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Curriculum and Instructional Quality

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ABSTRACT
The quality of curriculum and learning has become a critical issue in improving educational outcomes, particularly in the context of Islamic education, which emphasizes both intellectual and moral development. However, many educational institutions still face challenges such as irrelevant curricula, teacher-centered learning practices, limited integration of technology, and ineffective evaluation systems. This study aims to analyze the concept of curriculum quality, examine the development of quality-based learning, explore the role of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and digital learning, and evaluate learning practices based on quality principles. This research employs a qualitative approach using a library research method, analyzing relevant literature from scientific journals and academic sources published within the last ten years. The findings indicate that curriculum quality must be integrative, flexible, and aligned with contemporary needs while maintaining Islamic values. In addition, effective learning requires student-centered approaches supported by teacher competence, innovation, and technology integration. The study also reveals that HOTS and digital learning significantly enhance critical thinking and learning engagement, while continuous and comprehensive evaluation is essential to ensure learning effectiveness. In conclusion, improving educational quality requires a holistic and integrated approach involving curriculum reform, innovative learning strategies, and sustainable evaluation systems.

I. INTROUCTION

The quality of the curriculum and instruction is a key element in improving the quality of education, particularly in the context of Islamic education, which focuses not only on cognitive aspects but also on the development of students' character and spiritual values. The curriculum serves as the foundational framework that governs the objectives, content, methods, and evaluation of instruction, while instruction is the practical implementation of the curriculum within the educational process. Therefore, the quality of the curriculum and instruction is crucial to the success of achieving educational objectives as a whole. In the era of globalization and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, demands on the education system are becoming increasingly complex. Students are not only required to master knowledge but also to possess 21st-century skills such as critical, creative, collaborative, and communicative thinking. This necessitates an adaptive curriculum transformation as well as innovative, student-centered learning, as explained in previous studies [1].

A number of studies over the past decade have shown that improvements in the quality of learning are significantly influenced by the integration of technology, Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) approaches, and digital-based learning innovations. For example, research by Hwang et al. confirms that digital learning can significantly enhance student engagement and learning outcomes [2]. Furthermore, a study by Darling-Hammond et al. indicates that competency-based curricula and active learning contribute to the continuous improvement of educational quality [3]. Other research also emphasizes the importance of integrating values into the curriculum, particularly in religious education, to shape students' character [4]. However, based on a review of the literature and empirical evidence, several major challenges remain. First, the curriculum in many educational institutions is not yet fully aligned with the needs of the workforce and technological advancements. Second, teaching practices remain largely teacher-centered and do not sufficiently foster higher-order thinking skills. Third, the use of technology in learning is not yet optimal, and disparities persist among educational institutions. Fourth, within the context of Islamic education, there remain challenges in integrating Islamic values with modern scientific advancements in a balanced manner [5].

Based on these conditions, a research gap can be identified, namely the suboptimal integration of curriculum quality, learning innovations (HOTS and digital learning), and Islamic educational values within a comprehensive and sustainable framework. Previous studies have tended to address these aspects in isolation; therefore, a more integrative study is needed to produce a holistic model for improving educational quality. The research questions in this study can be formulated as follows: (1) what is the concept of curriculum quality in Islamic education; (2) how is quality-based learning developed; (3) what is the role of HOTS and digital learning in improving the quality of learning; and (4) how is quality-based learning evaluation conducted effectively. To address these research questions, this study employs a literature review approach by analyzing various relevant scientific sources. This approach was chosen to gain a comprehensive conceptual understanding of curriculum and learning quality, as well as strategies for their development.

The objectives of this study are to: (1) analyze the concept of curriculum quality in Islamic education; (2) examine the development of quality-based learning; (3) evaluate the role of Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and digital learning in modern education; and (4) formulate effective and sustainable learning evaluation strategies. The results of this study are expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of educational quality, particularly within the context of Islamic education in the digital age.

II. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a library research method, as stated in the abstract . This method was selected because the study focuses on analyzing concepts, theories, and previous research findings related to curriculum quality and learning processes without conducting field experiments. The qualitative approach allows the researcher to explore and interpret various academic sources in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the topic [2], [3]. The research design applied in this study was descriptive-analytical. This design aims to systematically describe the concepts of curriculum quality and learning, and then analyze them to identify patterns, relationships, and strategies for improving educational quality, particularly in the context of Islamic education. Through this design, the researcher also compared findings from previous studies to identify similarities, differences, and research gaps.

