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Learning System Transformation Through Character and Religious-Based Flagship Programs: A Qualitative Study at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School, Malang

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Abstract

Learning system transformation has become a strategic effort to improve educational quality in response to technological advancements, evolving student needs, and growing societal demands. However, prior studies have predominantly focused on digital technology and interactive learning methods, while research on learning system transformation through flagship programs integrating character development, religious values, and social experience remains limited. This study aims to analyze the forms of learning system changes, the driving factors behind those changes, stakeholder responses, adaptation strategies, and their impacts on students and the school community at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School, Malang. A qualitative approach with a descriptive design was employed. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews with the school principal as the primary informant, and documentation. Data analysis followed an interactive model comprising data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, with validity ensured through source and technique triangulation. The findings reveal that since 2021, the school has implemented learning innovations through the Qiro'ah and Da'i programs, Safari Ramadhan, the ASEAN Class Program (ACP), the Aspirational Class, and barcode-based digital learning media. These programs fostered more active, interactive, and character-oriented learning. Despite initial adaptation challenges among some teachers, the changes received positive responses from students, teachers, and the surrounding community. The study concludes that learning system transformation contributes significantly to enhancing students' learning experiences, social skills, religious competencies, and the school's institutional identity and public image.

Kata Kunci:

Transformasi Sistem Pembelajaran; Inovasi Pendidikan; Pembelajaran Berbasis Karakter; Pendidikan Berbasis Nilai Keagamaan; Program Unggulan Sekolah; Teknologi Pembelajaran.

Abstrak

Transformasi sistem pembelajaran merupakan upaya strategis dalam meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan yang selaras dengan perkembangan teknologi, kebutuhan peserta didik, dan tuntutan masyarakat. Namun, penelitian terdahulu umumnya berfokus pada teknologi digital dan metode pembelajaran interaktif, sementara kajian tentang transformasi sistem pembelajaran melalui program unggulan berbasis karakter, nilai keagamaan, dan pengalaman sosial masih terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis bentuk perubahan sistem pembelajaran, faktor pendorong perubahan, respons pemangku kepentingan, strategi adaptasi, serta dampaknya terhadap peserta didik dan lingkungan sekolah di SD Islam Al Ghaffar Malang. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara semi terstruktur dengan kepala sekolah sebagai informan utama, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan melalui model interaktif yang mencakup reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan, dengan keabsahan data diuji melalui triangulasi sumber dan teknik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sejak tahun 2021, sekolah mengimplementasikan berbagai inovasi pembelajaran melalui program Qiro'ah dan Da'i, Safari Ramadhan, ASEAN Class Program (ACP), Kelas Cita-Cita, serta media pembelajaran digital berbasis barcode. Program-program tersebut mendorong terciptanya pembelajaran yang lebih aktif, interaktif, dan berorientasi pada penguatan karakter. Meskipun terdapat tantangan adaptasi pada sebagian guru, perubahan yang dilakukan memperoleh respons positif dari siswa, guru, dan masyarakat. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa transformasi sistem pembelajaran berkontribusi signifikan terhadap peningkatan pengalaman belajar, keterampilan sosial, kompetensi keagamaan peserta didik, serta identitas institusional dan citra positif sekolah di masyarakat.

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INTRODUCTION

Changes in learning systems have become a strategic issue in educational development, as schools are required to adapt to developments in science and technology, as well as the increasingly complex needs of students. The current learning paradigm is no longer solely oriented toward knowledge transfer, but rather toward developing 21st-century competencies, encompassing critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, and character building. The integration of digital technology into the learning process also drives the transformation of educational practices to make them more effective, interactive, and student centered (Yani Fitriyani, Irfan Fauzi, 2020). Therefore, schools need to develop learning innovations that can answer the challenges of change while supporting the optimal achievement of educational goals.

Various studies show that the transformation of the learning system is generally influenced by developments in educational technology, demands for improving school quality, and community expectations regarding the quality of educational services (Zakiyyatul, M et al., 2025). Previous studies have focused on the implementation of digital media, technology-based learning, and interactive learning methods as efforts to improve student motivation and learning outcomes. Other research has also shown that character-building programs and experiential learning can

contribute to improving students' social skills, communication skills, and self-confidence. However, most research still places learning innovation in the context of technology use, while other studies Regarding changes in the learning system built through superior school programs based on religious values, character, and social involvement of students, it is still relatively limited.

