding learning materials. Teachers reported increased activity and interaction in class discussions. Teachers reported increased students' ability to relate learning materials to contemporary issues, such as work ethic and social responsibility. Innovative learning strategies problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and flipped classroom support the implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum by improving classroom dynamics, developing critical and reflective thinking skills, and improving students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects (Khotimah et al., 2024).

Challenges in implementing innovative learning strategies based on the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum at Mambaul Ulum Vocational High School include limited resources, such as a lack of teacher training in innovative methods and limited facilities for inquiry-based learning that supports student creativity. In addition, there are difficulties in integrating religious materials with more technical vocational aspects.

Overall, the implementation of problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and flipped classroom strategies at Mambaul Ulum Vocational High School Bondowoso has

DOI: https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v8i3.r587

e-ISSN: 2599-3046 (online) | Volume 8, Issue 3 | July - September 2024
p-ISSN: 2657-1781 (print)

great potential to support the implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (Abdurrahman et al., 2022). These three strategies improve students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills and encourage independent, contextual, and life-relevant learning. Thus, implementing these strategies can create a more effective and meaningful learning environment and increase student engagement in the learning process (Tabroni & Idham, 2023). Implementing this learning innovation focuses on developing analytical thinking skills and problem-solving abilities that are relevant to students' lives, supporting the overall goals of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum (Alam et al., 2023).

IV. CONCLUSION

Implementing the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum applies innovative learning strategies such as problem-based, inquiry-based, and flipped classroom learning. Teachers design these strategies to improve students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills, which align with the vision of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, which prioritises creativity, independence, and critical thinking. Problem-based learning helps students relate religious concepts to real issues, improve analytical skills, and apply concepts in everyday life. Inquiry-based learning deepens students' understanding through independent investigation, allowing in-depth exploration of religious values and their relevance in modern life. The flipped classroom combines independent and collaborative learning, deepening students' knowledge through interaction and discussion in class. Overall, implementing these strategies effectively develops students' critical, creative, and applicative skills and increases learning motivation and relevance in Islamic Religious Education. The limitations of this study include limited generalization to one school, difficulty measuring cognitive and affective skills, short implementation duration, uncontrolled external variables, resistance to change, and limited resources and training for teachers. Further research suggestions should focus on technology integration in problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and flipped classroom strategies for learning enhancement.

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