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**Embroidering Innovation in Madrasah Tsanawiyah Arabic Curriculum:  
Teacher's Perspective as Learning Architect/Menghadirkan Inovasi dalam  
Kurikulum Bahasa Arab Madrasah Tsanawiyah: Perspektif Guru sebagai  
Arsitek Pembelajaran**

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**Abstract:** Arabic language instruction at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level faces growing challenges in staying relevant and meaningful for students in today's dynamic world. A rigid and overly standardized curriculum often hinders students from engaging with the language in a practical and contextual way. In this situation, teachers are increasingly expected to act not only as curriculum implementers but also as creative designers of learning experiences. This study aims to explore conceptually how Arabic language teachers can serve as agents of innovation in curriculum development at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level. Using a library research approach, the study draws upon various scholarly works, curriculum documents, and educational policies to build a comprehensive understanding of the teacher's role in shaping innovative learning practices. The analysis employs content analysis techniques to uncover key ideas related to innovation strategies and the role of teachers in curricular design. The study concludes that empowering teachers as contextual curriculum designers, fostering innovation beyond technological tools, and supporting reflective practice are essential for addressing the challenges in Arabic language instruction.

**Abstrak:** Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab di Madrasah Tsanawiyah saat ini dihadapkan pada tantangan untuk tetap relevan dengan perkembangan zaman. Kurikulum yang kaku dan tidak kontekstual sering kali menyulitkan siswa dalam memahami dan mengaplikasikan bahasa secara fungsional. Dalam situasi seperti ini, guru tidak lagi cukup berperan sebagai pelaksana semata, tetapi juga dituntut menjadi perancang pembelajaran yang kreatif dan responsif terhadap kebutuhan siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji secara konseptual bagaimana guru dapat berperan sebagai agen inovasi dalam pengembangan kurikulum Bahasa Arab di Madrasah Tsanawiyah. Dengan menggunakan metode studi kepustakaan, kajian ini menelaah berbagai literatur, kebijakan, dan dokumen akademik yang relevan untuk membangun pemahaman yang utuh tentang peran strategis guru dalam menciptakan pembelajaran yang lebih bermakna. Analisis dilakukan melalui pendekatan analisis isi guna menemukan gagasan-gagasan utama terkait strategi inovasi dan peran guru dalam konteks kurikulum. Hasil kajian ini menegaskan pentingnya peran guru sebagai perancang kurikulum yang kontekstual, menunjukkan bahwa inovasi tidak harus berbasis teknologi, serta menekankan perlunya refleksi diri dan dukungan sistemik bagi guru dalam menghadapi tantangan pembelajaran Bahasa Arab.

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## Introduction

In the midst of the rapid changing times, the world of education is required to continue to innovate in order to remain relevant and meaningful. This also applies to Arabic language learning in Madrasah Tsanawiyah, which has been struggling with classic challenges, such as a curriculum that is too theoretical, monotonous methods, and teaching approaches that are less contextualized. Arabic is often only positioned as a collection of grammatical rules and memorization, not as a living and functional communication tool in students' daily lives.

This condition creates deep academic anxiety. Language, as Halliday<sup>1</sup>, explains, should be understood as a system of social meaning, not merely a linguistic structure. When learning only focuses on structure without paying attention to the social and communicative functions of language, students lose the meaning of what they learn. Arabic, which should be the gateway to understanding Islamic texts, instead becomes a cognitive burden that is detached from the context of their daily lives.

This issue cannot be separated from how the role of teachers has been framed. In many cases, teachers are still positioned as curriculum implementers, not as active and innovative learning designers. In fact, social<sup>2</sup> constructivism theory places teachers as facilitators who build knowledge with students through meaningful learning experiences. Similary, Apple<sup>3</sup> asserts that teachers are curriculum agents, subjects who are able to interpret, adjust, and even reshape the curriculum to suit the needs of learners and the local context.

A number of studies have tried to answer this issue. Unfortunately, in the context of Madrasah Tsanawiyah, many teachers have not been optimally empowered as learning architects. Research by Fatkurohima and Alwi revealed that Arabic language learning in some madrasahs is still teacher centered, with monotonous teaching methods and

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<sup>1</sup> M. A. K. (Michael Alexander Kirkwood) Halliday, *Language as social semiotic : the social interpretation of language and meaning* (Edward Arnold, 1978), <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1130000794201788416>.

<sup>2</sup> Lev S. Vygotsky, *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*, vol. 86 (Harvard university press, 1978), [https://www.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=RxjjUefze\\_oC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=Vygotsky,+L.+S.+\(&1978\).+Mind+in+society:+The+development+of+higher+psychological+processes.+Harvard+University+Press.&ots=okz1P1s17t&sig=3cSIIITKZYsAuNX3TBiV60IFiduo](https://www.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=RxjjUefze_oC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=Vygotsky,+L.+S.+(&1978).+Mind+in+society:+The+development+of+higher+psychological+processes.+Harvard+University+Press.&ots=okz1P1s17t&sig=3cSIIITKZYsAuNX3TBiV60IFiduo).

<sup>3</sup> Michael W. Apple, *Official knowledge: Democratic education in a conservative age* (Routledge, 2014), <https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/books/mono/download?identifierName=doi&identifierValue=10.4324/9780203814383&type=googlepdf>.

minimal use of interactive learning media<sup>4</sup>.