This situation indicates a research gap that requires further attention. To date, there has been little research that comprehensively examines how schools develop changes in learning systems through distinctive programs that become the identity of educational institutions. Furthermore, aspects related to the drivers of change, the school community's response to implemented innovations, school organizational adaptation strategies, and their impact on student development and community perceptions have yet to be explored in depth (Wulan Aulia Azizah, S.Pd., M.Pd., 2024). In fact, changes in the learning system are influenced not only by technological advances but also by the school's ability to design programs relevant to student needs and the socio-cultural context of the surrounding environment. Based on this gap, this study offers novelty through an examination of changes in the learning system implemented through flagship programs based on religion, character, and social experience at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School. This school has developed various innovative programs, such as *qiro'ah* (recitation of the Koran), *da'i* (preaching), Ramadan safaris, the ASEAN Class Program (ACP), a class of ideals, and the use of barcode-based learning media as part of its learning strategy. Unlike previous research that focused more on the technological aspects of learning, this study seeks to analyze changes in the learning system more holistically, considering pedagogical, social, and institutional dimensions. The study uses a descriptive qualitative approach through observation, interviews, and documentation to gain an in-depth understanding of the change process.

This study aims to identify the forms of changes in the learning system implemented at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School, analyze the factors driving the changes, examine teacher and student responses to the innovations, and evaluate adaptation strategies and the impact of these changes on student development and the school's image in the community. The results of this research are expected to provide theoretical contributions in the study of changes in learning systems and become a practical reference for schools in developing educational innovations that are relevant to the needs of students and the demands of modern developments.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on direct observation of the transformation of the learning system implemented at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School and the factors influencing its implementation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), Qualitative research is an approach that aims to understand the meaning attributed by individuals or groups to a social or human problem. Through this approach, researchers can obtain in-depth information about the learning transformation process, the implementation of school programs, the responses of the school community, and the impacts that emerged after the implementation of the new learning system.

The research was conducted at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School on May 8, 2026, for one full day, from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. WIB (Western Indonesian Time). The researcher was present at the research location during the observations and interviews. The researcher's presence aimed to obtain realistic data based on field conditions.

Subjects in this study were selected using a purposive sampling technique, which selects informants based on the knowledge and experience relevant to the research focus (Sugiyono, 2015). The primary informant was the school principal, selected for his comprehensive understanding of school development, the learning transformation process, and the implementation of various flagship programs. Students were also involved as supporting informants to gain a firsthand perspective on their experiences participating in school programs, ensuring the depth and

representativeness of the data. The research objectives included the transformation of the learning system implemented in the school, such as the use of technology-based learning media, the *Qiro'ah* (recitation of Islamic teachings) and *Da'i* (preaching) programs, the Ramadan Safari program, the ASEAN Class Program (ACP), the Dream Class program, and the implementation of barcode-based learning technology.

Data collection techniques were conducted through three methods: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations involved observing school conditions, the learning process, the use of learning media, and the implementation of various school programs. Interviews were conducted directly with the principal and several students using a semi-structured interview guide to ensure the information obtained remained aligned with the research focus while also providing the informants with the opportunity to explain their answers more broadly and in-depth. Through these interviews, researchers obtained information about the school's history, the forms of learning transformation, the factors driving change, the adaptation process of teachers and students, and the impact of the implemented programs. Documentation was conducted by collecting supporting data in the form of activity photos, learning media, school programs, and other documents related to the research.

The primary instrument in this study was the researcher herself, who played a role in conducting observations, developing interview questions, collecting data, and analyzing the research results. This aligns with the perspective of (Fiantika, 2022) In qualitative research, the researcher serves as planner, data collector, analyst, and reporter of research results. Furthermore, researchers use tools such as interview guides, stationery, and documentation to support the data collection process.

The data analysis technique refers to the interactive model of (Rintang et al., 2021), The research consisted of four stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation were selected and aligned with the research focus. Next, the data was systematically organized to facilitate analysis of the learning transformation, influencing factors, school community responses, adaptation strategies, and impacts. The final stage involved drawing conclusions based on the analysis of the data obtained during the research.

The validity of the data in this study was ensured through several strategies. First, source triangulation and technical triangulation were conducted by comparing the results of interviews with the principal and students with the results of observations and documentation. Second, member checking was conducted by reconfirming the findings with informants to ensure the accuracy and precision of data interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Third, peer discussions were conducted with members of the research team to discuss the findings and minimize subjectivity in the analysis process. These various strategies were implemented to ensure the research data was more valid, credible, and academically accountable.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Research findings were obtained through observations and interviews with the principal of Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School regarding changes to the learning system implemented at the school. Based on the research findings, changes to the learning system were implemented gradually through the development of learning programs, the use of technology-based media, and the reinforcement of character and religious learning. These changes began to be implemented gradually in 2021 through the development of learning programs, the use of technology-based media, and the reinforcement of religious learning.

