



## Improving student competence through innovation of Islamic boarding school-based learning strategic

Alvida Dzattadini<sup>1</sup>, Devina Amelia<sup>2</sup>, Livia Anggina<sup>3</sup>, M. Raihan Eka Putra<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

[alvidadzattadini@upi.edu](mailto:alvidadzattadini@upi.edu)<sup>1</sup>, [litlenemodva@upi.edu](mailto:litlenemodva@upi.edu)<sup>2</sup>, [liviaangginaa@upi.edu](mailto:liviaangginaa@upi.edu)<sup>3</sup>, [raihanekaputra12@upi.edu](mailto:raihanekaputra12@upi.edu)<sup>4</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka with Daarut Tauhiid Boarding School Curriculum at SMK Daarut Tauhiid Boarding School has been going on for three years. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of implementing a curriculum that combines academic, vocational, and character aspects based on boarding school values to create graduates who are technically superior, highly moral, and competitive at the national and international levels. Using a qualitative approach, data was collected through observations, interviews, and document studies. The findings show that the Kurikulum Merdeka focuses on a competency-based learning approach that encourages student creativity and independence, while the Daarut Tauhiid Curriculum emphasizes the formation of good and strong character according to pesantren values. The use of technology such as the Learning Management System (LMS) facilitates efficient and interactive learning implementation. This curriculum integration allows students to excel technically and have a strong character. The combination of vocational education, pesantren values, and digital technology can produce nationally and internationally competitive graduates, as well as highly moral graduates.

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### ABSTRAK

Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka dengan Kurikulum Daarut Tauhiid khas pesantren di SMK Daarut Tauhiid Boarding School telah berlangsung selama tiga tahun. Tujuan penelitian ini untuk mengevaluasi efektivitas penerapan kurikulum yang mengkombinasikan aspek akademik, vokasi, dan karakter berbasis nilai-nilai pesantren, guna menciptakan lulusan yang unggul secara teknis, bermoral tinggi, dan kompetitif di tingkat nasional maupun internasional. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan studi dokumen. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa Kurikulum Merdeka berfokus pada pendekatan pembelajaran berbasis kompetensi yang mendorong kreativitas dan kemandirian peserta didik, sementara Kurikulum Daarut Tauhiid menekankan pembentukan karakter baik dan kuat sesuai nilai-nilai pesantren. Penggunaan teknologi seperti Learning Management System (LMS) mempermudah pelaksanaan pembelajaran yang efisien dan interaktif. Integrasi kurikulum ini memungkinkan peserta didik unggul secara teknis dan memiliki karakter yang kuat. Kombinasi antara pendidikan vokasi, nilai-nilai pesantren, dan teknologi digital mampu menghasilkan lulusan yang kompetitif secara nasional dan internasional, serta bermoral tinggi.

**Kata Kunci:** kompetensi peserta didik; kurikulum pesantren; pengembangan kurikulum; strategi pembelajaran

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Currently, education in Indonesia faces various complex challenges in the midst of globalization and the rapid advancement of technology. As a country with a large and diverse population, Indonesia is confronted with issues of equitable access to education, the quality of learning, and the relevance of curricula to the needs of the labor market. According to reports from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, there remains a disparity in student learning outcomes between urban and rural areas. In addition, Indonesia faces challenges in improving teacher competencies and adopting digital technologies to support the teaching and learning process. Teaching methods that rely heavily on abstract concepts and lectures often make academic material less accessible and more difficult to understand. Many teachers pay insufficient attention to students' cognitive development, in other words, they fail to implement meaningful instruction (Mirdad, 2020). The limited variety of teaching methods further hinders students' learning motivation, resulting in mechanistic and rote-based learning patterns. Technology, however, provides opportunities for schools to transform curricula into more dynamic frameworks tailored to individual needs and focused on developing skills that are relevant to contemporary developments (Liriwati, 2023).

