

From Classroom to Community: Strengthening Economic Understanding through Problem-Based Learning

Edi Sutrisno*, Taufikin

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kudus, Indonesia

Email : edisutrisnospi@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

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*Fazlur Rahman,
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* *Edi Sutrisno*

This study aims to analyze the implementation model of Fazlur Rahman's thought in the development of modern Islamic vocational education. The primary focus of this study is how the integration between general science and religious science is realized systematically through curriculum, learning, and school culture. A descriptive qualitative approach is used, with data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The results of the study show that SMK NU Gembong has successfully applied Rahman's idea of integrating knowledge by removing the dichotomy between religious and general knowledge. This merger is evident in the curriculum, which includes tafsir, hadith, nahwu, fiqh, and Ke-NU-an, alongside vocational lessons in computers, automotive, and accounting. In addition, Rahman's concept of double movement is adapted in the learning of tafsir and hadith, where students are trained to understand the historical context of verses and relate them to modern reality. This implementation not only strengthens students' technical competence but also fosters moral and spiritual character rooted in Islamic values. This research emphasizes that Islamic vocational education can serve as a laboratory for integrating knowledge relevant to modern needs while maintaining the integrity of Islamic values.

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INTRODUCTION

Vocational education in Indonesia faces complex challenges in balancing technical-professional demands with the strengthening of religious values and character. According to BPS data, the open unemployment rate for vocational school graduates remains relatively high compared to other levels (BPS, 2025). On the other hand, religious and educational institutions note that the dichotomy between general (vocational) science and religious science remains the main obstacle to realizing a complete Islamic vocational school (Rodliyah et al., 2024; Rohman et al., 2024; Shaikh & Alam Kazmi, 2022).

In this context, religious-based institutions such as Islamic boarding schools and vocational schools have a strategic opportunity to address these challenges by fostering integration between technical competence and spiritual values. Fazlur Rahman's thoughts, especially the idea of integrating knowledge or Islamising knowledge, are an important theoretical foundation for the framework (Ahmad, 2023; Shabbir et al., 2022; Usman et al., 2022). Rahman emphasized that world science and religious science are not two separate domains, but can be united in a holistic Islamic epistemology (Waghid & Davids, 2018). Therefore, empirical observation of Islamic vocational schools that successfully combine religious and vocational content is critical, primarily to address the needs of graduates who are technically competent and grounded in Islamic values.

A review of the international and national literature shows three main themes relevant to the integration between general vocational and religious sciences in Islamic vocational institutions. First, the theme of internalizing Islamic values in the vocational school curriculum shows that pesantren-based institutions in Indonesia combine the national curriculum with local religious content to shape students' character (Abu Yasid Albustomi & Hefniy, 2024; Husnul Khotimah et al., 2024; Yulia Rahmi Ilmani & Hasanah, 2024). Second, the theme of integrative pedagogy in Islamic education affirms Fazlur Rahman's view of the Double Movement, namely, understanding the historical context of revelation and applying it contextually in modern life as the foundation of critical and relevant Islamic education (Sihab & Rozi, 2025). Third, the challenge of integrating science and religion shows that although many Islamic schools claim to have implemented integration, the practice is often symbolic or partial, leaving a scientific dichotomy in place (Sahil et al., 2024). An analysis of these studies reveals that most studies still focus on public secondary schools or madrasas, while studies that examine in depth the context of Islamic vocational schools are limited, and few explicitly link Fazlur Rahman's theoretical framework to the practice of scientific integration in Islamic vocational education.

Based on the review, there is a significant research gap. Although the integration of general and religious sciences and Fazlur Rahman's ideas has been widely discussed in the context of madrasas or Islamic higher education, empirical studies exploring its implementation in Islamic-based vocational schools remain limited. In particular, there has been little research that uses a qualitative approach to explore how the interaction among vocational curriculum, religious content, and teacher-student practice occurs in the context of Islamic vocational institutions and how these implications affect the development of graduates who are "technically capable as well as moral integrity".