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A. Identification of Changes to the Learning System

Based on observations and interviews, changes to the learning system at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School are evident through the development of various flagship programs that had not previously been implemented. When the school was first established in 2012, it still had limited facilities and a limited number of students. This situation prompted the school to implement various learning innovations to create a distinctive character that differentiated it from other schools.

The first change was seen in the implementation of the *Qiro'ah* and *Da'i* programs as part of the school's compulsory learning. These programs are not only implemented as extracurricular activities but also become part of the learning process for all students. The school uses the Quranic learning method through the "An-Nawawi" book, which was developed internally. This program is one of the school's characteristics because it focuses on developing the ability to read the Qur'an or *qiro'ah*.



Picture 1. Qiro'ah and Da'i Learning Activities at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School.

Based on Picture 1, the qiro'ah program is one form of change in the school's religious-based learning system. The program is implemented routinely and is part of the compulsory learning for students.

In addition to the religious-based program, the school has also begun implementing technology-based learning media. Observations show that the learning process utilizes digital screens to deliver material, resulting in students being more engaged during the lesson. Furthermore, textbooks are equipped with barcodes that students can scan to access materials and conduct independent learning evaluations. The use of digital media helps students understand the learning material more interactively.



Picture 2. Technology-Based Learning Activities.

Based on Picture 2, the school has begun implementing digital learning media through the use of digital screens and barcode-based textbooks in teaching and learning activities.

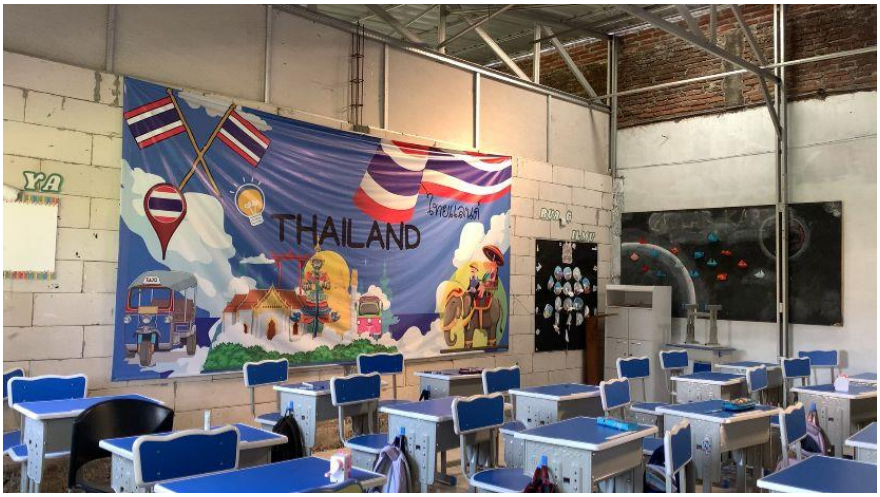
Another change is evident in the implementation of the Safari Ramadhan program, which directly involves students in the community. In this activity, students perform as preachers and qori/qoriah (reciters) in prayer rooms near the school. This program provides students with experience performing in front of the community while also developing their courage and communication skills.



Picture 3. Implementation of the Ramadan Safari Program by Students.

Picture 3 shows student involvement in the Ramadan Safari activity in the community. This program is part of the practical learning implemented by the school.

The school also developed the ASEAN Class Program (ACP), a program to introduce the cultures and languages of ASEAN countries to selected classes. Based on observations, each class has a distinct ASEAN identity, introducing students to the simple language and culture of that country. Furthermore, the school implements an aspiration class, which aims to broaden students' professional horizons from an early age.



Picture 4. Implementation ASEAN Class Program (ACP).

Picture 4 shows the implementation of the ASEAN Class Program (ACP) as part of the development of global insight-based learning in schools.

Table 1. Forms of Changes in the Learning System at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School.

No.	Form of Change	Program Implementation
1.	Qiro'ah and Da'i Program	Compulsory learning based on the art of reading the Quran
2.	Digital learning media	Barcode books for learning and self-assessment
3.	Ramadan Safari	Da'wah and Qiro'ah practices in community prayer rooms
4.	ASEAN Class Program (ACP)	Introduction to ASEAN cultures and languages
5.	Aspirational Class	Developing students' professional insights
6.	Icebreakers and interactive media	Increasing enthusiasm and participation in learning

Based on Table 1, changes to the learning system at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School do not only focus on academic aspects, but also on character development, communication skills, religious abilities, and the use of learning technology.

