

# Islamic Religious Education Learning for Gen Z in the Synergy of Independent Curriculum Digitalization and Teacher Education Reconstruction

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## Abstract

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### Keywords:

Islamic Religious Education, GenZ, Digitalization, Independent Curriculum, Reconstruction.

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Significant changes in digital technology have transformed the communication patterns, social interactions, thinking patterns, and learning styles of Generation Z, including in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. This generation is characterized by visual, fast-paced, interactive, and highly connected digital technology. On the other hand, the Independent Curriculum provides teachers with the opportunity to develop flexible, differentiated, project-based, and character-building learning. However, the implementation of digital-based PAI learning still faces challenges, particularly related to the uneven distribution of teachers' pedagogical skills and digital literacy. Therefore, a reconstruction of teacher education is needed to produce PAI educators who are adaptive, innovative, and responsive to current developments. This study aims to describe the PAI learning model for Generation Z through the synergy of the digitalization of the Independent Curriculum and the reconstruction of teacher education. The study used a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews with PAI teachers, and analysis of curriculum documents and learning materials. The research focused on the integration of digital learning, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, and strengthening teacher competencies in PAI learning. The results of the study indicate that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning designed digitally, contextually, and project-based can significantly increase student engagement, motivation, and understanding. Teachers who have good pedagogical competence and digital literacy can create reflective, interactive, and meaningful learning according to the characteristics of Generation Z. This study contributes to formulating a conceptual model of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning that is responsive to the digital era while providing implications for the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher education in madrasas in the future.

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## Abstrak

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### Kata kunci:

Pendidikan Agama Islam, Gen Z, Digitalisasi, Kurikulum Merdeka, Rekonstruksi

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Perubahan besar dalam teknologi digital telah mengubah pola komunikasi, interaksi sosial, cara berpikir, dan gaya belajar Generasi Z, termasuk dalam pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI). Generasi ini memiliki karakteristik visual, cepat, interaktif, dan sangat terhubung dengan teknologi digital. Di sisi lain, Kurikulum Merdeka memberikan ruang bagi guru untuk mengembangkan pembelajaran yang fleksibel, diferensiatif, berbasis proyek, dan berorientasi pada penguatan karakter. Namun, implementasi pembelajaran PAI berbasis digital masih menghadapi tantangan, terutama terkait kemampuan pedagogis dan literasi digital guru yang belum merata. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan rekonstruksi pendidikan guru agar mampu melahirkan pendidik PAI yang adaptif, inovatif, dan responsif terhadap perkembangan zaman. Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan model pembelajaran PAI bagi Generasi Z melalui sinergi digitalisasi Kurikulum Merdeka dan rekonstruksi pendidikan guru. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara dengan guru PAI, serta analisis dokumen kurikulum dan perangkat pembelajaran. Fokus penelitian diarahkan pada integrasi digitalisasi pembelajaran, implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka, dan penguatan kompetensi guru dalam pembelajaran PAI. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran PAI yang dirancang secara digital, kontekstual, dan berbasis proyek mampu meningkatkan keterlibatan, motivasi, dan pemahaman peserta didik secara signifikan. Guru yang

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*memiliki kompetensi pedagogis dan literasi digital yang baik dapat menciptakan pembelajaran reflektif, interaktif, dan bermakna sesuai karakteristik Generasi Z. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam merumuskan model konseptual pembelajaran PAI yang responsif terhadap era digital sekaligus memberikan implikasi bagi pengembangan pendidikan guru PAI di madrasah pada masa depan.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The spread of digital technology has had a major impact, including on education (Ahmad Kusaini et al., 2024; Aldogihier et al., 2025; Etemi et al., 2024). Islamic education, as an important part of child development (Badawi, 2025; Hakim et al., 2026). Generation Z who were born and grew up in the digital era are very different from previous generations in terms of their speed of thinking, ability to get information instantly, and greater interest in interactive learning and visualization (Çoklar & Tatli, 2021). In this context, the traditional PAI learning pattern, which is one-way, and lacks digital exploration, is less effective in reaching a deep understanding and appreciation of religion in this generation (Adiansah et al., 2026; Aulia et al., 2025; Hidayati et al., 2025; Muhalli, 2023). On the other hand, the Independent Curriculum is present as a national education policy that opens up space for learning innovation and differentiation based on the needs and character of students (Aziz et al., 2025; A. Ikhwan et al., 2025; Jaedun et al., 2024; Nifrizza et al., 2023). This requires Islamic Religious Education teachers to not only be able to master religious materials, but also be competent in designing learning that is adaptive to technological developments and the learning styles of Generation Z (Bakar et al., 2023a; Munawir et al., 2024).

