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PRINCIPAL'S LEADERSHIP INNOVATION IN MANAGING TAHFIDZ AL-QUR'AN LEARNING: A CASE STUDY OF THE QUR'AN CORNER PROGRAM AT SMAIT AN-NAHL, JAMBI

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Kata Kunci:
Inovasi Program; Kepala Sekolah; Mutu Pembelajaran; Tahfidz Al-Qur'an; Qur'an Corner.

ABSTRAK

(1) **Latar Belakang**: Pembelajaran tahfidz Al-Qur'an di *boarding school* sering terkendala oleh beragamnya daya ingat siswa dan tingginya kejenuhan (*futur*), sehingga kelompok belajar reguler menjadi tidak efektif; (2) **Tujuan Penelitian**: Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis inovasi program kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan mutu pembelajaran tahfidz di SMAIT An-Nahl Kota Jambi, hambatan pelaksanaan, serta solusi mengatasinya; (3) **Metode**: Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Informan dipilih secara *purposive sampling*, meliputi kepala sekolah, koordinator, guru tahfidz, pembina asrama, siswa, dan orang tua. Analisis data menggunakan model Miles dan Huberman, sedangkan keabsahan data diuji melalui triangulasi sumber, teknik, dan waktu; (4) **Hasil**: Kepala sekolah mengimplementasikan inovasi program *Qur'an Corner* sebagai jam tambahan menghafal intensif di luar jam formal dengan skema ganda: fungsi akselerasi bagi siswa cepat dan remedial bagi siswa lambat. Evaluasi berkala dilakukan pekanan bersama guru dan bulanan bersama kepala sekolah berbasis absen serta jurnal harian. Faktor pendukung utama adalah kompetensi guru yang andal, sementara penghambatnya adalah penurunan motivasi siswa dan benturan waktu dengan ekstrakurikuler; (5) **Kesimpulan**: Inovasi program melalui *Qur'an Corner* dilaporkan oleh peserta mendukung perbaikan dalam meningkatkan performa siswa dan kefokusan mutu hafalan (*mutqin*). Hambatan fluktuasi semangat diatasi melalui restrukturisasi kelompok belajar secara dinamis setiap bulan dan optimalisasi peran wali kelas dalam mengawal *murojaah* harian.

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Keywords:
Program Innovation; School Principal; Learning Quality; Tahfidz Al-Qur'an; Qur'an Corner.

ABSTRACT

Background: The learning of tahfidz Al-Qur'an in *boarding schools* is often constrained by the diversity of students' memories and high boredom (*futur*), so that the regular learning group becomes ineffective. **Research Objectives**: This study aims to analyze the innovations of the principal's program in improving the quality of tahfidz learning at SMAIT An-Nahl Jambi City, obstacles to implementation, and solutions to overcome them. **Methods**: The approach used is qualitative descriptive. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Informants were selected by *purposive sampling*, including principals, coordinators, tahfidz teachers, dormitory coaches, students, and parents. Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman models, while the validity of the data was tested through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time. **Results**: The principal implemented the innovation of *the Qur'an Corner program* as an additional hour of intensive memorization outside of formal hours with a dual scheme: acceleration function for fast students and remedial for slow students. Periodic evaluations were carried out weekly with teachers and monthly with school principals based on attendance and daily journals. The main supporting factor is the competence of reliable teachers, while the inhibition is the decrease in student motivation and the clash of time with extracurriculars. **Conclusion**: Program innovation through *Qur'an Corner* was reported by participants to support improvement in performance and focus on memorization quality (*mutqin*). Obstacles to enthusiasm fluctuations are overcome through dynamic restructuring of study groups every month and optimization of the role of homeroom teachers in overseeing *daily* murojaah.

A. INTRODUCTION

Education represents one of the most critical instruments in the formation and improvement of human capital quality. This foundational premise aligns with the overarching goals of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System in Indonesia, which explicitly stipulates that the ultimate objective of national education is to fully develop the intrinsic potential of students. This comprehensive development encompasses their spiritual faith, noble character, physical health, academic knowledge, practical skills, creativity, independence, and civic responsibility as democratic and accountable citizens. To translate this legislative mandate into reality, every single component of the educational ecosystem spanning from the strategic leadership of school principals, the pedagogical competence of teaching staff, the relevance of the curriculum, to the safety and optimization of the learning environment must be completely synchronized and managed to meet these national standards (Fitriana, Handayaningrum, and Roesminingsih, 2021).

Within this framework, the school principal serves an indispensable role as the primary driving force (*change agent*) in spearheading and sustaining high-quality educational processes. The day-to-day responsibilities of a principal extend far beyond the narrow boundaries of administrative routine and institutional management; a successful principal must possess the vision to inspire, encourage, and guide all members of the school community to collectively achieve institutional goals (Panjaitan and Puspitasari, 2022). An effective principal is characterized by a profound professional commitment, an ability to cultivate a highly conducive learning climate, and a capacity to design and execute innovative strategies that directly address the specific needs and shifting challenges of the institution they lead (Wahyuni and Maunah, 2021). Within

the specific context of Integrated Islamic Schools (Sekolah Islam Terpadu), the managerial role of the principal becomes infinitely more complex, as they are legally and morally tasked with managing not only secular academic metrics but also cultivating spiritual depth, moral uprightness, and a pervasive Qur'anic culture simultaneously across all school operations (Gafur, Baharuddin, and Zuhriyah, 2025; Juanda, 2022)

Islamic education in the contemporary era faces increasingly convoluted socio-cultural challenges. Modern educational institutions can no longer limit their scope to the passive delivery of theoretical religious knowledge; instead, they must actively nurture students to become intellectually sharp, deeply religious, self-disciplined, and highly adaptable individuals capable of navigating rapid social adjustments (Ma'rifah, Fauziati, and Maryadi 2023). In Integrated Islamic Schools, the memorization of the Holy Qur'an (tahfidz) has emerged as a cornerstone strategic program that naturally bridges spiritual fortification, habitual worship, character development, and holistic cognitive advancement. Theoretically, the governance of such programs is deeply rooted in Islamic Education Management Theory (Mulyasa, 2022; Yusuf et al., 2025). Numerous previous studies have extensively investigated the general role of school principals in managing tahfidz programs, largely focusing on strategic planning, teacher recruitment models, and traditional facility management (Azmil and Kulsum, 2023; Khoiri, 2020; Y. Suryana and Nuraeni, 2018). However, these existing literatures have not adequately addressed the micro-pedagogical operational breakdowns that occur inside the classroom, particularly when managing cognitive heterogeneity and acute student burnout (futur) simultaneously. Previous studies often assume that setting up standard halaqah groups and providing certified teachers are sufficient to guarantee program success, leaving a significant gap in literature regarding adaptive leadership interventions that directly restructure instructional designs in real-time.