B. Driving Factors for Change in Learning Systems

The research results indicate that changes in the learning system at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School were influenced by several factors. The primary factor stemmed from the school's initial conditions, which included limited facilities and limited student numbers. This situation prompted the school to innovate to compete with other schools through flagship programs with unique characteristics.

Furthermore, the need to build the school's identity was also a crucial factor in the changes to the learning system. The school strived to create programs that would become the school's primary characteristic, particularly through the qiro'ah (recitation of the Koran) and da'i (preacher) programs. Interviews revealed that the school focused not only on theoretical learning but also on students' practical skills in religious activities and community communication.

Developments in educational technology also contributed to the changes in the learning system. The school began utilizing digital learning media to make the learning process more

effective and interactive. The use of barcodes on textbooks is one innovation the school has developed to support students' independent learning.

Furthermore, the need to develop students' potential also motivated the implementation of various new learning programs. The school strives to provide a broader learning experience through activities that enhance students' communication skills, public speaking skills, and professional insight.

C. Response to Changes in the Learning System

Based on observations and interviews, the changes to the learning system received a positive response from students, teachers, and the community. Students appeared more active and enthusiastic during the learning process, especially when interactive media and icebreaker activities were used in class.

The principal explained that the use of digital learning media helped create a more engaging learning environment, making it easier for students to understand the material. Furthermore, the Ramadan Safari program provided students with hands-on experience performing in front of the public, further developing their courage and communication skills.

The surrounding community also responded positively to the school's programs. Interviews revealed a sense of pride in the students' ability to perform as preachers and reciters (Quran reciters) in religious activities in the surrounding area. This indirectly enhanced the school's positive image in the community.

However, the learning transformation process still faced several obstacles. Not all teachers were immediately able to implement interactive learning methods and the use of digital media in their lessons. In the initial stages of the program's implementation, the school underwent an adjustment process, requiring ongoing evaluation to ensure optimal program implementation.

Table 2. Response to Changes in the Learning System.

No.	Form of Change	Positive Response	Obstacle
1.	Students	More active, confident, and enthusiastic about learning.	Requires adaptation to the new system.
2.	Teachers	Supporting school program development.	Not all teachers are immediately able to implement new methods.
3.	Community	Supporting the Ramadan Safari and *Qiro'ah* programs.	Requires a program familiarization process.

Based on Table 2, most of the responses to changes in the learning system showed positive results, although schools still faced several obstacles in the program adaptation process.

D. Adaptation Strategies in Changing Learning Systems

In facing the transformation of the learning system, Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School has implemented a number of planned and sustainable adaptation strategies to ensure optimal program performance. Based on interviews with the principal, the first strategy implemented is regular evaluation of each ongoing program. Evaluations are conducted at least once per semester through internal meetings involving the entire teaching staff and the principal. In these forums, each teacher is asked to report any challenges encountered during program implementation, allowing improvements to be made collectively and based on field data. Programs deemed not to have achieved their intended goals are modified or adapted to reflect the actual conditions and needs of students.

The second strategy is improving teacher capacity through regular upgrading activities. Based on observations, it appears that teachers at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School are quite skilled in operating interactive learning media, including projectors, digital learning applications, and barcode systems integrated with teaching materials. This is the result of consistent training. The principal explained that the training focuses not only on mastering technology but also includes developing creative teaching strategies that are responsive to the diverse characteristics of students. Teachers who have mastered a skill are also encouraged to share their knowledge with colleagues through informal peer teaching sessions within the school environment. The third strategy is gradual implementation of changes so that both teachers and students have sufficient time to adjust. The principal stated that each new program is not immediately implemented across the board, but rather piloted in one or two specific classes before being disseminated to the entire grade level. This approach has been shown to reduce resistance from teachers who are unfamiliar with new learning methods. Based on field observations, students also appear to experience no significant difficulties in adapting to the changes because the transition process is carried out gradually and accompanied by adequate guidance.

The fourth strategy is strengthening flagship programs that have been proven to have a significant impact on student development and the school's reputation. The Safari Ramadhan program, for example, continues to be maintained and developed annually due to the positive response from students, parents, and the surrounding community. Similarly, the Qiro'ah learning program has now become a distinctive feature of the school. The principal explained that these programs are maintained not only because of their popularity, but because they consistently contribute to the development of religious character and self-confidence in students from an early age.

The fifth strategy is the active involvement of parents as partners in the adaptation process. The school regularly holds meetings with parents to disseminate information about new programs. Through this open communication, parents not only receive information but also provide input that the school uses to inform decisions regarding program development. This parental involvement creates a broader adaptation ecosystem, extending beyond the school environment to the home.