Education in Indonesia has undergone significant development since the era of independence, yet it continues to face numerous challenges to this day. According to data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, school participation rates in Indonesia have steadily increased, particularly at the primary and secondary levels. However, the quality of education remains a major concern, with the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) reporting that Indonesian students' proficiency in reading, mathematics, and science is below the global average. Moreover, disparities in access to education between urban and rural areas, as well as between high- and low-income groups, present issues requiring serious attention. Various policies, such as the Indonesia Smart Program (PIP) and the Merdeka Belajar initiative, have been introduced to improve both access to and the quality of education. Nevertheless, the implementation of these policies often encounters obstacles, including inadequate infrastructure and unequal distribution of funding. Therefore, education in Indonesia requires stronger synergy among the government, communities, and the private sector to establish an inclusive, high-quality, and sustainable education system. This underscores the importance of an adaptive curriculum in preparing students to face both global and local challenges (Nadira et al., 2022).

The Merdeka Curriculum represents a strategic initiative undertaken by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology to address these challenges. The rapid advancement of technology demands that individuals keep pace with such progress (Karim et al., 2022a). This curriculum is designed to provide educators with flexibility in selecting teaching approaches that align with students' needs and the local context. The Merdeka Curriculum encourages teachers to create more interactive and relevant learning experiences, enabling students to fully develop their potential under the core principle of student-centered learning. The flexible nature of the curriculum allows teachers to adopt more learner-focused instructional methods, which can enhance both learning outcomes and

students' motivation (Agnevia et al., 2025). Furthermore, the Merdeka Curriculum is expected to improve the quality of education, particularly in the digital era. It emphasizes not only content but also learning processes that are more adaptive and responsive to students' needs. Within this framework, differentiated instruction becomes a key strategy for addressing individual differences, including learning styles, interests, and abilities. This approach enables each student to learn in the most effective way for them, thereby making the learning process more meaningful. In addition, the curriculum integrates character and personality values, ensuring that students not only acquire academic knowledge but also cultivate positive character development (Kusumawardani et al., 2022).

Daarut Tauhiid Vocational High School (SMK Daarut Tauhiid) implements the Merdeka Curriculum, which grants teachers the flexibility to design learning experiences that meet the needs of their students. This curriculum replaces the conventional syllabus with Learning Objectives Pathways (Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran/ATP), which emphasize clear learning goals and expected outcomes. The Merdeka Curriculum demonstrates that a flexible curriculum is intended to empower both teachers and students to consciously take control of the ways they teach and learn (Hartoyo et al., 2023). As an educational innovation in Indonesia, the Merdeka Curriculum provides educators with the flexibility to design instruction according to students' needs. It emphasizes a learner-centered approach, highlighting differentiated instruction that considers students' interests, learning styles, and individual potential. By replacing the traditional syllabus, the ATP ensures that learning outcomes are more relevant and meaningful. Instructional methods such as project-based learning and problem-based learning engage students in active, creative, and critical thinking processes to solve real-world problems. This flexibility fosters more effective education in preparing students to face the challenges of the workforce and modern life. Moreover, the Merdeka Curriculum supports the strengthening of student character through the integration of local and national values, making it more holistic and inclusive (Nuraini et al., 2023).

The integration of Daarut Tauhiid's distinctive curriculum, which prioritizes character development based on Islamic values, adds an additional dimension to education at SMK Daarut Tauhiid. This approach aims to produce graduates who not only possess practical skills but also demonstrate strong character, integrity, and noble morality. The development of a religious curriculum, as well as the integration of educational practices with Islamic values, plays a crucial role in shaping students' religiosity, helping them to become responsible individuals with good moral conduct in society (Susilana et al., 2020). Therefore, education at SMK Daarut Tauhiid does not merely emphasize practical skills but also focuses on nurturing ethical character and leadership. In addition to its innovative curricular approach, SMK Daarut Tauhiid also leverages digital technology through the use of a Learning Management System (LMS). The adoption of this technology supports learner-centered instruction and enhances interaction between teachers and students. A literature study highlights that the use of LMS can strengthen student engagement in learning and facilitate easier access to instructional materials (Ambarwati et al., 2022). This is particularly important in supporting project-based and problem-based learning methods, where students are expected to be active and think critically in seeking solutions.

There remains a gap in research examining the integration of the Merdeka Curriculum and Daarut Tauhiid's distinctive curriculum with respect to students' character development. This study offers a new scholarly contribution by exploring in greater depth curriculum innovation

and instructional strategies at SMK Daarut Tauhiid, which combine both curricula along with Islamic character values. Unlike previous studies, this research holistically examines how the integration of these two curricula influences learning and student character, while also assessing its effectiveness in preparing students for an increasingly competitive workforce. The study will discuss several aspects of curriculum implementation at SMK Daarut Tauhiid. First, the curriculum at this school not only refers to the Merdeka Curriculum but also integrates Islamic values through Daarut Tauhiid's distinctive curriculum, providing a strong foundation for the learning process. Furthermore, curriculum development and revisions are carried out in a structured manner involving various stakeholders to ensure that the curriculum remains relevant to students' needs and the demands of the labor market.