The novelty of this research lies in (a) the focus on modern Islamic vocational school institutions in the Indonesian context, (b) the application of Fazlur Rahman's theoretical framework—including the concept of knowledge integration and the double movement approach—to the analysis of Islamic vocational learning practices, and (c) the use of qualitative methodologies of case study design that allow for an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms, perspectives of actors (principals, vocational teachers, religious teachers, students) and local contextual. Thus, this research can expand the literature on the integration of sciences and religions in Islamic education and make a new contribution to the development of a cohesive and adaptive Islamic vocational education model.

This research has the following specific objectives: (1) To describe how Islamic values and integration between general (vocational) and religious sciences are internalized in the curriculum and learning practices in Islamic-based vocational schools. (2) Identify the pattern of interaction between actors (school principals, vocational teachers, religious teachers, students) and the dynamics of the implementation of such integration in the setting of modern Islamic vocational schools. (3) Formulate a conceptual model of the integration of general-religious knowledge in Islamic vocational education that can be used as a reference for the development of similar institutions. This research is academically relevant because it fills a gap in the empirical literature on Islamic vocational education and examines the relevance of Fazlur Rahman's thought in a new context. In practice, the research results serve as a guideline for policymakers and practitioners of Islamic vocational schools in designing curricula, learning strategies, and school management that are adaptive to the challenges of the times.

The primary focus of this research is to understand the socio-cultural and pedagogical processes of the formation of integration between vocational studies and religious subjects in Islamic vocational schools—how the actors understand, practice, and evaluate such integration; how the curriculum and learning activities are designed to realize an integrative vision; and how actual challenges and opportunities arise in the process. The central argument is that successful Islamic vocational education is not just a matter of teaching technical skills or religious memorization, but of forming educational institutions that operate within a holistic Islamic epistemology—in line with Fazlur Rahman's thought—that then produce graduates who are technically superior and strong in grades. The research, using a qualitative case-study approach, will explore the experiences of principals, teachers, and students, translate the curriculum and activities into daily practice, and display their meanings and macro-implications. Next, research will be discussed in the methods section.

The urgency of this study continues to increase in line with rapid changes in the world of work, technological developments, and shifts in socio-cultural values that demand that vocational education graduates be not only skilled but also adaptable and valuable. This study paves the way for further research to compare integration models across various Islamic vocational institutions and to explore the long-term outcomes for employability and student character.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive design to examine in depth the practice of integrating general science and religious science in the Islamic education curriculum at SMK NU Gembong (Ellis & Hart, 2023; Morgenstern et al., 2021; Villamin et al., 2025). This design was chosen because it can holistically describe the school's educational context, including the values that underlie it and the experiences of educational actors within it. This research was carried out in an Islamic-based vocational education setting, namely SMK NU Gembong, which consistently applies the values of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah in its curriculum system. The research design is a case study because the primary focus is the in-depth examination of one specific case: the model of integration of the modern Islamic curriculum based on the thought of Fazlur Rahman (Cleland et al., 2021; Cole, 2024; Wohlin & Rainer, 2022). The research approach is phenomenological, with a theoretical basis in Fazlur Rahman's critical hermeneutics, particularly the concept of the double movement, which enables researchers to interpret contemporary Islamic educational practices contextually and reflectively.

Table 1. Research Informant

Name of the Informant	Role	Data Contribution
Drs. Sukahar, MM	Principal	Conception of integration of curriculum, managerial values, and school programs
KH. Zubaidi	Guru Nahwu	Nahwu Alfiyyah: Teaching and Strengthening Islamic Linguistic Competence
Ust. M. Amin	Teacher of Tafsir and Hadith	Contextual tafsir and hadith learning practice
Mrs. Fatimah, S.Pd.	Vocational Teacher (Computer and Automotive)	Integration of Islamic ethics in computer and automotive lessons
Ahmad (Grade XII student)	Student	Experience as a learner in an integrated education model

Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with school principals, religious teachers, vocational teachers, and students to explore their perceptions of the integration of Islamic science in vocational education. Observations were made on teaching and learning activities, including the "Ngaji Bareng" activity, to understand real practices in the field. Documentation in the form of syllabus, curriculum, and activity reports is used as supporting data. Researchers play a key role in data collection and interpretation and are active participants in the observation process. The research was carried out at SMK NU Gembong, Gembong District, Pati Regency. Table 1 presents the list of informants involved in the study.

Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, which included three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification (Al Fath et al., 2024; Cabello et al., 2021; Jannah et al., 2023). Data reduction involves sorting and grouping information by main themes such as curriculum integration, double movement practices, and the role of teachers. The reduced data is then presented in the form of narratives and tables to facilitate contextual interpretation. Conclusions are drawn repeatedly and reflectively, referring to Fazlur Rahman's Islamic education theory as well as empirical realities in the field. This model was chosen because it is flexible in capturing the dynamics of the educational process and supports a deep understanding of the social meaning of integrative practices. The credibility of the analysis is maintained by involving peer debriefing, cross-checking, and the use of direct quotes from informants as authentic evidence (Matrook et al., 2024; Muzingili et al., 2025; Siteo et al., 2025). With this approach, the researcher can construct an academic narrative that is not only descriptive but also interpretive of the development of modern Islamic education at the vocational level.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Integration of General Sciences and Religion in the Curriculum

One prominent approach to developing Islamic education at SMK NU Gembong is integrating vocational and religious lessons. This approach is the answer to the challenge posed by the dichotomy between general science and religious science, a fundamental problem in the Islamic education system. Fazlur Rahman's thinking served as the conceptual foundation for uniting these two scientific domains, emphasizing that world science and religious science are not contradictory entities but an integral part in forming a perfect human being. At

SMK NU Gembong, the merger is not limited to discourse; it is implemented in the curriculum through the presence of subjects such as tafsir, fiqh, hadith, nahwu, and Ke-NU-an within vocational lessons. This step shows awareness that technical skills must align with the strengthening of Islamic-based spiritual and moral values.

The policy of combining vocational lessons with religious materials is based on the school's philosophical view of the importance of forming students who are not only technically skilled but also spiritually strong. The Principal of SMK NU Gembong explained, "As a vocational school based on Nahdlatul Ulama, we realize that students must be prepared not only for the world of work, but also to understand Islamic values in depth. Therefore, we set the lessons of tafsir, nahwu, fiqh, hadith, and Ke-NU-an as part of the mandatory local content. This becomes a spiritual foundation that supports their vocational competence, so that when they enter society, they are not uprooted from the roots of Islam."

In line with that, one of the religious teachers conveyed the role of this integration in learning practices, "We do not teach religious material as a mere formality. After the main lesson hours, we guide students to understand tafsir, fiqh, and even scientific tools, such as nahwu, through a contextual approach. This is not just a lesson, but a space to form character, build a critical way of thinking, and connect the teachings of Islam with their daily reality."

Based on the informants' accounts, this integrative approach is implemented through a curriculum consciously designed with students' spiritual needs in mind in the vocational environment. The principal's commitment demonstrates that this strategy is grounded not only in religious values but also in managerial awareness, producing well-rounded graduates with work competence and moral integrity. Religious teachers act as an epistemological bridge between the world of classical Islamic science and the needs of modern life. This entire system aligns with the basic principles of Islamic education, as outlined by Fazlur Rahman, which emphasize integrating spirituality and reason as a modern approach to education. Thus, SMK NU Gembong can be seen as a real embodiment of adaptive, directed Islamic education practices.

The integration between general science and religion at SMK NU Gembong is carried out systemically. In the official curriculum, religious lessons such as tafsir al-Ibriz, fiqh, hadith of the Prophet, nahwu, and Ke-NU-an are included as mandatory local content in the learning structure. In addition, the "Ngaji Bareng" program, held twice a month to study the Prophet's Hadith, demonstrates the continuity between the formal curriculum and spiritual activities. The teaching of Nahwu Alfiyyah also supports this approach as a scientific tool, aiming to equip students with the ability to understand Islamic

texts critically. This learning practice is also incorporated into vocational subjects by instilling Islamic values of work ethics. Thus, the entire educational ecosystem at this school is directed to form technically capable and spiritually strong students. Based on this, an integrative picture between religious and vocational education at SMK NU Gembong is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Overview of Integrated Islamic Education at SMK NU Gembong