This theme is important to raise because teachers must be ready to face the dynamics of generation Z, both in terms of pedagogical approaches and the use of digital technology (Choirin et al., 2024). The mismatch between contextual and project-based learning currently has the potential to cause students to feel bored, emotionally disconnected from Islamic Religious Education material, and even experience boredom in interpreting religious teachings. Therefore, systematic efforts are needed to reconstruct Islamic Religious Education teacher education so that they are able to prepare prospective educators who have digital competence, a comprehensive understanding of the curriculum, and sensitivity to the learning needs of today's students (Amalia, 2025; A. Effendi et al., 2025; Junaidi et al., 2025). The synergy between digitalization, implementation of the Independent Curriculum, and reconstruction of teacher education is an important key in answering these challenges (Caena & Redecker, 2019).

Many previous studies have emphasized the need for changes in Islamic Religious Education learning to remain relevant to current developments. First, research conducted by Ifna et al., which examines the Digital Era in Religious Learning: Interactive Methods for Generation Z (Rafsanjani et al., 2024). Second, research conducted by Naomi et al., which examines the Opportunities and Challenges of Islamic Education in Society 5.0 (Hasanah & others, 2024). Third, research conducted by Saepul et al., which examines Navigating Challenges and Opportunities in Renewing Muhammadiyah's Educational Philosophy in the Digital Era (Anwar & Sofii, 2025; Harpiani et al., 2025; Istiyani et al., 2024; Ramadhan et al., 2025). Fourth, by Effendi et al., who researched improving the quality of Islamic Creed learning to adapt

to the challenges of the 5.0 Society era (M. N. Effendi & others, 2025). Fifth, research conducted by Siti et al., which examines the Digital Transformation of Islamic Education: A Study of the Development of Artificial Intelligence-Based Learning Modules (Zuhriyeh et al., 2025). Sixth, research by Herni which examines professional Islamic Religious Education teachers needs to strengthen their teaching strategies to address the challenges and unique characteristics of Generation Z (Hartati, 2024; Rustan et al., 2020).

Seventh, research conducted by Hisan et al., which examined the Urgency of Islamic Religious Education for Generation Z (Mursalin & Al Madzali, 2024). Eighth, research conducted by Devi et al., which examines the Level of Religiosity of Generation Z: A Comparative Study between Indonesia and England (Pramitha et al., 2024). Ninth, research conducted by Bakar et al., which researched Improving the quality of Islamic education for the current generation (Bakar et al., 2023b). Tenth, research conducted by Huda et al., which examines the Era of Technology in Islamic Education Learning Media: Systematic Literature Review (Huda et al., 2024). Eleventh, research conducted by Kasmudin et al., which researched Technology-based Education: Fostering the experience of the digital generation in Islamic schools in Indonesia (Mustapa et al., 2023). Twelfth, research conducted by Septiani et al., which researched Innovative Digital Media as Islamic Religious Education Learning (Susanti et al., 2024). Thirteenth, research by Salwa et al., which examines the perception of Islamic religious education and its implications for curriculum development in the era of society 5.0 (Sawari et al., 2022). Fourteenth, research conducted by Hendriyati et al., which researched the exploration of innovation in Islamic religious learning technology with the ilarning approach (Haryani et al., 2021). Fifteenth, research conducted by Emi, which examines the opportunities and challenges in utilizing digital media in Islamic Religious Education learning (Rohmiati, 2025). Sixteenth, research conducted by Zubairi and Nurdin, which examines the Challenges of Islamic Religious Education in the Era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 (Zubairi & Nurdin, 2022). Seventeenth, research conducted by Bouziane et al., which examines Digital Islam and the Muslim Millennial Generation: How Social Media Influencers Reimagine Religious Authority and Islamic Practices (Zaid et al., 2022).

From previous studies that have been studied, none have used Designing PAI Learning for Gen Z in the Synergy of Digitalization of the Independent Curriculum and Reconstruction of Teacher Education: Thus, this research is new. This article is expected to provide theoretical contributions in modifying contextual PAI learning designs, as well as practical contributions in formulating the direction of teacher education development in the digital era as well as being a reference for Teacher Training Institutions (LPTK).