The challenges encountered in implementing this curriculum include difficulties in adapting teaching methods and fostering student engagement, as well as the solutions applied to address these issues, such as teacher training and the enhancement of learning facilities. Finally, the learning process is designed to be enjoyable and interactive, with the primary focus of this study being to increase student engagement and create meaningful learning experiences. Therefore, this research aims to provide in-depth insights into curriculum innovation and instructional strategies at SMK Daarut Tauhiid, while also evaluating their impact on the development of students' competencies and character. The findings of this study are expected to offer valuable perspectives for educational development in other institutions and contribute to efforts in improving the overall quality of education in Indonesia. Through the various innovations implemented, SMK Daarut Tauhiid strives to create learning experiences that are engaging, interactive, and relevant to students' needs.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Curriculum Implementation in Schools**

The curriculum in education plays a strategic role in shaping students' competencies in alignment with the demands of society and the labor market. A curriculum must be designed not only to address cognitive aspects but also to foster students' character. In this regard, the integration of character values through faith-based education can serve as a solution for cultivating a generation with integrity. This approach is relevant to the efforts of SMK Daarut Tauhiid in combining the Merdeka Curriculum with Daarut Tauhiid's distinctive curriculum, which emphasizes the development of Islamic character. In the context of curriculum implementation, the success of curriculum policy is highly influenced by the role of school principals and the ability of teachers to align the curriculum with students' needs (Qodratullah, 2021).

At SMK Daarut Tauhiid, the Merdeka Curriculum provides flexibility that enables teachers to design project-based and problem-solving learning activities. This approach not only enhances student engagement but also sharpens their critical thinking skills, in line with the objectives of vocational education, which aim to prepare students for the workforce. Moreover, the integration of an Islamic values-based curriculum strengthens the character development of students. A curriculum model that combines pesantren values within the framework of the national curriculum has proven effective in shaping students who possess both academic competence and noble character. At SMK Daarut Tauhiid, this strategy is

realized through the Learning Objectives Pathway (Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran/ATP), which emphasizes not only academic achievement but also character formation, thereby making the curriculum more meaningful and relevant (Nuraini et al., 2023).

## **Curriculum Development and Revision**

Curriculum development that integrates technical skills and character formation is crucial in producing graduates who not only master competencies but also uphold good moral values. Holistic education, which encompasses intellectual, emotional, social, and moral aspects of students, has increasingly gained attention in educational literature. Character development must become a central focus of the curriculum so that students are well-prepared to face challenges at the global level (Cantika et al., 2022). This approach is reflected in the curriculum at SMK Daarut Tauhiid, which combines the Merdeka Curriculum with pesantren values to cultivate students who are disciplined, responsible, and morally upright. In addition, the utilization of technology such as Learning Management Systems (LMS) accelerates educational transformation by facilitating online learning.

Teaching methods that employ project-based and problem-based approaches are also implemented to develop critical thinking skills as well as collaborative abilities. Project-Based Learning (PBL) has been proven effective in providing more meaningful learning experiences and enhancing students' speaking abilities alongside various other instructional strategies (Karim et al., 2022b; Mahendra et al., 2023). The involvement of industry in assessing students' competencies through direct competency testing is one of the key innovations that ensures students' readiness to enter the workforce. Therefore, what is most crucial at the school level is how the curriculum is implemented and aligned with instructional practices. Schools hold the authority to adapt their curricula according to school conditions, student characteristics, regional potential, community needs, and the local environment. A curriculum approach that integrates character, technology, and industry has proven effective in producing graduates who are ready to compete at the global level (Azalia et al., 2023).