Educational Component	Specific Implementation	Stakeholder Involvement	Outcome Observed
Islamic Curriculum Design	Tafsir, Hadith, Nahwu, Ke-NU-an as local content	Principal, Religious Teacher	Strengthening of Islamic literacy and doctrinal consistency
Ritual-Based Reinforcement	Weekly "Ngaji Bareng" with Hadith Nabawi	Principal, all students	Improved student engagement and character alignment
Technical-Ethical Synergy	Integration of Islamic ethics in subjects like computers, automotive	Vocational teacher	Formation of ethically aware and socially responsible technicians
Language for Faith Literacy	Arabic grammar (Nahwu Alfiyyah) taught to decode Qur'ānic messages	Teacher of tafsir, teacher of Arabic language	Increased ability to critically engage with Islamic primary sources

This table presents a comprehensive description of the implementation of integrated Islamic education at SMK NU Gembong. The descriptive presentation format was chosen because it could describe the dimensions of actors, methods, and educational outcomes simultaneously and contextually. The involvement of principals, teachers, and students shows that the education system at this school operates collectively and in a directed manner. This strengthens the validity of the research results and opens the door to replicating similar models in other Islamic vocational education institutions.

Departing from this, the model of combining religious lessons and vocational lessons applied at SMK NU Gembong is a good practice in the development of modern Islamic education. This approach reflects Fazlur Rahman's thinking that removes the dichotomy between religious science and general science and emphasizes the importance of Qur'ānic ethics-based education. With the involvement of all school elements and an integrative curriculum, this approach produces graduates who are well-balanced between technical abilities and Islamic values. These results not only support strengthening students' character but also demonstrate that contextual Islamic education can be effectively applied in vocational school settings.

Application of the Double Movement Approach in Religious Learning

One of Fazlur Rahman's most important contributions to Islamic education is the idea of double movement—a hermeneutical approach that involves two movements: first, understanding the historical context of the Qur'ānic verses as they were revealed; and second, deriving the moral message of the verse for application in the current context. In the realm of education, this approach is translated into a learning method that integrates religious texts with contemporary social problems. At SMK NU Gembong, this approach is implemented through interactive, practical learning activities, where students are not only invited to read and memorize, but also to analyze and reflect on the meaning of Islamic teachings in daily life. This concept is crucial for shaping students' critical and ethical thinking amid complex social realities.

The implementation of the *double movement* approach is evident in the tafsir and hadith learning strategies used by teachers. A tafsir teacher explained: "When we teach tafsir, it is not enough to just read verses and meanings. Our students are encouraged to understand why the verse came down, and how its values can be applied to their problems today. For example, when discussing the verse about trust, we associate it with a professional attitude in the world of work."

The principal adds a practical dimension to this approach:

"Activities such as Ngaji Bersama Hadith Nabiji are not just ritual activities. These students are trained to discuss: what is the meaning of hadith in today's context? It is part of active learning, not passive."

Based on the interview, it can be identified that SMK NU Gembong has applied the principles of *double movement* in the teaching and learning process. The use of tafsir and hadith not only functions as a normative text, but also as a medium for social reflection and character strengthening. Teachers play an important role in encouraging students to think dialectically between historical contexts and contemporary realities. This approach creates a space for constructive dialogue and increases students' awareness of the relevance of Islamic values in real life. The pedagogical implementation of *double movement* functions as a bridge between tradition and modernity, simultaneously strengthening students' intellect and spirituality.

The *double movement* approach at SMK NU Gembong is reflected in the teaching methods, the content of the materials, and the design of the learning activities. In the "Ngaji Bareng" activity, students not only listen to the hadith passively, but are also encouraged to interpret the social context behind the hadith's message, such as the importance of honesty, trust, or social responsibility. The tafsir material used is also contextual, such as Tafsir al-Ibriz,

which provides space for critical and reflective interpretation. Students are trained not only to memorize but also to convey their understanding through class discussions. This creates an active and dialogical learning atmosphere. From this, *the double movement method* is not only a theoretical concept but also a pedagogical practice that is relevant and adaptable to students' needs in the modern era.