However, the quality of tahfidz learning cannot be superficially measured merely by the volume or quantity of verses memorized by students. True quality is multifaceted. In this study, the concept of mutqin (absolute fluency and long-term memory retention) is strictly operationalized as a learning-quality standard, shifting away from superficial quantitative verse collection. Mutqin is measured through a multi-layered classical cycle: sabaq (new memorization precision), sabqi (fluency review of recent deposits), and manzil (systematic retrieval practice of old historical memorization). This baseline is verified by certified instructional professionals using an objective rubric evaluating articulation precision (makharijul huruf), strict adherence to tajwid rules, and immediate recall consistency during random testing loops, and the ultimate ability of students to manifest the moral values of the Al-Qur'an in their daily social conduct. Consequently, ensuring a high-quality tahfidz program necessitates meticulous instructional design and strong leadership. Theoretically, this study anchors the principal's intervention within a robust triad of leadership frameworks: innovative leadership, instructional leadership, and transformational leadership. Instructional leadership provides the foundational focus on learning outcomes and academic rigor, while innovative leadership acts as the catalyst to challenge status-quo methods and design the dual-track pathways. These dimensions are operationalized through transformational leadership, where the principal does not merely enforce top-down directives but actively provides intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration to the teaching staff (Bass and Riggio 2006), fostering a collaborative

culture between homeroom teachers (wali kelas) and the Al-Qur'an department. The principal carries the executive burden of setting realistic memorization targets, evaluating individual student readiness, continuously upgrading teacher competencies, and providing structurally adequate learning facilities

In implementing this specialized instructional program, the principal's role must transcend traditional administrative oversight and dynamically evolve into a creative and adaptive innovator of instructional design (Warman et al., 2024). Innovative leadership is urgently required because tahfidz programs are naturally prone to unique operational bottlenecks. Crucially, the introduction of intensive additional sessions like the Qur'an Corner necessitates a careful evaluation of the balance between strict memorization targets and the students' psychological well-being. Increasing instructional hours can inadvertently induce severe mental fatigue and prolonged academic burnout (futur) if managed rigidly. Therefore, this study highlights how the principal's innovative design incorporates deliberate psychological safeguards, such as varying the physical learning environment using outdoor spaces (saung tahfidz and gazebos) to reduce cognitive tension, and utilizing dynamic group restructuring to eliminate the social anxiety and stigma often associated with slower learning tracks, heavy pressures from the general national academic curriculum, and the daunting challenge of maintaining long-term memorization retention across multiple years (Utami and Fatoni, 2022; Rido and Harfiani, 2025). When a principal fails to introduce adaptive and creative interventions, the quality of memorization invariably degrades, leading to high student frustration and missed institutional targets.

SMAIT An-Nahl in Jambi City stands out as one of the prominent Integrated Islamic high schools that has consistently developed a specialized tahfidz Al-Qur'an program through a unified day-school and boarding-school (*pesantren*) ecosystem. Despite its long list of structural achievements and an impressive track record of graduates successfully continuing their higher education to prestigious international institutions such as Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, the institution is not immune to operational discrepancies. Preliminary field observations and initial diagnostics revealed that the daily implementation of the tahfidz program occasionally suffered from operational deviations, where the actual teaching and learning process did not fully align with the meticulously designed institutional plans.

The primary root cause of this pedagogical mismatch was identified as a severe imbalance in individual student instructional effectiveness when trapped in large, rigid, and traditional classroom learning groups. Students with slower cognitive processing speeds felt overwhelmed and left behind, while students with rapid memorization capabilities felt structurally restricted and under-challenged. This acute disparity was further compounded by fluctuating student motivation and an uncoordinated schedule that frequently collided with other mandatory school activities. Recognizing these systemic vulnerabilities, the principal of SMAIT An-Nahl initiated the "Qur'an Corner" program, which fundamentally differs from traditional additional memorization sessions, conventional remedial instruction, or standard halaqah management. While routine adjustments typically just add extra hours or separate low-achieving students into static classes, the Qur'an Corner operates as a highly dynamic, dual-track ability grouping matrix governed by individualized pacing. It does not merely offer passive reading corrections (tahsin); rather, it introduces a fluid ecosystem where students move flexibly between the Acceleration Track (Upgrade) and the Remedial Track

(Intervention) each month based on empirical progress logs. This structural flexibility makes the principal's intervention a distinct organizational innovation rather than a routine schedule adjustment, as it alters the school's structural workflow, redistributes human resources dynamically, and utilizes physical space distinctively outside formal hours to break the rigid classroom paradigm the profound dimensions of the principal's program innovations, document the underlying implementation barriers encountered in the field, and articulate the concrete managerial solutions executed to dramatically elevate the quality of tahfidz Al-Qur'an learning at SMAIT An-Nahl Jambi City.

B. METHOD

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative research design (Savira & Suharsono, 2019; Samsu, 2021). The selection of a qualitative method was methodologically vital as it allowed the researcher to capture, unpack, and interpret complex, real-world phenomena in their natural setting (*naturalistic inquiry*), specifically focusing on the intricate managerial decisions, operational workflows, and behavioral changes resulting from the principal's instructional innovations (Samsu, 2021).