E. Impact of Changes in the Learning System

The research results show that the transformation of the learning system at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School has had a significant and measurable impact on three main dimensions: students, the school institution, and the wider community.

From the student perspective, the learning changes have significantly increased their activeness, self-confidence, and communication skills. Based on observations conducted during the research, it was clear that students at various grade levels appeared enthusiastic about participating in learning activities, especially when using technology-based media such as interactive projectors and learning barcodes. Students actively asked questions, responded to teacher questions, and confidently presented themselves in front of the class without appearing awkward. The principal stated that this change in attitude was very different from several years ago, when students tended to be passive and lacked confidence. Furthermore, students' recitation skills have shown significant progress. Several students who participated in the intensive recitation program have been able to participate in religious activities outside of school and even achieved success in competitions at the Malang city level. This demonstrates that the learning program is not merely ceremonial but develops real, measurable competencies in students.

The "Class of Aspirations" program also has a significant affective impact. Through this program, students are introduced to various professions from an early age, fostering intrinsic motivation that drives them to study harder. Interviews with several students revealed that knowing

their desired professions makes them more enthusiastic about their studies because they feel they have a clear goal to achieve. Meanwhile, the ASEAN Class Program (ACP) provides valuable experiences in introducing foreign languages and cultures, gradually developing students' global perspectives from elementary school age.

From the school's institutional perspective, the learning transformation has had a direct impact on the school's reputation and public appeal. The principal stated that over the past three years, the number of new student enrollments has increased significantly, and one factor frequently cited by parents during the enrollment process is the uniqueness of the school's learning program. Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School is now widely known in the Malang area as a school that excels in qiro'ah (Islamic recitation) learning and fostering young preachers. This strong institutional identity serves as a differentiator that is difficult for other schools to replicate. Furthermore, the school's learning innovations have begun to attract the attention of other educational institutions in the Malang area. Several schools have reportedly conducted comparative studies at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School to learn about the learning methods used, and some have even begun adopting certain elements of the school's program into their own systems.

From a community perspective, the Safari Ramadhan program has been one of the programs most directly impacted by the surrounding community. Through this program, students engage directly with the community to carry out da'wah activities, Quran recitation, and social activities during Ramadan. According to the principal, the community response to this program has been very positive and enthusiastic. These activities not only strengthen the emotional bond between the school and the surrounding community but also build trust among parents and residents that education at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School truly integrates religious values with the development of students' social character. This increased community trust has ultimately contributed to student growth and the expansion of the school's community support network.

Overall, the research findings indicate that the transformation of the learning system at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School has created a more innovative, interactive, and holistic educational ecosystem. The resulting impact is not partial, but rather touches all elements of the school community, from student academic and character development, strengthening institutional identity, to tangible contributions to the surrounding community.

Discussion

The implementation of free poetry writing through the Think Pair Share model in Cycle II showed better results compared to Cycle I. This improvement can be observed from students' performance, which increased from Cycle I to Cycle II. During the implementation of improvements in Cycle II, the learning process was conducted more optimally. The researcher provided clearer and simpler explanations and utilized visual media to stimulate students' ideas in writing free poetry. In addition, students demonstrated greater confidence in sharing their work, and teacher guidance was distributed more evenly throughout the learning process.

A. Changes to the Learning System at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School

Changes in the learning system at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School are evident in the emergence of various programs that focus not only on academic learning but also on strengthening character, social skills, and student learning experiences. Programs such as qira'ah (recitation of the Quran), da'i (preaching), Safari Ramadhan (Ramadan Safari), the use of digital media, and the ASEAN Class Program demonstrate that the school is beginning to develop more varied and student-centered learning. Observations indicate that learning no longer occurs solely in the classroom but also involves hands-on experiences and social interactions in the surrounding environment. This was evident when researchers witnessed students' enthusiasm for using

barcodes in the learning process, where students independently scanned the codes on their textbooks to access additional learning content.

This situation demonstrates a shift in learning patterns from teacher-centered to student-centeredm(Ani Khoirotun Nisa, 2024). Students are given the opportunity to actively participate through da'wah practices, qiro'ah learning, the use of interactive media, and community social activities. The principal stated in an interview that "we want students to be not only academically intelligent, but also to be courageous, confident, and have character that's what we build through these programs." This statement confirms that the shift in learning orientation is not simply a response to educational trends, but rather a deliberate and planned pedagogical choice.