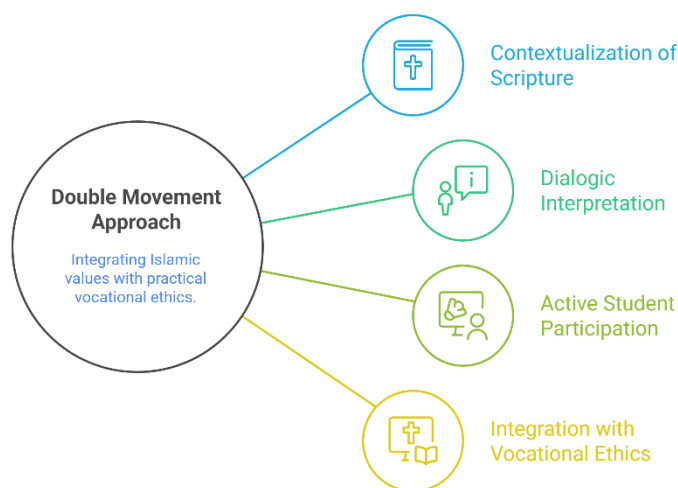


Figure 1. Unveiling the Dimensions of Double Movement

Figure 1 presents the framework for applying *the double movement approach* in learning practice at SMK NU Gembong. The thematic-descriptive form of presentation is used to show the direct correlation between Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutic concept and the pedagogical strategy carried out by the teacher. The use of discussion, contextual reflection, and analysis of the value of Islamic teachings is an important indicator that this approach is not only known but also actively applied. This table reinforces the narrative's validity by showing concrete changes in value and context-based learning approaches.

The application of Fazlur Rahman's double movement approach at SMK NU Gembong shows that Islamic education can be conducted in a contextual, reflective manner and be oriented towards the development of critical thinking. Through a learning process that emphasizes not only memorization but also value analysis and association with social reality, students gain more meaningful learning. This aligns with Fazlur Rahman's idea that education should form human beings who think, are ethical, and can respond to the challenges of the times in line with the values of the Qur'an. These findings show that the transformation of Islamic education is not only possible but has also been successfully implemented in the context of vocational education in Indonesia.

The Role of Teachers as Drivers of Intellectualism and Spirituality

In Fazlur Rahman's thought, teachers are not just conveyors of material, but key actors in the formation of students' intellectualism and spirituality. Teachers must be individuals with a strong scientific commitment and moral exemplars, because authentic Islamic education can only develop if it is carried out by educators who understand the teachings substantively and can relate them to reality. At SMK NU Gembong, the role of teachers is expanded from technical teaching to character development. Teachers are expected not only to teach material such as tafsir or nahwu, but also to produce scientific works and enrich Islamic discourse through written contributions. This activity reflects the view that teachers are the main pillars in reviving Islam's intellectual tradition, as emphasized by Fazlur Rahman. This role is highly strategic in addressing the challenges of modern Islamic education, which requires teachers to serve as intellectual and moral guides for the younger generation.

The findings show that SMK NU Gembong has successfully adopted and implemented Fazlur Rahman's reform thinking in an integrated Islamic education system. First, the incorporation of general and religious sciences is carried out systematically through the curriculum and learning activities, ensuring a balance between technical competence and depth of spiritual value. Second, the *double movement approach* is applied in the learning process through contextual discussions of tafsir and hadith, thereby strengthening the critical reasoning and social relevance of Islamic teachings. Third, teachers not only play the role of teachers, but also as agents of intellectual renewal by fostering the spirit of work and educating ethically. These findings show a pattern of application of contemporary Islamic education that is responsive, critical, and rooted in tradition. Thus, SMK NU Gembong can serve as a reference model for the development of integrative, reflective Islamic education in the modern era.

Discussion

The results of this study reveal that the integration of general science and religious science in the curriculum of SMK NU Gembong is a concrete form of Islamic education reform grounded in Fazlur Rahman's thought. These findings are relevant to the research's purpose of exploring integrative education models in the vocational environment, which have tended to be dominated by purely technical aspects. In the context of modern Islamic education, this integration addresses the scientific dichotomy that has long been a classic problem in Indonesia's Islamic education system. By harmoniously combining vocational and religious lessons, SMK NU Gembong has demonstrated that curriculum transformation can produce students who are not only competent but also have a strong moral and spiritual foundation.

The concept of scientific integration at SMK NU Gembong aligns with Fazlur Rahman's idea of eliminating the dichotomy between religious science and general science. Rahman in Ahmad (2023) emphasizes that Islamic education must develop human beings as a whole, capable of thinking critically and spiritually simultaneously. The implementation of an integrative curriculum at SMK NU Gembong, integrating tafsir, fiqh, nahwu, hadith, and Ke-NU-an into the structure of vocational education, reflects this paradigm. Fouz Mohamed Zacky (2024) added that curriculum integration is an effort to unite classical Islamic epistemology with the needs of the modern world. In line with this, Adhinugraha et al. (2024) show that an education system that integrates religious and secular aspects can produce graduates who are adaptable and characterful.

