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# ENHANCING AL-QURAN READING SKILLS IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION AT AN-NIKMAH AL-ISLAMIYAH INSTITUTE PHNOM PENH CAMBODIA

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the effectiveness of innovative teaching methodologies for enhancing Al-Quran reading skills at An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Institute in Cambodia. The case study method includes qualitative assessments, evaluating the impact of tailored instructional strategies, interactive learning sessions, and individualized feedback. The assessments focused on key aspects of Quranic recitation, such as pronunciation accuracy, fluency, and adherence to Tajwid rules. Additionally, feedback surveys were administered to both students and teachers to evaluate the effectiveness and practicality of the instructional strategies. These surveys aimed to identify strengths, areas for improvement, and overall satisfaction with the teaching methods. By focusing on these traditional teaching methods, the project preserves and promotes cultural authenticity while ensuring high levels of student engagement and long-term retention of Quranic skills. Additionally, the program encourages leadership development among proficient students by involving them in peer mentoring roles, fostering a collaborative and supportive learning environment. The anticipated outcomes include not only enhanced Quranic literacy among all students but also the establishment of sustainable practices that can be continued by local educators, thereby ensuring the lasting impact of the project on the institute and the wider community.

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## Introduction

Cambodia is a Southeast Asian country bordered by Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. Its capital is Phnom Penh, and Khmer is the official language. Cambodia boasts a rich history, notably the renowned Angkor civilization, and is currently experiencing rapid development. Islam first arrived in Cambodia in the 13th century via trade and interactions with the Malay Sultanate and the Islamic Caliphate in the Middle East. At that time, Cambodia was under the Hindu-Buddhist Khmer Empire. A significant Islamic figure during this period was Sheik Ahmad Al Qomi, a Persian scholar who arrived in Cambodia in 1585 and established a madrasah in Phnom Penh. In the 17th century, numerous Muslim traders from the Malay region and the Middle East settled in Cambodia, contributing to the spread of Islam. Some sources claim that Islam was

introduced to Cambodia in the 9th century. The Cham people adopted Islam after the fall of Vijaya, the Cham state's capital, to Vietnam in 1471, eventually replacing their Hindu-Buddhist culture with Islam (Junaidi 2023).

A significant aspect of Islam in Southeast Asia is the focus on education. Education is a central concern for Muslim communities, regardless of whether they are in majority or minority Muslim countries. The goals and characteristics of educational approaches for Muslim communities are crucial for their long-term development. In Southeast Asia, the spread of secularism by Western influences has posed challenges for the survival of Islamic education, despite its comprehensive role in human development. After a period of quiet, Islamic scholars renewed their attention to the integrated concept of Islamic education as an alternative to mainstream education within Muslim communities. This

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culminated in the first world conference on Islamic education, held in Mecca in 1977 (Hikmah 2017).

In Cambodia, Islamic communities began to emerge in 1993, indicating the initial spread of Islam. However, the development has been incomplete and not fully realized due to the lack of a proper system. Additionally, the growth of Islamic religious education has been slow because there is no support for its presence in Cambodia (Yahyani, Kurnianto, and Ariyanto 2020)

Islamic education in Southeast Asia is expected to progress with the times and become a cornerstone of religious globalization. Integrating science and Islam is a strategy for Muslims in the region to compete with international scholars. Islamic schools will also produce graduates who are globally employable and become leaders in religious practice and scholars of the Qur'an (Hikmah 2017).

Recitation of the Quran combines the concept of recitation with the Quran itself. According to the comprehensive Indonesian dictionary, recitation refers to reading the verses of the Quran accurately and flawlessly. The Quran is the word of Allah, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through the Jibril, who is described as trustworthy and respected. For Muslims, reading the Quran is a form of worship, as it serves as the foundation and guide for life. Teaching the Quran to children is fundamental in Islam, ensuring they remain connected to their faith. By instilling the Quran's teachings early, children's hearts are filled with wisdom, preventing them from being led astray by desires and corruption (Kusuma Wardani et al. 2022)

Reading and writing the Quran are essential skills for Muslims. In the context of Islamic education, these practices are obligatory for every Muslim. It is no surprise that many verses and Hadith emphasize the importance of continually engaging with the Quran. This engagement includes reading, writing, memorizing, and reflecting on its content, with the most crucial aspect being the implementation of its teachings in daily life (Hakim 2019). Among the well-known Hadiths concerning the study of the Quran, one narrated by Bukhari states:

عن عثمان رضي الله عنه عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: خَيْرُكُمْ مَنْ تَعَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ وَعَلَّمَهُ

*“The most excellent man with Allah SWT among you is the one who learns the Qur'an and then teaches it to others”* (Bukhari).

The aforementioned Hadith generally emphasizes that every Muslim is obligated to engage with the Quran earnestly and continuously. Those who study the Quran and are able to teach its knowledge to others will attain the highest honor. In the context of education, students of Islamic studies in schools bear significant responsibilities. Besides learning the Quran, they are also tasked with teaching it, ensuring that their peers become proficient in Quranic teachings (Hakim 2019).