This phenomenon aligns with constructivism theory, which explains that knowledge is built through experience and social interaction (Suparlan, 2019). Piaget (1954) emphasizes that students actively construct their understanding, whereas Vygotsky (1978) views social interaction as an essential part of the learning process. In this study, this process is evident when students participate in the Ramadhan Safari activity, which requires them to communicate directly with community members, and when using digital learning media that encourages active participation during the learning process. Compared to previous research, which generally only examines constructivism in the context of technology-based learning in the classroom, this study demonstrates that constructivist principles can be realized more broadly through the integration of technology, social practices, and religious values, a model that has not been widely studied in the context of Islamic elementary schools.

The findings of this study also share similarities with previous studies, which found that experiential learning and the use of interactive media can increase student engagement in learning. However, this study demonstrates a broader form of integration, as schools utilize more than just learning technology but also combine it with character education and socio-religious practices. This novelty distinguishes this study from previous studies, which tended to separate the technological, character, and social dimensions as separate variables.

On the other hand, these changes have not been entirely seamless. Based on interviews, school principals acknowledged that not all teachers were immediately able to adapt to new learning methods, particularly regarding the use of digital media and interactive learning. Field observations also revealed a significant difference between teachers who were already skilled at using projectors and learning applications and those who still occasionally needed technical assistance. This demonstrates that learning innovation requires more than just facilities; it also requires human resource readiness and a continuous adaptation process.

The significance of these findings is that changes to the learning system in elementary schools can be more effective when educational innovations focus not only on academic aspects but also simultaneously consider students' learning experiences, character, and social needs. The practical implication is that other schools seeking to transform their learning need to build an innovation ecosystem that encompasses these three dimensions simultaneously, not separately.

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B. Driving Factors for Change in Learning Systems

Changes in the learning system at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School were influenced by both internal and external conditions. Interviews with the principal revealed that when the school first opened, it faced limited facilities and student numbers, necessitating specific strategies to compete with other schools. The principal stated, "Back then, we only had a few students and limited facilities, so we had to think hard—what could we offer that other schools didn't?" This situation prompted the school to develop unique programs that would establish the institution's identity and gain public trust.

In addition to internal factors, developments in educational technology and increasing public demand for quality education also influenced changes in learning at the school. The school began utilizing digital media and developing learning experiences deemed more relevant to today's students' needs. The use of barcodes on textbooks, which researchers witnessed directly during observations, is one concrete example of the school's adaptation to developments in educational technology (Syarifuddin, 2021). Interestingly, this technology isn't presented as an end, but rather as a bridge to enrich existing learning content.

Upon closer examination, the changes made by the school go beyond simply changing teaching methods, but also into building a school culture. The qiro'ah (recitation) and da'i (preaching) programs are not only learning activities but also shape the school's distinctive character in the eyes of the community. In this context, these learning changes serve as a strategy to strengthen the educational institution's identity. (Salman, 2022). This differs from the findings of previous studies, which generally viewed technology and national curriculum policies as the primary drivers of learning change. This study demonstrates that institutional identity-based motivation can be an equally powerful, if not more sustainable, driver of innovation because it originates from within.

This aligns with the theory of educational change management, which explains that educational institutions need to innovate to survive and adapt to environmental developments. (Zein Damanik et al., 2025). Sekolah yang mampu beradaptasi biasanya lebih mudah membangun kepercayaan masyarakat and maintaining the sustainability of educational programs. In the case of Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School, this trust is evident in the increasing number of enrollments in recent years, as the principal stated in an interview.

Previous research (Safira, 2023) Many studies have discussed changes in learning as a result of technological developments. However, this study found that social factors, the need to build a school image, and student character development are also key drivers of change. Thus, learning changes are understood not only as a form of educational modernization but also as a social and cultural strategy for schools. These findings contribute to a broader understanding of the factors driving educational innovation at the elementary school level, particularly in Islamic-based institutions with their own unique values and institutional culture.

These findings demonstrate that educational innovation at the elementary school level can develop from the real needs of schools and the community, not solely due to the demands of digitalization in education. The implication of these findings is the need for educational policies

that provide space for schools to develop innovative programs based on local identity and needs, rather than simply being uniform and top-down.

C. Response to Changes in the Learning System

The changes to the learning system implemented at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School have received a positive response from students, teachers, and the community. Observations showed that students appeared more active and enthusiastic when learning used interactive media and practical activities outside the classroom. One student the researchers met said he enjoyed learning more because he could directly practice what he learned in school during the Ramadan Safari program. The program also boosted students' confidence because they gained hands-on experience performing in the community.

These responses indicate that students tend to engage more easily in learning that provides real-world experiences than in learning that is purely theoretical. Practical social activities provide a space for students to learn to communicate, collaborate, and develop confidence in performing in public. These experiences are rarely achieved when learning takes place only in the classroom.