## **Scientific Development Procedure**

Curriculum development is carried out in a structured manner, generally beginning at the start of the academic year and designed to be completed within 2–3 months. Thereafter, the curriculum is routinely evaluated at the end of the academic year, with flexibility for revisions at any time to maintain its relevance and sustainability. In this process, the school committee plays an active role at every stage to ensure that the program runs as planned. The learning approach is also student-centered, with the curriculum designed to support character development while simultaneously helping students achieve their educational goals. Student-centered learning emphasizes the active involvement of students in the learning process, with teachers serving as facilitators. This method is intended to foster the development of students' character while supporting them in reaching their educational objectives (Yusnita & Muqowim, 2020). SMK Daarut Tauhiid also establishes close collaboration with industry partners, who not only serve as sites for practical training but also actively participate in various activities such as teaching as guest lecturers, providing hands-on training, and organizing industry-based classes. This enables students to gain real-world experiences

aligned with workforce demands. The school's curriculum development team is likewise responsible for designing concrete programs based on Competency Standards (Standar Kompetensi/SK), which are consistently monitored and adapted to meet evolving needs.

This school trains students to acquire global competencies, including through the use of English and Arabic in field practice. Such efforts provide students with an additional advantage to compete in the international labor market. Another innovation implemented is the validation of students' work by industry practitioners, such as in the Broadcasting and Visual Communication Design departments, where students receive direct feedback to improve their quality. All of these initiatives reflect SMK Daarut Tauhiid's commitment to continuous innovation. These innovations are intended to create positive change in support of achieving educational objectives. SMK Daarut Tauhiid not only ensures the delivery of quality learning but also prepares students to face the challenges of the modern workforce. This model of curriculum development can serve as an inspiration for other educational institutions. The innovations include practitioner-led learning, project-based learning, and the integration of the Merdeka Curriculum with pesantren-based curricula (Anwar et al., 2022).

### **Instructional Methods in the Merdeka Curriculum**

Learning designed to be enjoyable aims to create interactive and relevant experiences that enhance student engagement. Within the Merdeka Curriculum, differentiated instruction serves as a key strategy to address the individual needs of students, such as learning styles, interests, and abilities (Gusteti & Neviyarni, 2022). Furthermore, the use of technology, such as software applications known as Learning Management Systems (LMS), is utilized to develop online learning environments (Bradley, 2021). At SMK Daarut Tauhiid, this technology is applied in project-based learning and robotics training, which not only enhances students' technical skills but also creates relevant and engaging learning experiences (Putra et al., 2023). Through this approach, students are better prepared to face the challenges of the modern technological era. The Merdeka Curriculum provides teachers with the flexibility to design learning that adapts to students' needs, making it more inclusive and meaningful. This approach, combined with technology and innovative instructional methods, enables SMK Daarut Tauhiid to create enjoyable learning experiences, increase student motivation, and strengthen their critical thinking skills and character. The integration of these strategies supports the school's goal of producing graduates who are both academically competent and strong in character (Azzahra et al., 2022).

## **METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to provide an in-depth exploration of innovations in curriculum development and instructional strategies at SMK Daarut Tauhiid Boarding School. The research was conducted at SMK Daarut Tauhiid Boarding School, a faith-based educational institution with a boarding system that emphasizes vocational education. The research subjects consisted of the curriculum development team and relevant teachers..

Data were collected using three primary techniques: interviews, field observations, and document analysis. The interviews were conducted with the curriculum development team and accounting subject teachers. Field observations were carried out to directly examine the learning process, including the integration of modern technologies such as the Learning Management System (LMS). Meanwhile, document analysis focused on curriculum frameworks, syllabi, lesson plans (RPP), and reference books that support the teaching and learning process, in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the policies and practices implemented in the school. The collected data were then analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved identifying key themes from interview transcripts, observation notes, and relevant documents.

The analysis process was conducted iteratively, with the researcher consistently referring back to the data to ensure that the findings accurately reflected the realities observed in the field. Through this analysis, the study sought to identify models of curriculum innovation, challenges in implementation, and the strategies employed to achieve the intended educational objectives. In the discussion, data analysis is presented descriptively, outlining the findings according to the identified categories. These include the effectiveness of the implemented curriculum, the responses of students and teachers to instructional innovations, and the contribution of digital technologies to the teaching and learning process. The researcher also examines how the integration of the Merdeka Curriculum with the Daarut Tauhiid Special Curriculum influences students' character formation and competency development, as well as how implementation challenges can be addressed through the identified strategies. The findings of this study are expected to provide new insights for educational development in other institutions and contribute to broader efforts to enhance the quality of education in Indonesia.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Integration of the Merdeka Curriculum and the Daarut Tauhiid Curriculum**