## METHOD

A qualitative approach is used in this study by considering that the problems in this study are closely related to the process, contextual practices in PAI learning that cannot be measured quantitatively. The qualitative approach provides researchers with the freedom to understand in depth the learning process, especially in relation to the characteristics of generation Z, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, and the use of digital technology by teachers (Aslanyan-rad, 2024). Focusing on the meaning and experiences of teachers and students is an important element in revealing how these three elements synergize in educational practices in madrasas.

In this study, a case study was used. The research location in madrasah was chosen because it has implemented the Merdeka Curriculum and shown initiative in integrating PAI learning with technology. Case studies allow researchers to study phenomena comprehensively in a real, limited environment, so that a complete and in-depth understanding of the strategies, challenges, and patterns of learning innovation developed by PAI teachers in the madrasah environment can be obtained. The selection of informants was carried out purposively, consisting of PAI teachers, madrasah principals, students, and madrasah curriculum developers.

Data collection methods were carried out directly in class, by interviewing informants, and documentation. Observations were carried out to capture the real dynamics of learning, while interviews aimed to explore perceptions, strategies, and reflections from teachers and students. Documentation is used as triangulation material. The focus is to design a conceptual model of PAI learning that is in accordance with the character of generation Z based on real practices.

The data was analyzed using a thematic analysis model, then coded, collected according to the theme: technology integration in Islamic Religious Education, application of the principles of the Independent Curriculum, challenges for Islamic Religious Education teachers, and the response of Gen Z students to religious learning. (Hendrastomo & Januarti, 2023). It is hoped that through this analysis, a design for an Islamic Religious Education learning model that is pedagogically relevant, curricularly contextual, and digitally adaptive can be prepared. This research is also expected to provide a real contribution to the development of teacher education, especially in preparing Islamic Religious Education educators who are responsive to changes in the times and the needs of future generations.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Characteristics of Islamic Religious Education Learning for Generation Z**

Observation results in Islamic Religious Education classes and interviews with teachers and students show that Generation Z students have learning preferences that are highly influenced by the digital environment. They tend to want fast, visual, mobile-friendly, and contextual learning. Islamic Religious Education teachers revealed that students' interest in the material increased when they were engaged through media such as short videos, interactive digital quizzes, or online discussions. This finding is in line with a study by Kumar which states that Gen Z is more responsive to technology-based learning approaches because they are accustomed to concise and interactive content in their digital daily lives (Kumar & Mamgain, 2023). Therefore, conventional learning approaches need to be adjusted to meet the learning style expectations of this generation.

Gen Z students show a high tendency to respond to learning that is linked to the reality of their lives, especially socio-religious issues that emerge in cyberspace. Teachers who link Islamic Religious Education materials to social media phenomena, for example about digital ethics, tolerance, or viral religious content, receive positive responses from students. Joanna stated that contextual and relevant learning with students' digital experiences can increase participation, critical understanding, and emotional involvement in learning (Tai et al., 2019). Thus, the characteristics of Gen Z who think quickly, are critical, and are adaptive to change become important capital in designing PAI learning that not only transmits teachings, but also forms reflective socio-religious awareness (Chan et al., 2020).

Ina et al., stated that to support the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education learning for Gen Z, the learning model must provide space for open dialogue, active participation, and exploration of digital media as a tool for internalizing values. (Blau et al., 2020). According to Nnajofofor, the learner-centered digital pedagogy approach as developed by Eady & Lockyer is relevant, namely an approach that positions students as the main actors in creating meaning through technology-based interactions. (ENEH, n.d.). Teachers who gave religious content creation projects on digital platforms were proven to be more capable of sparking student creativity and participation. This proves that PAI learning based on Gen Z characteristics must move from instruction to participation, from indoctrination to exploration, and from text to context.

### **Integration of Digitalization and Independent Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education Learning**

Has enabled Islamic Religious Education teachers to be more adaptive and innovative in creating contextual and relevant learning to students' needs. This curriculum emphasizes differentiated, project-based learning, and character building. Ikhwan et al., stated that Islamic Religious Education teachers in madrasas have begun to integrate digital platforms such as Google Classroom, Quizizz, Canva, and YouTube as learning media that enrich students' understanding of religious material. (M. Ikhwan et al., 2023). In an interview, one of the teachers stated that "without digital media, it is difficult to reach students' interest in religious studies." This integration not only facilitates access and flexibility in learning, but also explores values in everyday life. Verica also stated that the integration of technology in the curriculum must be adjusted to the learning style of digital natives (Milutinović, 2022).