The field research was systematically carried out at the campus of the Integrated Islamic Senior High School (SMAIT) An-Nahl, located in Jambi City. While the study spans the 2026 academic year, the intensive fieldwork and direct data collection were precisely conducted over a four-month period, from March 2, 2026, to June 26, 2026. During this timeframe, observations and interviews were executed with rigorous frequency. Non-participatory observations of the halaqah sessions, dormitory routines, and special evening sessions were conducted three times a week, resulting in a total of 48 distinct observation sessions (each lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes). Concurrently, semi-structured in-depth interviews were formally administered. Each of the 22 participants was interviewed twice once at the beginning of the fieldwork in March to capture baseline perceptions, and once toward the conclusion in June to evaluate the ongoing impacts and structural adaptations of the program. Each interview session lasted between 45 to 70 minutes, ensuring comprehensive data logging and saturation. To achieve absolute data saturation and enable robust cross-verification, a total of 22 participants were integrated into the sample and classified into the following precise categories: 1 School Principal, selected as the key informant due to his capacity as the chief institutional innovator and policy architect; 1 Al-Qur'an Department Coordinator, selected due to his role as the primary supervisor of the daily instructional workflows; 4 Tahfidz Teachers, selected based on their official professional tahfidz competency certifications and their direct experience in teaching the Qur'an Corner sessions; 4 Dormitory Supervisors (Musyrif/Musyrifah), recruited because they directly monitor and guide students' independent murojaah routines outside formal school hours; 6 Students, proportionally sampled to represent the distinct tracks of the program (3 students from the Acceleration Track and 3 students from the Remedial Track); and 6 Parents, selected as representatives of the families of the observed student cohorts.

The characteristics of the student participants were meticulously identified based on attributes highly relevant to the research focus, specifically their cognitive processing speed, initial memorization levels (baseline), and prior tahfidz experience: (1) The Acceleration Track Cohort (Upgrade) consisted of 3 students who possessed a

strong tahfidz background from their Junior High School (SMP) years, entering the school with an initial baseline of over 10 juz. They demonstrated high cognitive capacities and were capable of depositing 1–2 new pages of memorization (ziyadah) per session. (2) The Remedial Track Cohort (Intervention) consisted of 3 students who had no intensive Al-Qur'an memorization experience prior to entering SMAIT An-Nahl. Their initial baseline was below 2 juz, and they exhibited significant difficulties with foundational reading accuracy (tahsin / articulation flaws) and were highly vulnerable to mental fatigue and academic burnout (futur) when placed in rigid, uniform classroom groups.

Data sources were meticulously separated into primary and secondary categories. Primary data consisted of raw, verbatim interview transcripts from extensive in-depth interviews and detailed field notes derived from direct, non-participatory observations of the halaqah sessions, dormitory routines, and special evening sessions. Secondary data sources comprised authentic institutional documents, including the official tahfidz curriculum syllabus, semester lesson plans (promes), daily lesson designs (RPH), student daily attendance sheets, teacher journal logs, and historical student memorization tracking scorecards (Roziqin, 2019).

The data collection process was carried out through the simultaneous deployment of three classic qualitative instruments: prolonged observation, structured and unstructured in-depth interviews, and exhaustive document reviews (Sugiyono, 2020; Ichsan and Ali, 2020; Fadhallah, 2021; Jarto, 2022). To secure maximum data depth and maintain participant comfort, the 6 parents were interviewed individually (individually interviewed) rather than through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). This personalized, face-to-face interview procedure was intentionally selected to allow parents to openly and freely express their honest perceptions, report their children's psychological fluctuations at home, and share the observable impacts of the Qur'an Corner program on their children's spiritual development without any external social pressure or group conformity bias. To safeguard the empirical integrity of the findings, the collected qualitative data were systematically subjected to interactive analysis using the renowned framework developed by Miles and Huberman, which cycles iteratively through three continuous phases: data reduction (sorting, focusing, simplifying, and coding raw field data), data display (organizing information into thematic matrices, narrative text, and structural tables), and conclusion drawing or verification (identifying stable patterns, causal relationships, and generating valid institutional meanings) (Rijali, 2018). Finally, to guarantee academic rigor and eliminate subjective bias, data trustworthiness was verified using rigorous data triangulation methods, explicitly cross-examining findings through source triangulation (comparing statements across different informant categories), technique triangulation (cross-checking interview claims against direct observation and physical document trails), and time triangulation (conducting field observations at highly varied time intervals, specifically during Dawn, Morning, Afternoon, and Night sessions) (Samsu, 2021; Sutriani and Octaviani, 2019).

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings

1. Planning and Execution of the Tahfidz Al-Qur'an Program

The field data collected from the coordinator of the Al-Qur'an department reveals that the structural planning of the tahfidz Al-Qur'an program at SMAIT An-Nahl Jambi City is executed at the beginning of every single semester or academic year. The school principal enforces a mandatory administrative requirement where all tahfidz instructional staff must design comprehensive pedagogical tools before entering the classroom. These tools specifically include a detailed teaching syllabus, a semester timeline program (*program semester* / promes), and an explicit Daily Lesson Plan (*Rencana Pembelajaran Harian* / RPH). The daily execution of the program strictly references these predefined semester targets to ensure institutional accountability.