This is in line with the experiential learning theory of (Kolb, 1984) Through real experiences, students not only understand the material cognitively, but also gain emotional and social experiences during the learning process (Nugrahening Pinasti, 2023). Compared to previous studies that implemented experiential learning in laboratory contexts or digital simulations, this study demonstrates that the concept can be more authentically realized through direct student engagement in real social and religious environments.

In addition to students, teachers also responded positively, despite still undergoing an adaptation process to the new learning method. The principal stated in an interview that some teachers initially felt less confident using digital media in class, but after participating in upgrading training and receiving mentoring from colleagues, their confidence gradually increased. This situation demonstrates that educational change often requires a gradual process, particularly regarding teacher readiness (Sofyan Iskandar, 2025).

Previous research (Nur Hidayat, 2024) Studies generally highlight students' positive responses to the use of learning technology. However, this study shows that positive responses arise not only from digital media but also from the social and religious experiences experienced directly by students. This is an important distinction because it demonstrates that student learning motivation in Islamic-based schools is influenced not solely by the appeal of technology but also by the perceived relevance of the values within the learning activities.

The significance of these findings suggests that the success of learning system changes is influenced by the school's ability to create learning experiences that are relevant, engaging, and close to students' daily lives. Practically, these findings imply that schools need to design learning programs that not only utilize technology but also integrate social context and local values to ensure more meaningful and sustainable student engagement.

D. School Adaptation Strategies in Facing Change

In response to changes in the learning system, schools employ several adaptation strategies, such as regular program evaluations, teacher training, and gradual implementation of changes. These strategies ensure the change process is accepted by the entire school community without causing excessive resistance (Kuswara, 2024). Based on interviews, the principal explained that evaluations are conducted routinely through internal meetings involving the entire teaching staff, where each teacher is asked to openly share challenges and input. This mechanism creates a space for dialogue that strengthens a sense of shared ownership of the program.

Program evaluations are conducted to assess the effectiveness of learning implementation and adapt it to the school's needs. Meanwhile, teacher training through upgrading activities is a

crucial step in improving teachers' skills in implementing interactive learning and using digital media. Field observations demonstrate tangible results from this training: teachers appear quite skilled in operating projectors and digital media during the learning process.

The school's gradual approach demonstrates that educational change requires a process of adjustment that is not instantaneous. The principal explained that each new program is first piloted in one or two specific classes before being implemented comprehensively. The school appears to understand that the success of learning innovations depends not only on the program itself, but also on the readiness of teachers and students to implement it.

This aligns with the concept of adaptive management, which emphasizes the importance of continuous evaluation and adjustment within an organization (Rauf, 2026). In the context of education, schools need to continuously improve their programs based on the needs and conditions encountered during implementation. Compared with previous research that emphasized the role of top-down policies in encouraging school adaptation, this study's findings demonstrate that adaptation initiatives driven by independent school leadership have proven to be more flexible and responsive to field dynamics.

Research (Baiq Karni Apriani, 2025) also explains that school leadership and teacher readiness are crucial factors in the success of educational innovation. This study demonstrates that school culture and strengthening institutional identity contribute to the success of this adaptation process, a dimension that has not been widely explored in previous research. This finding adds a new perspective that institutional adaptation is not only about technical capacity, but also about the strength of the school's culture and identity.

These findings demonstrate that changes to the learning system require flexible, evaluative management, and the ability to adapt to school dynamics on an ongoing basis. Practical implications for school administrators include the importance of establishing participatory evaluation mechanisms and a sustainable teacher training system as prerequisites for the long-term success of learning innovation.

E. Impact of Changes in the Learning System

Changes to the learning system at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School have had a significant impact on student development and the school's image in the community. From the students' perspective, the changes in learning have made them more active, confident, and have improved communication skills. This is not merely a general statement based on observations; researchers witnessed firsthand how students boldly performed Quranic recitations in front of the community during the Safari Ramadhan program, something the principal described as "unimaginable if students only studied in the classroom." Students' recitation skills have also measurably improved, as reflected in the participation of several students in Malang city-wide competitions, some of which have won awards.

In addition to impacting students, the changes in learning have also strengthened the school's identity. The recitation program and the development of young preachers have become distinctive features that distinguish the school from other educational institutions. This has made the school more well-known in the community and increased its appeal. The principal mentioned in an interview that several schools in the Malang area have conducted comparative studies at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School to learn about the flagship programs implemented, and some have even begun to adopt certain elements into their own learning systems. This fact demonstrates that the impact of school innovation has transcended institutional boundaries and begun to impact the broader educational ecosystem.