The subject of this research consisted of secondary data sources, namely scientific literature such as international journal articles, national accredited journals, academic books, and relevant educational documents. Meanwhile, the object of the research included the concepts of curriculum quality in Islamic education, the development of quality-based learning, the role of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and digital learning, and the evaluation of learning based on quality. The population of this study covered all literature related to curriculum quality and learning. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique, based on several criteria: (1) publications within the last ten years to ensure up-to-date information, (2) relevance to the research topic, (3) sources from reputable journals or credible academic publications, and (4) clear methodological and

theoretical contributions. Based on these criteria, a number of key references were selected and analyzed in depth.

Data were collected through documentation techniques by systematically searching, selecting, and reviewing relevant literature from academic databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and Springer. The data collection process involved identifying appropriate keywords (e.g., curriculum quality, learning quality, HOTS, digital learning, and Islamic education), selecting relevant articles, organizing the collected sources, and conducting critical reading to extract essential information [6]. The main research instrument in this study was the researcher as a human instrument. The researcher played a central role in collecting, selecting, interpreting, and analyzing the data. To support the process, a data extraction form was used to record important information from each source, including the author, year of publication, research objectives, methods, findings, and relevance to the current study.

The data analysis technique used was content analysis. This process involved several stages, namely data reduction by selecting relevant information, data categorization based on key themes such as curriculum, learning, HOTS, digital learning, and evaluation, comparative analysis to examine similarities and differences among previous studies, and synthesis to integrate the findings into a coherent conceptual framework. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the overall analysis [7]. To ensure the validity and credibility of the data, source triangulation was applied by comparing information from multiple references. In addition, cross-checking among sources was conducted to ensure consistency and to minimize bias in interpretation. Through this method, the study is expected to provide a systematic and comprehensive analysis of curriculum and learning quality, particularly within the framework of Islamic education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Curriculum Quality in Islamic Education

The results of this study indicate that curriculum quality plays a fundamental role in determining the success of the learning process. Based on the analysis of the literature and the content of the study , a high-quality curriculum is not only structured in terms of objectives, content,

and assessment, but also integrates spiritual, intellectual, and moral dimensions, particularly in Islamic education.

In practice, curriculum quality is reflected in several core components, including learning objectives, content relevance, teaching strategies, assessment systems, and supporting resources. These findings are consistent with research by Suyatno et al., which states that curriculum quality must be aligned with competency development and character education to produce holistic learners [1]. Furthermore, Zubaidah emphasizes that 21st-century education requires curriculum transformation that supports critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration [2]. However, the analysis also reveals a significant gap between curriculum design and implementation.

Many educational institutions still apply rigid and content-oriented curricula that are not fully responsive to students' needs and global challenges. This finding supports the study by Mulyasa, who argues that curriculum effectiveness depends on its adaptability to social and technological changes [3]. Therefore, the findings suggest that curriculum quality improvement should focus on flexibility, integration of values, and alignment with real-world competencies. In Islamic education, this also includes the integration of religious values into all learning components, not only as separate subjects but as a holistic framework guiding the educational process.

3.2 Development of Quality-Based Learning

Quality-Based Learning Development is a systematic and ongoing approach to improving the quality of all components of learning from the curriculum and the teaching-learning process to learning outcomes to ensure they align with the needs of stakeholders (students, parents, and the community) and established educational standards [8]. The findings show that the development of quality-based learning is closely related to the implementation of student-centered approaches. Based on the analysis of the study , effective learning is characterized by active student participation, interactive learning environments, and the use of innovative teaching models such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Project-Based Learning (PjBL), and collaborative learning.

These results are supported by research conducted by Hidayat et al., which found that student-centered learning significantly improves students' critical thinking and engagement [4]. In addition, Rusman highlights that effective learning requires the integration of pedagogy, technology, and

content knowledge to create meaningful learning experiences [5]. Despite these advancements, challenges remain in implementation. Many teachers still rely on traditional teaching methods due to limited training, lack of technological skills, and insufficient institutional support. This condition creates a gap between theoretical frameworks and actual classroom practices. Thus, improving learning quality requires not only curriculum reform but also teacher professional development, infrastructure support, and continuous evaluation. Teachers must shift their role from knowledge transmitters to facilitators, motivators, and evaluators, as highlighted in the study findings.