SMK Daarut Tauhiid Boarding School has implemented the Merdeka Curriculum for the past three years, with its application now relatively well established. Within this curriculum, the traditional syllabus has been replaced by the *Learning Objectives Flow* (Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran/ATP), which outlines the learning content, learning objectives (TP), learning outcomes (CP), and competencies to be achieved by students. In Grade 10, the primary focus is on equipping students with the foundational skills they need, while in Grades 11 and 12, students begin to concentrate on their respective areas of specialization. Enhancing teachers' competence in developing lesson plans (RPP) is crucial for achieving the intended curriculum goals, and continuous mentoring is considered a key factor for success. New elective subjects are introduced in Grades 11 and 12, such as Entrepreneurship Education (*Pendidikan Kewirausahaan/PKK*). At Grade 10, this subject emphasizes the basics of entrepreneurship, while in Grades 11 and 12, it is further deepened according to the students' chosen fields of specialization. Through this competency-based approach, SMK Daarut Tauhiid seeks to produce graduates who are not only skilled in vocational domains but also capable of applying their knowledge in real-world professional contexts. The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes a scientific approach to learning, encouraging students to actively

construct knowledge through observation, inquiry, information gathering, communication, and association (Rusmita, 2024).

In addition to the Merdeka Curriculum, SMK Daarut Tauhiid also implements a distinctive framework known as the Daarut Tauhiid Curriculum. As a pesantren-based school, this curriculum is specifically designed to reflect the institution's identity and the values rooted in its boarding school tradition. The integration of the Merdeka Curriculum with the Daarut Tauhiid Curriculum aims not only to align with national education policies but also to preserve the school's unique religious-based character. By combining formal education with pesantren values, the integrated curriculum seeks to holistically shape students, balancing the development of academic skills with character formation (Qodratullah, 2021). The Daarut Tauhiid Curriculum places strong emphasis on character education, with the goal of producing graduates who are not only competent in their respective fields of expertise but also morally upright and resilient. This vision is reflected in the school's tagline, "*Baku: Baik dan Kuat*" ("Good and Strong"), which encapsulates two central aspects the school aims to cultivate in its students: noble character and the ability to persevere in the face of challenges. Well-structured curriculum development, therefore, must prioritize clear educational objectives, particularly in fostering a balanced growth of students' character and professional competence (Nuraini et al., 2023).

The integration of the Merdeka Curriculum with the Daarut Tauhiid Curriculum serves not only to comply with governmental mandates but also to reinforce pesantren identity and values within the context of vocational education. With its student-centered approach, the Merdeka Curriculum trains students to become more independent, creative, and prepared to apply their skills in the workplace. Meanwhile, the integration of pesantren-based values with the national curriculum enables an educational model that is not only academically sound but also strong in character formation (Kusumawati, 2024). In contrast, the Daarut Tauhiid Curriculum places its primary emphasis on character development, which is regarded as essential for both professional life and daily conduct. The intended character formation encompasses two dimensions: *noble character* (*baik*), which includes sincerity, honesty, and responsibility; and *strong character* (*kuat*), which comprises discipline, courage, and resilience in facing challenges. Differentiated learning is employed to facilitate the optimal development of both skills and character among students (Gusteti & Neviyarni, 2022). The reinforcement of these two dimensions—*baik* and *kuat*—constitutes the foundation instilled in SMK Daarut Tauhiid students, preparing them to enter the workforce with integrity and mental fortitude.

In the current digital era, SMK Daarut Tauhiid has also implemented technology-based learning through a self-developed Learning Management System (LMS). This platform enables teachers to upload learning materials, provide quizzes, and conduct examinations in a fully paperless format. The integration of pesantren values with formal education creates a more holistic learning system, combining academic instruction with religious education. The LMS further facilitates teacher–student interaction while allowing for more efficient monitoring of students' learning progress. At present, SMK Daarut Tauhiid is developing a more secure examination management system equipped with features that restrict students' access solely to the examination page, thereby maintaining integrity and honesty during

assessments. Teachers play a pivotal role in advancing the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly in facilitating competency-based learning supported by technology (Anggraini et al., 2022). By combining the Merdeka Curriculum, the distinctive pesantren-based curriculum, and digital technology, SMK Daarut Tauhiid seeks to produce graduates who are not only work-ready but also morally grounded, in line with the pesantren's educational philosophy that emphasizes balanced character formation and academic competence.