The use of digitalization in Islamic Religious Education is also seen in project-based learning practices. Students are given the task of making digital Islamic preaching videos, infographic content of Islamic values, and interactive visual presentations tailored to their interests. These projects are part of an effort to internalize values through a creative approach, which is a characteristic of the Independent Curriculum. This approach has been proven to be able to increase active student participation, build critical thinking skills, and strengthen the relationship between Islamic teaching texts and digital social realities. Hidayu et al., stated that the combination of technology, content, and pedagogy through the TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) framework is the main key in designing 21st century learning, including in the field of religious education. (Shafie et al., 2019).

However, Islamic Religious Education teachers still face a number of challenges in this integration process, including limited facilities, disparities in digital literacy between students, and the persistence of old pedagogical habits that are oriented towards lectures and memorization. (Gurung et al., 2023). To overcome this, teachers make gradual adjustments, such as compiling digital teaching tools, sharing good practices with fellow teachers through learning communities, and participating in Independent Curriculum training independently. These findings indicate that the success of integrating digitalization and Independent Curriculum is highly dependent on the pedagogical readiness and motivation of teachers to change. Zakakariya stated that digital learning innovation can only be successful if accompanied by changes in learning culture and systemic support from educational institutions. (Aboobaker & KA, 2021). Thus, the practice shows that the transformation of Islamic Religious Education learning can occur gradually and contextually if accompanied by a reflective and collaborative spirit from educators.

### **Implications of Teacher Education Reconstruction on Islamic Religious Education Learning Innovation**

Research findings show that teachers' capacity in integrating the Independent Curriculum and digital technology is highly determined by their educational background, teaching experience, and involvement in professional development programs. PAI teachers who have experience in training based on the Independent Curriculum and digital literacy tend to be more prepared in designing interesting learning for generation z. (Haq & others, 2024). One of the teachers revealed that the training material that helped him the most was about "the preparation of Islamic Religious Education learning projects that link Islamic values with digital social problems." This finding confirms that the reconstruction of teacher education is not only limited to changes in the curriculum at LPTK, but also requires continuity between training, field practice, and support from educational institutions. Ayse stated that the professionalism of Islamic Religious Education teachers in the digital era is highly dependent on the quality of the reconstruction of teacher education programs that are adaptive to the realities of the times (Ucan, 2019).

The reconstruction of teacher education also needs to respond to the transformation of the pedagogical paradigm, which is centered on students. Teachers who are open to change and active in self-development show the initiative to use a collaborative, reflective, and project-based approach in teaching Islamic Religious Education. According to Rieke, this practice is in line with the responsive teacher education framework, namely teacher education that emphasizes the importance of critical reflection, curriculum flexibility, and mastery of technology (van Bommel et al., 2025). Teachers are no longer positioned merely as transmitters of material, but as designers of learning experiences that awaken the meaning of religious values in ways that are relevant to today's students. Thus, the reconstruction of teacher education becomes the main foundation for the birth of a transformative PAI learning model, namely one that is able to form a generation of faith and digital empowerment at the same time.

Institutional support also plays an important role in forming a healthy and progressive teacher education ecosystem. Provides space for teachers to take online training, share good practices through the madrasa community, and develop teaching materials that are in accordance with student character. This finding shows the importance of synergy between madrasa institutions, LPTK, and national education policies in encouraging comprehensive renewal of PAI teacher education. According to Quinie and Nagaletchimee, today's teacher education must be built with a future ready teacher education approach, namely preparing teachers to answer the challenges of the 21st century through a dynamic, collaborative, and technology-based curriculum (Ong & Annamalai, 2024). Thus, innovation in Islamic Religious Education learning cannot be realized optimally without serious investment in redesigning the teacher education system to be truly contextual, progressive, and future oriented.

## DISCUSSION

### **Characteristics of Islamic Religious Education Learning for Generation Z**

The characteristics of Islamic Religious Education learning for generation Z show different tendencies compared to the previous Islamic Religious Education learning approach. If previously religious learning relied heavily on lecture methods, memorization, and guided verbal discussions, now this approach is no longer entirely relevant for students who were born and raised in a digital environment (Campbell & Bellar, 2022). Generation Z students show a preference for visual, application-based, and contextual learning models with the issues they are facing in cyberspace. According to Linda et al., in their book, learning models that integrate technology and contextual personalization are much more effective in building engagement and understanding of digital native students (Corrin et al., 2019).