Long-term and short-term memorization targets are determined through a comprehensive diagnostic test conducted at the beginning of the academic year, which classifies students based on their initial abilities (baseline). The Al-Qur'an department coordinator splits these benchmarks into two distinct target categories: (1) The High-Baseline Target (Acceleration Track): Designed for students entering with a baseline of >10 juz. Their targets are set to 1.5 pages per day, 30 pages (1.5 juz) per month, and 7.5 juz per semester, aiming for full 30 juz completion within two years. (2) The Low-Baseline Target (Remedial/Regular Track): Designed for students with an initial baseline of <2 juz or those with basic reading flaws. Their targets are adjusted to a realistic pace of 0.5 pages (10 lines) per day, 10 pages per month, and 2.5 juz per semester, prioritizing reading accuracy (tahsin) before increasing volume. On the operational level, the student body is organized into small learning cohorts known as halaqah. Field data clarified that the optimized ratio of 10 to 15 students per teacher applies strictly to the regular, formal Tahfidz sessions conducted during daily school hours. In contrast, during the innovative Qur'an Corner sessions held outside formal hours, this ratio is dynamically modified to maintain pedagogical efficacy. The Acceleration Track groups are expanded to a 15:1 ratio because these students possess high learning autonomy, while the Remedial Track groups are intentionally downsized to an intensive 5:1 ratio to allow teachers to provide highly focused, face-to-face remedial instruction. Tahfidz teachers and students confirmed that the daily instructional sequence strictly implements the Ilman Wa Ruuhan methodology, which features a distinct multi-sensory and rhythmic approach that differentiates it from conventional, passive talaqqi methods. While traditional talaqqi often relies solely on the teacher reading a long verse and the student repeating it blindly, the Ilman Wa Ruuhan protocol enforces a rigorous, four-step structured procedure: (1) Visual and Auditory Modeling (Talaqqi-Musyafahah): The teacher recites exactly one line with clear lip movements, and students actively look at the teacher's mouth to absorb the physical articulation. (2) Rhythmic Chopping (Al- Qath'u): The teacher breaks long verses into shorter, rhythmic breath-segments (waqf and ibtida'), making it highly accessible for students with diverse working-memory capacities. (3) Guided Synchronous Recitation: The cohort recites the segmented lines together to build collective confidence and auditory familiarity. (4) Individual Verification (Setoran): Each student recites back individually to receive personalized corrections. Through this approach, the teacher directly models the verses, listens to the student's recitation, and immediately provides detailed, face-to-face corrections. During individual verifications, teachers apply explicit verbal and

visual prompts to correct mistakes immediately, preventing errors from becoming permanent muscle memory. For instance, when a student mispronounces the letter Ayn (ع) from the upper throat as a simple glottal Hamzah (أ) in Surah Al-Fatiha, the teacher immediately halts the recitation and models the deep pharyngeal constriction, prompting: "Bring the sound back to the middle of the throat, squeeze it slightly 'Al-'Alamin,' not 'Al-Alamin.'" For tajwid errors, such as a student missing the proper three-second nasal duration (ghunnah) on a Nun Syaddah (نّ), the teacher raises a hand as a visual anchor and counts out loud: "Hold the sound in the nasal cavity for two to three counts 'Innnnnna,' feel the vibration before releasing it. Furthermore, mass review sessions (murojaah) are conducted twice every single day: an early morning session before regular academic classes commence, and a late afternoon session right before students dismiss. To prevent students from prioritizing fast quantitative accumulation (ziyadah) at the expense of retention fluency (mutqin), the school enforces a strict "2:1 Murojaah-to-Ziyadah Ratio" monitoring framework. Teachers enforce a rigid rule logged in the daily student scorecards: a student is legally barred from depositing a new page of ziyadah unless they successfully pass a fluid oral review of the last 2 deposited pages (sabqi) and the last 10 pages (manzil) without a single major structural hitch. This balance is audited weekly by the coordinator via the physical tracking logs to catch and stabilize any qualitative degradation early. The primary administrative proof validating this daily execution consists of teacher journal logs and student attendance books.

2. The Core Innovation: *The Qur'an Corner Program*

The principal of SMAIT An-Nahl stated that the primary catalyst for launching an instructional innovation was a series of unfavorable evaluation data from the previous academic semester. The data clearly demonstrated that a percentage of students were unable to study effectively when confined exclusively to large, static classroom *halaqah* groups. Slower students suffered from high anxiety, while fast students experienced boredom. To eliminate this bottleneck, the principal introduced a strategic intervention called the Qur'an Corner program, which injected intensive, dedicated Al-Qur'an memorization hours completely outside the standard formal classroom schedule.

The coordinator translates this policy into a highly dynamic, ability-based grouping system. Student placement into the dual-track mechanism is not arbitrary; rather, it is strictly governed by a matrix combining four distinct indicators: memorization speed (lines memorized per day), reading accuracy (tahsin level), retention fluency (mutqin tracking), and qualitative teacher behavioral assessments. Out of the 120 total students enrolled in the grade, 30 students (25%) were assigned to the Acceleration Track, 20 students (16.7%) were placed in the Remedial Track, and the remaining 70 students (58.3%) continued in the standard regular track. Student tracking is fluid rather than static. The Al-Qur'an department reviews student placements every four weeks (monthly) based on the daily diagnostic scorecards. Students can move flexibly between tracks to prevent stagnation or over-exhaustion. For example, if a student in the Remedial Track demonstrates flawless tahsin alignment and achieves their monthly benchmark consistently, they are promoted to the standard or acceleration track the following month. Conversely, if an accelerated student displays dropping retention rates or severe mental fatigue (futur), they are temporarily transferred to a lower track for psychological and pedagogical stabilization. The Qur'an Corner is structurally scheduled outside formal classroom hours to avoid national

curriculum clashes. It runs four days a week (Monday to Thursday), from 16:00 to 17:30 (90 minutes per session). In terms of teacher allocation, the school deploys 8 certified instructors: 2 senior teachers are allocated to the Acceleration Track (maintaining a 15:1 student-to-teacher ratio), while 4 specialized remedial teachers are allocated to the Remedial Track to enforce a tight 5:1 ratio for intensive micro-coaching. The remaining 2 teachers oversee floating administrative evaluations. The instructional activities cycle strictly through independent pre-memorization mapping, peer-murojaah testing, and final face-to-face master verification. The Remedial Track avoids stopping memorization entirely while fixing reading flaws; instead, it enforces a strict 70:30 Pedagogical Balance. During the 90-minute session, 60 minutes (70%) are strictly dedicated to intensive Tahsin instruction focusing on makharijul huruf mechanics and vocal anatomy via phonetic drills. The remaining 30 minutes (30%) are allocated to the continuation of memorization using heavily shortened targets (e.g., only 3 to 5 lines of ziyadah per day). This balance ensures that students' reading mechanics improve structurally without entirely halting their psychological momentum of moving forward across verses. To prevent the Acceleration Track from prioritizing fast quantitative accumulation at the expense of mutqin quality, the principal instituted a mandatory gatekeeping oral examination. even if an accelerated student completes the 30-juz target ahead of schedule, their graduation is legally frozen until they pass a blind oral board exam. In this exam, external certified examiners randomly quote any ten verses from various juz, and the student must immediately continue the recitation for at least one page without a single hesitation, articulation error, or prompt. If a student fails more than one prompt, they are stripped of their accelerated status and forced to re-enter a mandatory, long-term manzil review cycle.