Looking further, the learning developed by schools is not solely oriented toward academic achievement, but also toward the development of students' character and social skills. This aligns

with the concept of holistic education, which views education as a process of balanced intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual development (Riza Mi'rotul Rohmaha, 2023). Compared with studies that define the impact of learning solely in terms of cognitive learning outcomes, this study broadens that perspective by showing that the most lasting impact occurs in the dimensions of student character and self-confidence, which are formed through real-life experiences.

The findings also demonstrate that community involvement in learning activities can strengthen social relationships between schools and their surrounding communities. The Ramadhan Safari program is a form of learning that not only impacts students but also builds community trust in the school. This trust, in turn, has a significant impact on the growth in new student enrollment, as the principal stated that community interest in the school has continued to increase in recent years.

The significance of these findings is that changes to the learning system can have a broader and more sustainable impact when schools are able to integrate academic aspects, character, social experiences, and community needs into the educational process. Implicationally, these findings encourage education policymakers to consider more comprehensive indicators of learning success, measuring not only academic scores but also the development of students' character, self-confidence, and social contributions as integral learners.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the transformation of the learning system at Al Ghaffar Islamic Elementary School was realized through the development of various holistic and distinctive flagship programs, including the Qiro'ah and Da'i program, the Ramadhan Safari program, the ASEAN Class Program (ACP), the Aspirational Class program, barcode-based learning media, and interactive digital media. These programs collectively demonstrate that learning can be developed in a more contextual, active, and student-centered manner, creating meaningful educational experiences that extend beyond academic achievement to encompass the strengthening of character, social skills, and religious values.

The driving factors behind these changes stemmed from a combination of internal and external conditions. Internally, the school's limited facilities and student numbers in its early years served as a catalyst for identity-based innovation. Externally, rapid developments in educational technology and increasing societal expectations pushed the school to design programs that were both relevant and competitive. These findings offer a theoretical contribution by broadening the conventional understanding of educational innovation drivers, demonstrating that institutional identity and local socio-cultural needs can serve as equally powerful — and arguably more sustainable — forces of change compared to technology adoption or top-down curriculum policy alone.

Stakeholder responses to the learning system changes were overwhelmingly positive. Students became noticeably more active, confident, and enthusiastic, particularly through hands-on activities and the use of interactive media. Teachers generally supported the direction of the changes, though a portion required time and training to fully adapt to new methods. The surrounding community expressed strong appreciation for programs such as the Ramadhan Safari and qiro'ah guidance, both of which significantly reinforced the school's positive image and deepened its social ties with the community.

The school's adaptation strategies proved effective in sustaining the innovation process. Through regular program evaluations, structured teacher upgrading activities, gradual implementation of new programs, continuous strengthening of proven flagship initiatives, and active parental involvement, the school successfully minimized resistance and maintained long-term program sustainability. These strategies highlight that successful educational transformation

is not merely a matter of adopting new tools or methods, but requires a carefully managed, participatory, and evaluative process.

The impact of the learning system transformation was multidimensional. At the individual level, students demonstrated measurable improvements in communication skills, self-confidence, and religious competencies. At the institutional level, the school strengthened its identity and increased its appeal, attracting greater community interest and becoming a reference point for other schools in the Malang area. At the community level, school programs fostered closer and more meaningful relationships between the school and its surrounding environment, building mutual trust that contributed to the school's sustained growth.

Based on these findings, several recommendations are put forward. For school administrators, it is essential to continue developing learning innovations by strengthening flagship programs, expanding the use of learning technology, and maintaining consistent program evaluation to ensure responsiveness to students' evolving needs. Investment in ongoing teacher professional development must also be prioritized to ensure that all educators are equipped to implement interactive and technology-integrated learning effectively. For teachers, greater readiness and creativity in designing active, student-centered, and character-oriented learning experiences are strongly encouraged, alongside a sustained commitment to integrating social practices and real-world experiences into the curriculum. For the community and parents, continued and active involvement in school programs remains vital, as collaborative partnerships between schools, families, and communities form the foundation for holistic student development. Finally, for future researchers, it is recommended to expand the scope of this inquiry by examining the long-term effectiveness of character and religious-based flagship programs across a broader range of schools and student populations, incorporating quantitative measures of learning outcomes and social development to complement the qualitative insights offered by this study.

Overall, the findings of this study affirm that learning system transformation achieves its most optimal results when schools are able to integrate academic, character, technological, social, and community dimensions in a balanced and sustained manner. Educational innovation is not a destination but an ongoing process — one that thrives when driven by clear institutional values, responsive leadership, and a genuine commitment to the holistic development of every learner.

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