In contrast to the findings of Al Mursyidin & A'lal Hikam (2024), which highlight implementation obstacles stemming from teacher limitations and school cultural resistance, SMK NU Gembong demonstrates that the success of integration is strongly influenced by the principal's managerial vision and teachers' dedication. This shows that visionary leadership is a key factor in realizing integrative and contextual Islamic education.

The implementation of the *Double Movement* approach in religious learning at SMK NU Gem, Bong, also reflects the adoption of modern hermeneutic practices in Islamic education. As Rahman (2002) states, this concept aims to connect the verse's historical context with its relevance to contemporary issues. The activity of "Ngaji Bareng Hadith Nabawi" and the practice of contextual interpretation are concrete applications of these principles. Husnol Khotimah et al. (2024) explain that learning that integrates critical analysis of religious texts with social reflection can increase students' ethical awareness. Zaini (2023) also affirms that *the Double Movement* bridges traditional reason and modernity in Islamic education. Although Prayitno and Qodat (2019) consider that this approach is rarely used in vocational schools because it is considered too theoretical (Al Fath et al., 2024), practice at SMK NU Gembong actually shows its relevance and applicability in the vocational realm, primarily when facilitated by teachers who understand the social context of students. Thus, *Double Movement* is not only a philosophical but also a constructive pedagogical strategy.

The role of teachers in fostering students' intellectualism and spirituality supports Fazlur Rahman's thesis that educators are agents of intellectual change. Rahman emphasized that teachers must be the leading actors in transforming science cognitively, morally, and ethically. These findings align with Rohman et al. (2024), who emphasized the importance of intellectual exemplars in reviving the tradition of Islamic thought. The activities of teachers at SMK NU Gembong—such as preparing scientific papers and facilitating contextual learning—demonstrate their role as intellectual and spiritual facilitators.

Rodliyah et al. (2024) found that teacher quality is strongly correlated with the quality of learning and students' character. Instead, Ahmad (2023) noted that weak teacher capacity is often the main obstacle in the modernization of Islamic education. Therefore, the practice at SMK NU Gembong emphasizes that teacher recruitment and professional development are crucial factors in contemporary Islamic education reform.

In practice, this study provides an implementable model for Islamic vocational schools seeking to integrate religious and vocational curricula harmoniously. These findings serve as a reference for the formulation of education policies that are contextual and grounded in Islamic values. Teachers and principals in religious-based madrassas or vocational schools can adopt this approach to strengthen graduates' character and competence. Theoretically, this research strengthens the relevance of Fazlur Rahman's thought as a conceptual framework for integrative Islamic education. The double movement approach applied has proven not only philosophical but also pedagogically practical. Thus, Fazlur Rahman's thinking gave rise to curricular and methodological innovations in modern Islamic education.

Overall, the study's results show that the integration of general science and religion, the application of the double movement approach, and the active role of teachers in building Islamic intellectualism have been successfully implemented at SMK NU Gembong. These findings reinforce the validity of Fazlur Rahman's theory and prove that Islamic education can be conducted progressively, reflectively, and contextually without losing its spiritual dimension. This research has made a significant contribution to the development of an integrative Islamic education model in the era of the Independent Curriculum. Further research is recommended to examine the application of similar approaches across different geographic contexts and educational levels to expand the model's impact and replicability.

CONCLUSION

This research confirms that the development of Islamic education at SMK NU Gembong has been in line with Fazlur Rahman's reform thinking. The integration of vocational and religious lessons into the curriculum creates a balanced learning ecosystem that balances technical competence and spiritual depth. The application of the double movement approach encourages contextual, critical, and applicative religious learning, thereby strengthening the relevance of Islamic values in students' daily lives. The role of teachers as drivers of intellectualism and spirituality also strengthens the quality of education, which is not only oriented to mastery of material but also to character formation. These findings suggest that an integrative and reflective Islamic education model can be effectively implemented in vocational schools.

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