3. Monitoring, Coordination, and Reporting Systems

To ensure that the innovative program does not deviate from target quality standards, the principal instituted a layered quality-control framework. Students are required to deposit their accumulated weekly memorization progress to a specially designated, highly competent teacher who has been officially certified. Structural coordination is strictly maintained through two primary communication loops: weekly evaluation meetings and monthly monitoring rallies. During the weekly evaluations, the coordinator and tahfidz teachers review individual student performance using three primary administrative indicators: ziyadah target compliance (the number of lines successfully memorized), sabqi/manzil error frequency (the number of hesitation prompts recorded during review), and the daily attendance logs. During the monthly monitoring sessions, the principal and the coordinator analyze macro-level metrics, focusing on the historical trajectory of each cohort and teacher-to-student pedagogical compatibility. Decision making is strictly data-driven: if a student's tracking log shows high error counts in sabqi for two consecutive weeks, the coordinator immediately makes a formal decision to freeze new ziyadah deposits and adjust the student's instructional focus to intensive retention recovery.A concrete example of this data-driven intervention occurred during the April 2026 evaluation loop. The weekly tracking logs revealed that a student in a regular halaqah had failed to meet their daily benchmarks for three weeks due to severe academic burnout (futur) and high anxiety when reciting in front of peers. In response to this specific evaluation result, the coordinator executed an immediate change in grouping, transferring the student from the uniform 15:1 regular cohort into the 5:1 Remedial Track of the Qur'an Corner.

Concurrently, the teaching strategy was shifted from open classroom recitation to isolated, low-pressure individual coaching near the outdoor gazebos. To provide additional student support, the school assigned a dormitory warden (musyrif) to give personal motivational mentoring every evening, successfully restoring the student's memorization confidence within four weeks.The principal issued a policy requiring regular homeroom teachers (wali kelas) to actively collaborate by monitoring student murojaah consistency during the morning homeroom periods (07:15 to 07:30). Homeroom teachers log student attendance and verify their morning review tasks using a standardized, physical daily check-list. To communicate their findings to the tahfidz teachers, the school utilizes a centralized, physical administrative ledger located in the staff room. Every afternoon, homeroom teachers update this ledger with specific notations (e.g., flagging students who missed morning murojaah due to illness or low focus), allowing tahfidz teachers to immediately adjust the afternoon Qur'an Corner session targets based on the student's real-time readiness. Parents receive structured information about student progress through two distinct administrative channels: a physical weekly progress report card delivered every Friday afternoon via the students, and a formal monthly academic transcript mailed directly to the household. Crucially, parents are actively integrated into participatory follow-up decisions rather than being passive recipients of data. If the monthly report indicates that a student is struggling significantly or requires a track transfer, the school schedules a mandatory, individual parent-teacher conference. During this conference, parents, the coordinator, and the homeroom teacher collectively design and sign a tailored spiritual and academic support contract, outlining specific joint responsibilities such as screen-time limitations at home and home-based weekend murojaah supervision schedules to ensure absolute synchronization between the domestic and school environments.

4. Post-Innovation Impacts, Supporting Factors, and Inhibiting Obstacles

The empirical evidence indicates that the implementation of the Qur'an Corner program brought a profound paradigm shift to the school's religious and academic climate. Rather than relying on generic descriptions, the explicit impacts of this structural innovation are substantiated by direct narrative accounts from multiple stakeholders and objective tracking records.To understand the inner dynamics of the program, direct interview accounts were analyzed. The Al-Qur'an department coordinator highlighted the macro-level behavior adjustments observed across the cohorts: "The rigid barriers of the old classroom setup were completely broken down by the Qur'an Corner. Teachers are no longer forced to split their attention between an advanced student ready to leap forward and a struggling student stuck on a single line. The able-based tracking allowed us to reallocate instructional focus where it was urgently needed." (Interview, April 12, 2026).Similarly, a tahfidz teacher from the Remedial Track shared the pedagogical transformation of the slower learners: "In the regular halaqah, students with reading flaws experienced intense social humiliation, causing them to shut down mentally. In the downsized 5:1 remedial track, we focused strictly on their phonetic mechanics. Once their reading accuracy stabilized, their anxiety dropped, and their intrinsic motivation to memorize naturally returned." (Interview, April 19, 2026). Furthermore, a student from the Acceleration Track expressed the cognitive freedom experienced under the new framework: "Previously, I felt structurally restricted because I had to wait for the rest of the class to finish

reviewing basic lines. In the Upgrade track, my teacher allowed me to deposit up to two pages per day. The environment in the outdoor saung also kept me highly focused without feeling suffocated by a traditional classroom layout." (Interview, May 3, 2026).These qualitative statements are strongly supported by concrete administrative evidence from the students' official tracking scorecards and teacher journal records. For instance, the progress chart of a remedial student showed that prior to the innovation (January–February 2026), the student averaged only 3 lines of ziyadah per week with a high error density of 4 to 5 pronunciation prompts per page. Following four weeks of intensive placement in the Qur'an Corner (March–April 2026), the scorecard documented a distinct performance change: the reading accuracy stabilized completely with zero tahsin errors, and the memorization speed increased systematically to 10 lines (0.5 pages) per day.