### **Curriculum Development and Revision**

SMK Daarut Tauhiid establishes strong collaboration with industry partners, who not only serve as venues for student internships but also play an active role in teaching as guest lecturers, delivering hands-on training, and organizing industry-based classes. This partnership provides students with authentic learning experiences aligned with workplace demands. The school's curriculum development team is responsible for designing concrete programs based on established Competency Standards (SK), which are consistently monitored and adapted to meet evolving needs. Curriculum development and revision at SMK Daarut Tauhiid are conducted comprehensively, aiming to meet the requirements of modern society while preserving traditional pesantren values. The implemented curriculum integrates the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes student-centered learning approaches. This approach fosters creativity, independence, and professional skills, while also embedding the school's distinctive pesantren curriculum that instills moral values such as honesty, responsibility, and humility. The ultimate goal of this integrated approach is to produce graduates who not only possess competitive technical competencies but also embody strong moral character (Cantika et al., 2022).

In its implementation, digital technology plays a pivotal role in the curriculum through the integration of a Learning Management System (LMS), making the learning process more efficient, interactive, and engaging. The LMS facilitates teachers in managing every aspect of instructional delivery, ranging from student registration to the storage of test results. It also enables teachers to receive assignments digitally and maintain continuous communication with students (Amaliyah & Darmawan, 2024). Furthermore, the LMS supports the administration of learning materials, assessments, and assignments in an online format, thereby providing convenience for both teachers and learners. In addition to technological integration, project-based learning and problem-based learning methods are implemented to equip students with the ability to face real-world situations. Curriculum revision is routinely conducted through annual evaluations involving various stakeholders, including the curriculum team, school management, parents, and industry partners. These revisions are designed to ensure that the curriculum remains relevant to student needs and contemporary developments. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, significant changes were made to support online learning through the utilization of the LMS. Minor revisions are also carried out regularly, such as the integration of the *Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project* (P5) with local content and digital literacy. The annual evaluation outlined in the *Rencana Kerja Tahunan* (RKT) further ensures that the curriculum consistently aligns with the evolving needs of students and the demands of the labor market.

Another innovation in curriculum development is the involvement of industry partners in validating students' competencies. Industry practitioners conduct competency assessments to ensure that students' skills are aligned with current professional demands. These partners also provide insights into the latest industrial developments, thereby ensuring the curriculum remains up to date. Parents are also actively engaged in regular evaluations, offering valuable feedback to improve learning programs. Another core component is character education. Pesantren values such as sincerity, discipline, and responsibility are integrated with technical learning to foster students' moral and professional balance. This character formation is embedded within academic activities, such as the *Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project* (P5), which cultivates nationalism, creativity, and collaboration in students' daily lives (Cantika et al., 2022). The strength of SMK Daarut Tauhiid's curriculum lies in its flexibility and innovative nature. It is adaptable to dynamic circumstances—such as the COVID-19 pandemic—while also responsive to contemporary trends, including digital transformation and character reinforcement. The integration of vocational education, character formation, and technology produces graduates who excel not only in technical expertise but also in moral integrity, making them relevant in the modern era and competitive at both national and international levels. This approach demonstrates that education can uphold traditional values while simultaneously embracing technological advancement and societal change.

## **Curriculum**

## **Development**

## **Procedure**

At SMK Daarut Tauhiid, the curriculum development process begins at the start of the academic year and is completed efficiently within two to three months. Once the curriculum has been developed, programs are implemented as planned and subsequently evaluated at the end of the academic year to assess their effectiveness and the achievement of predetermined objectives. If shortcomings or areas for improvement are identified, revisions are carried out immediately rather than postponed until the following year. This approach ensures that programs continuously evolve and deliver optimal benefits for students (Piliano et al., 2023). In addition, the school committee plays an active role throughout the entire process, not only at the beginning or end, to guarantee that all activities proceed as planned and generate maximum impact. Student involvement is also emphasized in every learning activity, ensuring that learners remain the central priority. Ultimately, the curriculum functions as a key element in shaping students' character and supporting the achievement of educational goals (Kusumawardani et al., 2022).