When compared with PAI learning practices in other madrasas that have not fully implemented the Independent Curriculum or the use of technology (Rasyidi & Al Idrus, 2024), the approach looks more progressive and responsive to the needs of generation Z. In several other madrasas, PAI learning is still dominated by the use of textbooks and one-way lectures, which results in low student attention to religious material. Meanwhile, has begun to implement a project-based learning approach, reflective discussions, and the use of digital media such as short videos and interactive platforms. This places as a practical example of the integration of digital pedagogy and Islamic values that are relevant to the needs of the times. Thus, the characteristics of PAI learning in this madrasa can be used as a model for other madrasas that want to transform their learning adaptively and contextually (Ahadiyah et al., 2024; Budiartini et al., 2025).

The application of Islamic Religious Education learning characteristics that are adapted to the needs of Generation Z has a direct impact on increasing active participation, emotional involvement, and critical understanding of religious values in students (Ahwan & Karfida, 2025; Aslihah & Wasehudin, 2023; Aulia et al., 2025; Chanifah et al., 2021). Students who were previously passive in Islamic Religious Education lessons began to show enthusiasm when the material was delivered through digital media that they were familiar with, such as TikTok videos with Islamic values, online quizzes, and assignments to create Islamic religious content. Nisar and Muhammad stated that Muslim students need to be educated to become ethical and faithful digital citizens through a learning process that is in accordance with their digital ecosystem (Ahmad & Khalid, 2024).

In addition, the transformation of the characteristics of Islamic Religious Education learning also has an impact on the role of teachers as facilitators and designers of learning experiences, not just as transmitters of material. Islamic Religious Education teachers have begun to move from a classical instructional approach to a participatory and reflective approach. They have developed teaching tools that are more open, choice-based, and provide space for student exploration. Garry Falloon stated that the change in the role of teachers is an important part of the transformation of education (Falloon, 2020). The subsequent impact is the formation of a more equal and dialogical teacher-student relationship, which strengthens emotional and spiritual bonds in the learning process. Thus, new characteristics and learning cultures occur in Islamic Religious Education classes.

### **Integration of Digitalization and Independent Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education Learning**

The integration of digitalization and the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education learning shows a significant difference compared to the Islamic Religious Education learning model in madrasas which still relies on conventional approaches. Yudhi and Henny stated that the Independent Curriculum gives teachers the pedagogical freedom to change their approaches, adjust methods, media, and learning projects according to the character of the students (Suchyadi & Suharyati, 2021). When this policy is combined with technological support, PAI teachers are able to create a learning environment according to needs. Compared to madrasas that have not adopted the Merdeka Curriculum optimally, PAI learning focuses more on collaboration, digital literacy, and strengthening religious values in the context of students' daily lives. Integrating technology and pedagogical freedom can encourage learning innovation that has an impact on improving student understanding.

Different from madrasas that still use textbooks as the only source of learning, develops project-based learning that allows students to produce digital religious works, such as preaching videos, interactive posters, and reflections of Islamic values on social media. This is a concrete form of the application of the principles of the Independent Curriculum which prioritizes contextual and differentiated learning. Islamic Religious Education teachers at this madrasa have begun to implement platform-based instructional design, as well as integrating the principles of heutagogy, namely learning that gives students autonomy to design how they learn. This approach is not generally found in other madrasas that are still oriented towards mastering textual material. So, it can be said that the integration of digitalization and the Independent Curriculum is at a level of practice that is already moving towards a 21st century learning model (Retno et al., 2025).

Zakkiyah et al., stated that the integration of digitalization and the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education learning has a positive impact on the learning process (Zakiyyah & others, 2024). When students are given the opportunity to express their religious understanding through digital media that is familiar to them, the learning process becomes more meaningful and sustainable. Students involved in a project to create digital da'wah content showed a more reflective and personal understanding of Islamic values, compared to students who only attended classical lectures. In addition, this integration encourages students to not only become consumers of religious information, but also producers of Islamic content that is relevant to their lives.

Askin et al., stated that there is another impact, namely increasing the capacity of Islamic Religious Education teachers as adaptive learning designers (Nor et al., 2024). Through the integration of the Independent Curriculum and digital technology, teachers are required to understand students' needs, and be able to use various platforms, and create a dialogic learning space. Islamic Religious Education teachers have begun to develop digital teaching tools, expand collaboration between teachers across subjects, and create an internal learning community. This strengthens the capacity of the madrasah as a learning institution. Thus, the impact of this integration is not only felt at the student level, but also has positive implications for the transformation of teacher work culture and the learning ecosystem in the madrasah.