Methodologically, the school's tracking system carefully distinguished improvements in memorization speed (the quantitative volume of daily verse collection) from improvements in retention fluency and accuracy (measured by the strict count of hesitation prompts and articulation slips logged during sabqi and manzil reviews). Speed increases were only permitted by teachers if the accuracy and retention logs maintained a flawless record of zero major hitches. The documented surge in student enthusiasm was not merely inferred subjectively by the teaching staff; rather, it was rigorously cross-verified using a combination of direct researcher observation and student self-reported data. The researcher's field notes during the afternoon sessions documented an immediate drop in off-task behaviors (such as sleeping or looking out the window) from 35% in traditional setups to less than 5% within the Qur'an Corner zones. Furthermore, in their self-reported interviews, students explicitly stated that the outdoor spatial variations (such as the saung tahfidz and gazebos) and the low-pressure individual coaching completely removed their psychological fatigue, shifting their perception of tahfidz from a stressful institutional obligation to an enjoyable spiritual discipline. Crucially, the study distinguished between immediate, short-term improvement displayed during the supervised 90-minute Qur'an Corner sessions and long-term memorization retention over multiple months. While short-term performance shifts were easily stimulated by immediate teacher supervision, long-term cognitive retention was structurally secured through the integration of the home-school framework. The data showed that students who achieved rapid speed inside the Qur'an Corner could only sustain that volume long-term if they strictly complied with the mandatory morning murojaah ledger managed by homeroom teachers and passed the random weekend retrieval checks enforced by parents under the signed "Spiritual and Academic Support Contract." Without these secondary structural reinforcement loops, the quantitative gains achieved during the intensive sessions invariably suffered from cognitive decay within three to four weeks. The precise operational dynamics regarding the supporting factors and inhibiting obstacles discovered during the field research are systematically compiled in the table below:

Table 1. Matrix of Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of the Innovation

No.	Supporting Factors & Empirical Evidence	Inhibiting Factors & Empirical Evidence
1.	**Certified Tahfidz Competency** a. *Evidence:* High teacher mastery in phonetic mechanics. b. *Cross-Informant Consensus:* Confirmed by Principal, Coordinator, and Teachers. c. *Key Quote (Teacher):* "Our internal certification guarantees that error correction during talaqqi is standard across all groups."	**Fluctuation of Intrinsic Student Motivation (Futur)** a. *Evidence:* Psychological burnout from target saturation. b. *Cross-Informant Consensus:* Reported by Students, Parents, and Dormitory Wardens. c. *Key Quote (Student):* "Sometimes after a long academic day, my brain feels completely saturated, and I lose focus."
2.	**Dedicated Isolation of Learning Time** a. *Evidence:* 90-minute blocks free from standard class pressures. b. *Cross-Informant Consensus:* Confirmed by Principal, Coordinator, and Students. c. *Key Quote (Coordinator):* "Scheduling the program at 16:00 gives students a distinct psychological separation from secular subjects."	**Strict Scheduling Conflicts** a. *Evidence:* Friction with compulsory extracurricular timelines. b. *Cross-Informant Consensus:* Reported by Principal, Teachers, and Students. c. *Key Quote (Principal):* "We still struggle when mandatory school club competitions collide with the afternoon session block."
3.	**Cross-Departmental Homeroom Synergy** a. *Evidence:* Daily morning tracking via centralized ledger support. b. *Cross-Informant Consensus:* Confirmed by Coordinator, Homeroom Teachers, and Parents. c. *Key Quote (Homeroom Teacher):* "The morning ledger ensures that what happens in the	**Deficit in Independent Spiritual Drive** a. *Evidence:* High dependency on constant external teacher supervision. b. *Cross-Informant Consensus:* Reported by Dormitory Wardens, Teachers, and Parents. c. *Key Quote (Warden):* "A subset of students only perform well under direct eyes; their

classroom directly feeds into the afternoon tahfidz targets."	independent murojaah drive at the dorm remains low."

Source: Compiled from Research Interview Logs (March-June 2026)

Analysis/Discussion

1. Strategic Management of Planning and Alignment with "Mutqin" Quality Standards

The empirical findings of this study demonstrate that SMAIT An-Nahl Jambi City has successfully executed the fundamental principles of strategic educational planning. However, looking deeper than simple recurring administrative monitoring, the Qur'an Corner program operates as a dynamic framework of continuous improvement (kaizen) that is strictly structured around Deming's Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle within Total Quality Management (TQM) (Sallis, 2015). The Plan phase is operationalized through the structural compilation of syllabi, semester timeline programs (promes), and explicit Daily Lesson Plans (RPH) that set tailored diagnostic benchmarks based on students' initial abilities. The Do phase is manifested in the daily running of the dual-track Qur'an Corner outside formal hours, applying the Ilman Wa Ruuhan methodology. The critical shift into continuous quality improvement occurs in the Check phase, where the weekly and monthly evaluation loops function as analytical tools to identify instructional bottlenecks such as structural drops in retention or student mental fatigue (futur). Finally, the Act phase is demonstrated not by passive logging, but by immediate structural adjustments, such as dynamically re-engineering student groupings every four weeks, downsizing remedial cohorts to a 5:1 ratio, and reallocating teaching resources to rescue struggling learners. This iterative process prevents long-term learning stagnation and ensures that quantitative acceleration never compromises mutqin standards (Taufikin, Fathurrochman, and Mulyadi, 2025).

Furthermore, the principal's uncompromising vision to prioritize *mutqin* (absolute fluency and long-term memory retention) over mere rapid quantitative verse collection shows a deep understanding of authentic Islamic instructional quality (Djuddah, Mukhtar, and Hidayat, 2021). This vision is successfully realized in the field through the rigorous implementation of the classic *sabaq* (new memorization deposit), *sabqi* (review of recent deposits), and *manzil* (systematic review of old historical memorization) cycles, which are further reinforced by mandatory mass *murojaah* sessions twice a day (Handayani, Syaifuddin, and Abidin, 2021; Mutaqin, 2021).