The Quran, as the sacred book of Muslims, must be integrated into various aspects of life to develop a strong, faithful individual. As a source of divine guidance, the Quran provides teachings on many subjects, including faith, principles of love, ethics, social interactions, politics, and the pursuit of knowledge. Regarding modern science, the Quran offers humans insights and inspiration to study the natural phenomena created by Allah SWT (Sarnoto 2021).

### Methods

This inquiry was conducted utilizing investigative and advancement approaches. Investigate and advancement could be a strategy that can be utilized to create a book, module, learning strategy, assessment instrument, educational modules show, learning approach, assessment, supervision, staff preparation, and others. characterized this inquire about strategy as “a handle of utilizing and approving instruction products.” The item that comes from this inquiry is the 3A media of Quran Learning (Please Instruct Me Quran) (Fatwa Rosyadi Satria Hamdani, Tandika, and Adwiyah 2018).

The proposed teaching method aims to enhance Al-Quran reading skills among secondary school participants at the An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Institute in Cambodia. Targeting the first secondary school level (typically ages 12-14), this method focuses on developing foundational Tajwid skills, ensuring proper pronunciation, and fostering a deep appreciation for Quranic recitation.

The following methods were employed to enhance Al-Quran reading skills at An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Institute, focusing on traditional, non-technological approaches. Given that 80% of the students were already fluent in reading the Al-Quran, the methods



were designed to both refine the skills of proficient students and improve the abilities of those who required additional support.

- 1) Halaqah (Circle) Study Sessions:
  - Students were divided into small groups for halaqah sessions, where each group was led by a teacher or a more proficient student. These sessions were held regularly, providing a structured environment for students to practice recitation.
- 2) Repetition and Memorization (Hifz):
  - Repetition was emphasized as a core component of the learning process. Students engaged in daily recitation exercises, focusing on repeating specific verses to reinforce proper pronunciation and adherence to tajwid rules.
  - Hifz, or memorization, was integrated into the curriculum to help students internalize the recitation patterns and rules. This practice not only improved fluency but also helped students retain the correct recitation methods over time.
- 3) Peer Learning and Assessment:
  - Students were encouraged to work together, with more fluent students assisting those who were less proficient. This peer learning approach fostered a collaborative environment and allowed students to learn from one another.
  - Regular peer assessments were conducted, where students evaluated each other's recitation. This method helped reinforce learning and provided additional opportunities for feedback and correction.
- 4) Leadership Development:
  - More advanced students are given the opportunity to lead group recitations and help teach others. This not only helps them hone their skills, but also boosts their confidence and prepares them for future roles in leading prayers and teaching.

## Results and Discussion

### 1) Activity Result

These activities collectively contributed to significant improvements in Al-Quran reading skills at An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Institute, underscoring the effectiveness of traditional, non-technological Islamic educational methods. Initially, a baseline assessment revealed that 85% of students were already fluent in Quranic recitation, while the remaining 15% needed targeted support in areas such as fluency, pronunciation, and adherence to

tajwid rules. The implementation of small group halaqah sessions provided personalized instruction, where immediate feedback helped students refine their recitation skills, particularly benefiting those less proficient. Repetition and memorization exercises were integrated into daily routines, reinforcing correct practices and aiding in the internalization of tajwid rules, leading to gradual improvements in accuracy and pronunciation. For the already fluent students, advanced skill development activities focused on refining rhythm, articulation, and breath control, further enhancing their mastery. These students were also encouraged to take on leadership roles during group recitations, boosting their confidence and practical experience. By the end of the program, 85% of the students had achieved advanced proficiency in Quranic recitation, with the remaining 15% showing significant progress, though they required continued support. The high level of student engagement throughout the program demonstrated that traditional methods, when effectively applied, can lead to substantial educational outcomes.

### 2) Discussion

The results of this study indicate that traditional methods can be highly effective in improving Al-Quran reading skills, even in an environment where the majority of students are already fluent. The success of these methods lies in their ability to provide personalized, immediate feedback and to foster a deep, collaborative learning environment.

The use of halaqah (circle) study sessions at An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Institute proved highly effective in enhancing Quranic recitation skills. These small group settings provided personalized instruction, enabling teachers to offer immediate feedback and correction, which was particularly beneficial for the 20% of students who initially struggled. The supportive environment created by these sessions allowed students to practice and improve their recitation skills. Additionally, the emphasis on repetition and memorization (hifz) played a critical role in improving students' fluency and pronunciation. These traditional techniques not only reinforced correct recitation practices but also helped students internalize the rules of tajwid, allowing for progressive refinement of their recitation and leading to greater confidence and accuracy. For the 80% of students who were already fluent, the traditional methods facilitated further refinement of their recitation skills, with a focus on nuanced aspects of tajwid such as rhythm and articulation.

This consistent practice and immediate feedback ensured that even minor errors were corrected, allowing for continuous improvement. The non-technological methods also contributed to increased confidence among students, with the structured yet flexible nature of the halaqah sessions encouraging more fluent students to take on leadership roles in group recitations, further enhancing their skills and providing opportunities to practice in real-world contexts. However, maintaining student engagement without technology, especially for those already proficient, was a primary challenge. This was addressed by incorporating varied recitation exercises, peer assessments, and motivational rewards, demonstrating that traditional methods can be adapted to meet the needs of modern learners. Time management was another challenge, particularly in providing personalized instruction for students who needed more attention.