3.3 The Role of HOTS and Digital Learning

3.2.1 HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills)

HOTS refers to higher-order thinking skills that require students not only to memorize, but also to understand, analyze, evaluate, and create something new. HOTS is essential in modern education [9]. The results indicate that the integration of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and digital learning is essential in enhancing learning quality. HOTS enables students to develop analytical, evaluative, and creative thinking skills, which are crucial in addressing real-world problems. Research by Widodo et al. shows that HOTS-based learning significantly improves students' problem-solving abilities and learning outcomes [6]. Similarly, digital learning has been proven to increase accessibility, flexibility, and interactivity in the learning process. According to Setiawan et al., the use of digital platforms and e-learning systems enhances student engagement and independent learning [7]. However, the study also identifies several limitations. Not all educational institutions have adequate technological infrastructure, and many teachers lack digital competencies. This creates a digital divide that affects the overall quality of education.

3.2.2 Digital Learning

Digital learning is a learning process that utilizes digital technology to support, expand, and improve the quality of learning. With the advent of technology, learning is no longer limited by time and space, allowing students to learn flexibly and independently [10]. In the context of modern education, digital learning has become crucial because it enhances

interactivity, access to information, and students' technological skills. Digital learning refers to technology-based learning methods such as:

a. E-learning

E-learning is a learning system conducted electronically via the internet. Learning materials are delivered through digital platforms such as a Learning Management System (LMS).

b. Interactive videos

Interactive videos are audio-visual learning media equipped with interactive elements, such as quizzes or questions embedded within the video.

c. Online learning platforms

Online learning platforms are applications or websites that provide various learning features, such as materials, discussions, assignments, and assessments. In addition, the integration of HOTS and digital learning in Islamic education requires careful adaptation to ensure that technological advancement does not compromise moral and spiritual values. Therefore, innovation in learning must be balanced with value-based education.

3.4 Evaluation of Quality-Based Learning

The findings show that evaluation is a crucial component in ensuring learning quality. Evaluation is not only used to measure learning outcomes but also to improve the learning process itself. The study identifies three main types of evaluation: formative, summative, and diagnostic evaluation. These findings are consistent with research by Arifin, which emphasizes that continuous and systematic evaluation is necessary to monitor student progress and improve instructional strategies [8]. Furthermore, effective evaluation must meet several principles, including objectivity, validity, transparency, and continuity. According to Sudjana, evaluation should be used as feedback for both teachers and students to enhance learning effectiveness [9]. However, the analysis reveals that many educational institutions still focus primarily on summative assessment, neglecting formative and diagnostic approaches. This limits the ability of evaluation to support continuous improvement.

Therefore, the study suggests that evaluation systems should be redesigned to emphasize authentic assessment, continuous feedback, and alignment with learning objectives. In Islamic education, evaluation should also assess moral and spiritual development, not only cognitive achievement.

III. CONCLUSION

The quality of the curriculum and instruction is a critical factor in the success of Islamic education in shaping outstanding students intellectually, spiritually, and socially. A well-designed curriculum must be comprehensive, integrating Islamic values, advancements in knowledge, and the demands of an ever-changing world. Developing quality-based instruction is a crucial step in creating an effective and meaningful learning process. The implementation of modern learning approaches such as HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) can encourage students to think critically, analytically, and creatively. Additionally, the use of technology through digital learning offers significant opportunities to enhance access, flexibility, and the quality of learning in the digital age. Innovations in learning, such as the use of interactive media, blended learning, and various other creative methods, also play a role in increasing student interest and engagement. Thus, learning focuses not only on the delivery of content but also on active and enjoyable learning experiences.

On the other hand, quality-based learning evaluation is a crucial component in measuring educational success. Evaluation serves not only to assess learning outcomes but also as a tool for providing feedback and a foundation for continuous improvement in learning. With an objective evaluation system, valid Thus, learning focuses not only on the delivery of content but also on active and enjoyable learning experiences. On the other hand, quality-based learning evaluation is a crucial component in measuring educational success. Evaluation serves not only to assess learning outcomes but also as a tool for providing feedback and a foundation for continuous improvement in learning. With an evaluation system that is objective, valid, transparent, and sustainable, the quality of education can be systematically improved over time.

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