To maintain empirical rigor, the positive impacts of the Qur'an Corner on long-term memorization retention must be interpreted purely through an educational and pedagogical framework rather than making unverified neurocognitive or neurological assertions. The qualitative data collected in this study do not establish underlying neurocognitive mechanisms or brain storage alterations. Pedagogically, the high retention fluency (mutqin) achieved by students is the direct result of rigorous, evidence-based educational strategies: intensive retrieval practice (manifested through the sabaq, sabqi, and manzil cycles), spaced repetition (the mandatory twice-daily murojaah sessions), and structured interleaving of new verses with old historical memorization. Furthermore, the supportive boarding school environment acts as a structural stabilizer that optimizes time management and peer modeling, which naturally complements the spaced retrieval loops. This systematic pedagogical

reinforcement, rather than any isolated biological change, secures the stabilization of student memory over multiple months.

2. Evaluation of the *Qur'an Corner* as an Adaptive Innovation for Cognitive Heterogeneity

One of the most pervasive, classic bottlenecks documented in Islamic educational management worldwide is the acute heterogeneity of student cognitive processing speeds and spiritual endurance (Fatmawati, 2019; Khoiri, 2020). The decisive managerial action taken by the principal to design and deploy the Qur'an Corner program aligns precisely with Everett Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory. Rather than limiting the analysis to the principal's generic role as an innovator, the institutional adoption of the program can be validated through Rogers' five distinct innovation attributes: (1) Relative Advantage: The program proved highly advantageous over the traditional structure by simultaneously accommodating rapid learners through the Acceleration Track and reducing intense social anxiety for slower learners via the Remedial Track. (2) Compatibility: The Qur'an Corner was designed to be perfectly compatible with the existing boarding-school (pesantren) values and the rigorous requirements of the national curriculum by utilizing isolated time blocks (16:00 to 17:30) that eliminated programmatic friction. (3) Complexity: To manage structural complexity, the principal introduced a streamlined, physical daily ledger system, making the dual-track tracking simple and operational for both tahfidz and homeroom teachers. (4) Trialability: The program was initially piloted using a small subset of cohorts in early 2026, allowing the Al-Qur'an department to test and adjust the tracking mechanics before full school-wide implementation. (5) Observability: The visible outcomes such as the clear jump in reading precision and the systematic drop in off-task classroom behaviors from 35% to less than 5% made the innovation highly observable and respected by teachers, students, and parents alike.

By introducing a highly dynamic, dual-track ability grouping matrix, the principal successfully engineered a learning environment governed by individualized pacing. The acceleration track (*upgrade*) gave fast-learning students the intellectual and spiritual freedom to maximize their potential without being dragged down by the average class speed, while the remedial track completely stripped away the intense social anxiety and humiliation felt by slower students (Azmil and Kulsum, 2023). This innovative restructuring effectively minimized academic burnout (*futur*) because it provided customized pedagogical treatment tailored precisely to the student's real-time psychological and cognitive state (Firmansyah, Rahwan, and Kholis, 2024).

Moreover, by anchoring the method within the *Ilman Wa Ruuhan* and *talaqqi* frameworks, the program ensures that accelerated speed never compromises the core quality of tajwid, maintaining a balanced trajectory between speed and precision (Hernawan and Muthoifin, 2018; Syafrinal, 2025). This aligns with the leadership mandate where a principal must not only dictate targets but actively construct the structural pathways required to achieve them (Fitrah, 2017; Panjaitan and Puspitasari, 2022).

3. Layered Coordination Loops, Teacher Competency Management, and Character Internalization

he development of the Qur'an Corner serves as strong empirical proof of the principal's transformational leadership, moving far beyond the administrative routing of monitoring meetings. The principal successfully operationalized the four classic dimensions of transformational leadership defined by Bass and Riggio (2006): (1) Intellectual Stimulation: The principal challenged status-quo methods by urging tahfidz teachers to rethink rigid classroom structures and collaboratively design the dual-track ability grouping matrix to resolve the chronic bottleneck of student cognitive heterogeneity. (2) Individualized Consideration: This was demonstrated empirically when the principal structurally budgeted for and enforced a tight 5:1 teacher-to-student ratio for the Remedial Track, providing struggling students with customized pedagogical care and individual coaching in outdoor gazebos. (3) Inspirational Motivation: The principal articulated a clear, shared vision that prioritized mutqin quality over mere quantitative page-collection, inspiring teachers to maintain high rigor by enforcing the "2:1 Murojaah-to-Ziyadah Ratio" control framework. (4) Idealized Influence: The principal modeled absolute institutional accountability by directly leading the monthly monitoring rallies alongside the coordinator, actively adjusting the school's structural trajectory based on empirical tracking logs rather than relying on top-down directives. By doing so, teachers feel structurally supported and highly motivated to maintain rigorous instructional standards across all *halaqah* cohorts (Jamilah, Warman, and Azainil, 2023; Hudaya, Rosyid, and Suklani, 2025).

However, the efficacy of these coordination loops is profoundly bound to the human resource factor. The field data emphasizes that having an "expert teacher in their field" serves as the ultimate backbone of the *Qur'an Corner's* success. This underscores the absolute necessity of rigorous teacher competency management, as standardizing pedagogical quality across multiple *halaqah* cannot be achieved without certified instructional professionals (Mukhlis, 2024; Yunita and Supendi, 2024). When teachers possess officially validated competencies, their capacity to provide detailed, micro-level corrections during the *talaqqi* process is secured, which directly protects the students from developing long-term reading flaws.

Furthermore, the data indicates that the impacts of this innovation extend far beyond cognitive or purely academic metrics. The claim that the program fosters foundational Islamic values such as patience (sabar), continuous effort (ikhtiar), responsibility, and deep spiritual attachment to the Holy Scripture is grounded in specific, observable participant behaviors and self-reported testimonies, rather than assumed through mere regular attendance. Patience and responsibility were explicitly observed by teachers during the strict "Gatekeeping Oral Examination," where students voluntarily embraced intensive review cycles and controlled their anxiety under pressure to defend their mutqin quality. Continuous effort (ikhtiar) was documented in the researcher's field notes, which tracked a significant shift in student habits: off-task classroom behaviors dropped sharply as students actively utilized their free time for peer-to-peer murojaah testing. Furthermore, in individual interviews, parents reported a notable transformation in their children's independent spiritual drive at home, observing that students began initiating their daily review tasks autonomously during weekends without requiring parental or teacher coercion. This behavioral triangulation confirms a genuine, gradual internalization of character values stimulated by the

supportive, low-pressure design of the innovation. This character transformation is amplified by the cross-departmental synergy between the Al-Qur'an department and the regular homeroom teachers (*wali kelas*), proving that a school-wide unified culture is vital to sustain the behavior modifications achieved in the *boarding school* environment (Putri et al., 2024; Utami and Fatoni, 2022).