Extending study hours and encouraging additional practice outside of formal class time proved effective in ensuring that all students received the necessary support to improve their recitation skills. The success of the intervention at An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Institute underscores the sustainability and effectiveness of traditional methods in Islamic education, even without the use of technology. These methods produced significant improvements in students' Quranic reading skills and hold potential for replication in other Islamic educational institutions, particularly in settings where access to technology is limited or where there is a desire to preserve traditional teaching practices. The focus on personalized, oral instruction and the use of group learning environments can be effective in improving Quranic literacy across diverse contexts.

The study's findings highlight the significant impact of traditional teaching methods on enhancing Al-Quran reading skills, even in settings where most students are already proficient. These methods, particularly effective at the An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Institute in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, owe their success to personalized, immediate feedback and a strong collaborative learning environment. The use of small group sessions, known as halaqah, proved especially beneficial in improving Quranic recitation skills by allowing teachers to provide personalized instruction and immediate corrections. This approach was crucial for the 20% of students who initially struggled with their recitation, as the supportive environment enabled them to practice and gradually enhance their skills. The study also emphasized the importance of repetition and

memorization, known as hifz, in helping students internalize the rules of tajwid. For the 80% of students already fluent in recitation, traditional methods further refined their skills by focusing on nuanced aspects of tajwid, such as rhythm and articulation. Consistent practice coupled with immediate feedback ensured continuous improvement and boosted students' confidence. The structured yet flexible halaqah sessions encouraged more fluent students to take on leadership roles, enhancing their skills and providing real-world practice opportunities. However, maintaining engagement without technology was a challenge, especially for proficient students. To address this, varied recitation exercises, peer assessments, and motivational rewards were incorporated, demonstrating that traditional methods could be successfully tailored to meet the needs of modern learners. Time management was another challenge, particularly in providing personalized instruction for students needing more attention. Extending study hours and encouraging additional practice outside formal class time proved effective in ensuring all students received the necessary support to improve their recitation skills. The study's success at the An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Institute underscores that traditional methods in Islamic education can be both sustainable and effective, even without technology. These methods not only led to significant improvements in students' Quranic reading skills but also hold potential for replication in other Islamic educational institutions, particularly in settings with limited access to technology or where there is a strong desire to preserve traditional teaching practices. The focus on personalized, oral instruction and group learning environments proved effective in improving Quranic literacy across diverse contexts, showcasing the enduring value of traditional educational methods.



**Fig 1.** Teaching tajweed in the classroom



**Fig 2.** Teaching makhorijul in the room



**Fig 3.** Teaching tajweed in the room



**Fig 4.** Improvement of Quran recitation In the classroom



**Fig 5.** Tajweed enhancement in the classroom



**Fig 6.** improvement of the makhorijul huruf in the classroom



**Fig 7.** Teaching makhorijul huruf in the classroom collaborating with UIN IB Padang and UMSU students

### 3) Activity Evaluation

The evaluation of activities aimed at enhancing Al-Quran reading skills at An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Institute highlighted the effectiveness of traditional, non-technological methods in improving recitation abilities. Pre- and post-activity assessments showed significant progress across all student proficiency levels. Notably, the 15% of students who were less proficient demonstrated marked improvement in fluency and accuracy, while the 85% of already fluent students experienced refinement in the nuanced aspects of tajwid and rhythm. Feedback from both students and teachers indicated high satisfaction with the personalized instruction and supportive environment provided by halaqah sessions, which were instrumental in fostering student confidence and ensuring rapid improvement.

The consistent application of repetition and memorization techniques proved successful in reinforcing correct recitation practices and promoting long-term retention of tajwid rules. Engagement levels remained high throughout the

activities, driven by motivational rewards, peer assessments, and the opportunity for fluent students to take on leadership roles. Despite challenges in managing time and maintaining engagement without technology, the adaptability of traditional methods ensured that all students received adequate support. The overall success of these activities demonstrates the sustainability and effectiveness of traditional Islamic educational practices in enhancing Quranic literacy, offering a valuable model for other institutions in similar contexts.

### Conclusion

The study at An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah Institute demonstrated that traditional, non-technological methods can be highly effective in improving Al-Quran reading skills, even in a context where 80% of students were already fluent in recitation. Through the use of halaqah sessions, repetition, and memorization, students at all levels of proficiency were able to enhance their recitation skills significantly. The personalized, immediate feedback provided in small group settings was particularly beneficial for less proficient students, while more advanced students further refined their skills and gained confidence in their recitation.

Despite challenges such as maintaining engagement and managing time without the aid of technology, the study showed that these obstacles could be overcome with thoughtful adaptation of traditional methods. The success of this approach highlights the sustainability and relevance of traditional Islamic education practices, suggesting that these methods can be effectively implemented in similar educational settings to achieve meaningful improvements in Quranic literacy.

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