### **Implications of Teacher Education Reconstruction on Islamic Religious Education Learning Innovation**

The reconstruction of teacher education in the context of Islamic Religious Education learning shows significant differences when compared to the conventional teacher education pattern that is still widely applied in other madrasas. Islamic Religious Education teachers have begun to display pedagogical competencies that are integrated with technology, flexible to curriculum changes, and responsive to the character of generation Z. This did not happen suddenly, but rather as a result of a continuous learning process, participation in digital training, and strengthening of active teacher community networks. Marcela et al., stated that teachers in institutions that have not experienced educational reconstruction tend to be fixated on textual syllabuses and one-way teaching models that ignore the personalization dimension of learning (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020). Apart from the curriculum and technological competency aspects, striking differences are also apparent in the orientation of Islamic Religious Education learning itself.

The reconstruction of teacher education encourages teachers to frame religious education no longer as a transfer of knowledge, but as a process of spiritual guidance and the formation of social awareness based on values. Teachers do not only convey doctrine, but become facilitators who link Islamic teachings with the digital and social realities faced by students. On the other hand, Islamic Religious Education teachers who have not received reconstructive training still define the success of learning in terms of memorizing material and cognitive values alone. Rui Yuan stated that this comparison shows that teacher education that equips educators with reflective, contextual, and collaborative skills is able to produce more relevant and transformative learning innovations (Yuan et al., 2022) so that the quality of learning is very much determined by the quality of education and comprehensive and sustainable teacher reconstruction.

The main impact of the reconstruction of teacher education on innovation in Islamic Religious Education learning is the emergence of creativity and courage in designing contextual learning that is close to the lives of students. Muslim et al., stated that Islamic Religious Education teachers at this madrasah were able to compile learning projects that combined Islamic values with digital phenomena, such as social media ethics, preaching through creative content, to critical analysis of online religious issues (Alkouatli, 2022). This impact shows that future-oriented teacher education not only produces teachers who master the content, but also teachers who are able to bring values to life in the practice of students' lives. Transformative Islamic Religious Education teachers are those who are able to align the values of Islamic teachings with the dynamics of the times without losing their essence.

Abdul stated that the reconstruction of teacher education also had an impact on the formation of a collaborative and innovative culture in the madrasa environment (Abdul Jaleel et al., 2024). Teachers no longer work individually, but form learning communities, share digital media, and create interdisciplinary projects that strengthen cross-subject learning. Islamic Religious Education teachers are actively involved in local curriculum design forums and collaborate with ICT and Indonesian language teachers in strengthening Islamic narratives in the digital space (Aziz et al., 2024; Baidho & Bz, 2026; Gadatia & Mahananda, 2025; Posangi et al., 2025). This impact shows that the reconstruction of teacher education has a systemic effect: not only on teachers as individuals, but also on the professional climate and learning ecosystem in the institution.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the previous explanation, it can be concluded that 1. the characteristics of Islamic Religious Education learning for generation Z require an interactive, contextual, and digital technology-based approach in order to answer the needs of their visual, critical, and responsive learning style to current issues, 2. the integration of digitalization and the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education learning has succeeded in creating meaningful learning conditions by internalizing Islamic values through creative and project-based digital activities, 3. the reconstruction of teacher education plays a significant role in encouraging innovation in Islamic Religious Education learning, especially through strengthening digital pedagogical competencies, reflective approaches, and professional collaboration that results in religious learning that is more transformative and relevant to the challenges of the times.

This study contributes to the development of Islamic religious education based on the characteristics of generation Z through the integration of digitalization and the Independent Curriculum which is in line with the reconstruction of teacher education. Theoretically, this study enriches the study of contextual and digital pedagogy in religious education in the madrasa environment. Practically, the results of this study provide direct benefits for teachers in designing more relevant and innovative learning, as well as for educational institutions such as madrasas and Teacher Training Institutions (LPTK) to develop policies, curricula, and teacher training programs that are adaptive to the demands of the times. This study can be a reference at the educational unit and ministry levels to develop strategies for transforming Islamic Religious Education learning that is able to answer the challenges of the digital era while strengthening Islamic values in the younger generation.

The limitations of this study lie in the relatively limited scope of location and time, which was only conducted in one state madrasah with certain characteristics and within a short period of time. This limits the generalization of the results to other madrasahs that have different social, cultural, and human resource backgrounds. In addition, the qualitative approach used relies on subjective data from observations and interviews, so that strengthening through a quantitative or mixed methods approach is still needed to obtain a more comprehensive picture. Further research is highly recommended to expand the scope of locations, involve more participants, and test the effectiveness of the PAI learning model developed.

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