4. Strategic Interventions for Overcoming Motivation Fluctuations and Systemic Bottlenecks

Evaluating existing spatial interventions against student fatigue to clear up any ambiguity, the utilization of outdoor learning spaces specifically the saung tahfidz (wooden gazebos) and open-air campus gardens represents actual, existing interventions that were fully operationalized during the March–June 2026 fieldwork, rather than merely proposed future strategies. The field data provided clear, empirical evidence that changing the learning environment directly helped reduce student mental fatigue (futur). The coordinator's physical tracking logs documented that when students were stuck in traditional, enclosed classrooms, the average daily attention drop and minor behavioral friction stood at 35%. However, within two weeks of rotating the halaqah cohorts to the outdoor saung tahfidz, teacher records documented a sharp, measurable reduction in off-task behaviors, which dropped to less than 5%.

Furthermore, in their individual interviews, students explicitly stated that the sensory shift breathing fresh air and hearing natural sounds completely removed the claustrophobic anxiety of uniform classrooms, lowered their stress levels, and allowed them to sustain cognitive focus during intensive 90-minute memorization sessions. Functional Framework for a Proposed Digital Tahfidz Monitoring SystemWhile the current physical ledger system provides strong baseline data, it suffers from minor communication lags. Therefore, a major institutional recommendation for future development is the transition toward a synchronized mobile application and database. To be effective, the proposed digital Tahfidz system must meet five core functional requirements: (1) Real-Time Memorization Tracking: A dedicated module for teachers to instantaneously log the exact Surah, verse, and line count of daily ziyadah deposits. (2) Automated Murojaah Records: An algorithm-driven interface that tracks spacing intervals of sabqi and manzil reviews, automatically flagging verses due for retrieval practice. (3) Instant Teacher Feedback Loops: A voice-and-text notation system for instructors to drop precise, micro-level feedback regarding makharijul huruf and tajwid errors. (4) Secure Parent Access Portals: A read-only dashboard for parents to view performance graphs, check attendance, and digitally sign support contracts. (5) Rigorous Data Security Protocols: Absolute alignment with national data privacy regulations via end-to-end encryption (AES-256) and multi-factor authentication (MFA) to safeguard records.Resource Allocation and Staff Competency RequirementsThe digitalization recommendation must not be treated as an automatically effective solution; its successful implementation requires dedicated resource allocation and specific staff competencies. Structurally, the school must budget for hardware infrastructure (providing low-cost tablets for all tahfidz teachers) and secure a stable campus-wide cloud network. In terms of human capital, two critical staff competencies are mandatory: first, basic digital literacy and user-interface fluency among all tahfidz teachers, ensuring they can log data swiftly without disrupting the face-to-face talaqqi dynamic; and second, specialized data analytics training for the department coordinator to interpret monthly data trends and automate the student

track-restructuring process. The school must institute a mandatory two-week professional training workshop prior to the system's launch to bridge these technical literacy gaps. Holistic Extracurricular Integration via Coordinated Scheduling Finally, to eliminate the operational friction identified in the field, mandatory extracurricular activities must not be treated as competing, negative demands that drag down spiritual metrics. Instead, the principal must execute a coordinated scheduling matrix that integrates personal talents and spiritual growth into absolute harmony. Rather than allowing club schedules to collide haphazardly with the 16:00 Qur'an Corner block, the school should enforce a non-overlapping calendar framework: reserving Mondays and Wednesdays strictly for intensive tahfidz tracks, while shifting sports, arts, and leadership clubs exclusively to Tuesdays and Thursdays. Furthermore, student participation in extracurricular programs should be treated as a healthy psychological outlet to vent the cognitive pressure built up during memorization, ensuring that character internalization and holistic human capital development grow together under a balanced school culture (Fitriana, Handayaningrum, and Roesminingsih, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Based on the qualitative evidence gathered, the leadership innovations executed by the school principal appear to play a supportive and adaptive role in managing the tahfidz Al-Qur'an learning program within the boarding school ecosystem at SMAIT An-Nahl Jambi City. Rather than demonstrating definitively measured quantitative outcomes, the implementation of the Qur'an Corner program serves as a valuable managerial innovation in organizing ability-based differentiated learning. By structured split-tracking into an Acceleration Track (Upgrade) and a Remedial Track (Intervention), the program provides a highly flexible operational framework that addresses the challenges of student cognitive heterogeneity and psychological fatigue (futur), as reported by participants.The strategic management of this program relies heavily on the principal's transformational coordination, which balances intensive instructional targets with structured monitoring loops, including weekly evaluations with instructors and monthly administrative alignment meetings. The qualitative findings indicate that these administrative setups help maintain learning rigor and support reading accuracy (tahsin) without strictly halting memorization momentum. Crucially, the improvements in reading precision, student enthusiasm, and retention consistency documented in this study reflect the shared perceptions and qualitative judgments reported by the teachers, coordinators, and students, rather than standardized statistical metrics.Ultimately, this study contributes to the field of adaptive tahfidz learning management by providing an empirical model of how institutional leadership can dynamically restructure rigid, classical classroom boundaries into individualized, ability-centered instructional designs.To support future institutional development and build upon these qualitative insights, two key recommendations are proposed: first, the school should plan a gradual transition from traditional paper-based journal logs toward a synchronized digital database or mobile tahfidz application with secure parent portals to minimize communication lags; and second, the management should introduce an integrated scheduling matrix that non-overlappingly separates intensive memorization blocks from mandatory extracurricular

activities. These proposed technological and calendar adjustments are presented strictly as prospective developmental recommendations for the school's long-term growth, rather than established findings derived from the current research data.

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