Collaboration with industry partners is also a crucial factor in curriculum development. Industry partners are not only visited by students but are also actively involved in various activities, such as organizing industry-based classes, sharing professional experiences as guest lecturers, and providing hands-on training. Through this collaboration, students gain not only theoretical knowledge but also practical experiences that are directly relevant to the professional world, better preparing them to face future challenges. The curriculum development team is responsible for identifying curricular needs that align with both educational objectives and student requirements. This process includes the preparation of formal documents, such as Competency Standards (SK), as well as the development of

concrete programs that can be systematically monitored and effectively managed. With consistent monitoring, issues arising during implementation can be promptly identified and addressed, thereby positioning the curriculum as a dynamic and relevant framework to support quality learning.

As part of its recent curriculum development innovations, SMK Daarut Tauhiid has implemented validation sessions in two major areas. First, in the Broadcasting and Visual Communication Design programs, students are assigned to design documentation and program productions aligned with industry needs. Their works are directly assessed by industry practitioners, providing valuable feedback that enhances their quality and strengthens the connection between education and the professional sector. Second, validation is conducted through field practice for 12th-grade students, during which they are required to use English and Arabic throughout the process. This approach not only refines their technical skills but also develops their ability to communicate in international languages. As a result, students are prepared not only to face technical challenges but also to acquire global competencies that serve as their advantage in the workforce. These innovations reflect SMK Daarut Tauhiid's commitment to continuously enhancing the quality of learning, providing students with the best possible experiences, and ensuring that they acquire skills that align with the demands of the modern labor market.

## **Discussion**

This study demonstrates that the application of various learning models at SMK Daarut Tauhiid, such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and project-based learning, has a significant positive impact on students' motivation and learning outcomes. One of the main benefits of these approaches lies in the improvement of students' critical and creative thinking skills. By engaging in activities relevant to their areas of expertise, students not only acquire theoretical knowledge but also apply it within real-world contexts. This highlights that problem-based learning enhances students' active participation, which in turn contributes to better learning achievements (Salam et al., 2022). Furthermore, the integration of religious education within the curriculum provides significant benefits for students' character development. Religious teachings, when embedded in problem-based learning, help students gain a deeper understanding of Islamic values and apply them in their daily lives (Rohman, 2022). As a result, students do not only progress academically but also develop into individuals with strong moral character, which represents one of the primary educational objectives at SMK Daarut Tauhiid.

The integration of technology in the learning process is also a crucial aspect in supporting the effectiveness of teaching and learning activities. The use of Learning Management Systems (LMS) and other digital platforms, such as Quizizz and Kahoot, not only makes the learning process more engaging but also provides flexibility for students to access materials anytime and anywhere. This demonstrates that technology can enhance learning effectiveness while offering a more modern learning experience (Salsabila & Agustian, 2021). Furthermore, the implementation of differentiated learning at the school highlights its commitment to meeting the diverse needs of every student, including those with special

educational needs. Individualized learning approaches have become increasingly emphasized in contemporary education systems. Each student possesses a unique learning style, including slow learners who often require different instructional strategies compared to other students (Wahyuningsih & Suranti, 2023). Such an approach not only creates a more supportive and comfortable learning environment but also encourages students to actively participate in the learning process.

## **CONCLUSION**

The implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* combined with the distinctive Daarut Tauhiid curriculum at SMK Daarut Tauhiid has successfully created an integrated education system that merges academic development with Islamic character formation. The utilization of technology supports innovative teaching methods and collaboration with industry partners. Equally important is the application of diverse and responsive learning models that integrate various approaches, including problem- and project-based learning, religious education, technology integration, and differentiated instruction. Through this approach, SMK Daarut Tauhiid has succeeded in providing a high-quality and inclusive learning experience. This not only supports students' academic growth but also nurtures their moral character, preparing them as ethical individuals capable of facing real-world challenges. The curriculum enhances not only students' technical competencies but also their moral values. Despite several challenges such as teaching adaptation and student engagement, initiatives such as teacher training and facility improvements have offered significant solutions. Continuous long-term evaluation, strengthened collaboration with industry, and optimized use of technology remain essential to ensuring the sustainability and relevance of the curriculum in the modern era.

## **AUTHOR'S NOTE**

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