The research that has been done seeks to develop a more effective approach to learning Arabic. For example, the integration of communicative approaches, digital technology-based learning, and the use of interactive audio visual media have been proven to significantly improve students' Arabic language skills. Various recent studies have shown innovative efforts in improving the effectiveness of Arabic language learning, such as the application of communicative approaches, the integration of digital technology, and the use of interactive audio-visual media.

These approaches are proven to be able to significantly improve students' language skills through more active and contextualized interactions. However, these approaches tend to focus on the technical aspects of learning methodology and have not touched much on the deeper conceptual dimensions, such as how teachers are empowered as the main designers of the curriculum and pedagogical innovators in the context of Arabic language learning<sup>5678</sup>. However, these approaches focus on technical teaching strategies and have not touched on the conceptual aspects of how teachers are empowered as the main designers of the curriculum.

Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that there is a gap between the ideals of an adaptive curriculum and the reality in the field which is still dominated by classical instructional approaches. This problem becomes more complex when teachers are not facilitated to take an active role in curriculum design. This is where the importance of conceptual efforts to revisit the strategic position of teachers in Arabic learning curriculum innovation in madrasah.

The purpose of this study is to conceptually examine the role of teachers as agents of innovation in Arabic curriculum development in Madrasah Tsanawiyah. Using a

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<sup>4</sup> Ann Farid Fatkurohima dan Itsnaini Muslimati Alwi, "Strategi Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Maharah Qira'ah Di MTs 05 Kalikuning," *YASIN* 5, no. 3 (24 April 2025): 1849–63, <https://doi.org/10.58578/yasin.v5i3.5472>.

<sup>5</sup> Rania Izzati dkk., "The Relevance of Arabic Language Learning According to Rusydi Ahmad Thu'aimah with Modern Education Strategies," *Mantiqu Tayr: Journal of Arabic Language* 5, no. 1 (2025): 41–55.

<sup>6</sup> Asri Ainun Sorongan dan Imam Fauji, "Development of Interactive Learning Media Based on Google Sites Application Using the ADDIE Model for Arabic Language Instruction.," *Indonesian Journal of Education Methods Development* 18, no. 4 (2023).

<sup>7</sup> Nurjannah Abna dan Nawawi Nawawi, "The Effectiveness of Audiovisual Media in Learning Arabic Language (Qualitative Research of Arabic Literature Students, Faculty of Letters and Arabic Language Education, Faculty of Religion, UMI)," *Tamaddun*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.33096/tamaddun.v17i2.12>.

<sup>8</sup> Zuhdi Sayfudin dan Sofyan Muhammad, "The Effect of the Use of Interactive Media in Arabic Language Learning on Students' Learning Outcomes at Nurul Ilmi Integrated Islamic Elementary School, Jambi," *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies* 51, no. 1 (2025): 158–64.

literature study approach, this research examines various educational theories, policy documents, and recent research results to formulate a complete understanding of the role of teachers as learning designers who are creative, adaptive, and relevant to the challenges of the 21st century.

By prioritizing the teacher's perspective as an active subject in curriculum transformation, this research is expected to enrich the scientific treasure in the field of Arabic language education and provide a theoretical basis for developing a more contextual and transformative curriculum in the Madrasah Tsanawiyah environment.

## Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with the type of library research, which aims to conduct a conceptual analysis of the role of teachers as agents of innovation in the development of the Arabic curriculum in Madrasah Tsanawiyah. This approach was chosen because this study is not oriented towards collecting empirical data directly, but rather on understanding and analyzing previously published concepts, theories, and research results.<sup>910</sup>

The focus of the research lies on how teachers can be empowered as creative curriculum designers who are responsive to the needs of the times, especially in Arabic language learning at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level. This focus includes the role of teachers in shaping the curriculum structure, innovative pedagogical strategies, and the integration of social and cultural values into the learning design.<sup>1112</sup>

The data and data sources in this study were obtained from various relevant scientific literature, both in the form of reference books, accredited national and international journals, educational policy documents, as well as the results of previous studies that discuss curriculum development, the role of teachers, and Arabic language

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<sup>9</sup> Kamaluddin Kamaluddin, Fitria Sarnita, dan Muhammad Wahyu Setiyadi, "Literatur Review: Peran Guru Penggerak Dalam Menghadapi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar," *Empiricism Journal* 5, no. 1 (29 Maret 2024): 18–27, <https://doi.org/10.36312/ej.v5i1.1598>.

<sup>10</sup> Viki Bayu Mahendra, "Konsep profesionalisme guru dalam perspektif pendidikan Islam," *Rayah Al-Islam* 5, no. 02 (2021): 419–26.

<sup>11</sup> Tjatur Yuli Winarsih, "Implementasi Manajemen Berbasis Sekolah dalam Pengembangan Kurikulum SMP Islam Ma'arif 02 Malang," *Jurnal Kebijakan dan Pengembangan Pendidikan* 2, no. 2 (2014), <http://ejournal.umm.ac.id/index.php/jkpp/article/view/1906>.

<sup>12</sup> Mahendra, "Konsep profesionalisme guru dalam perspektif pendidikan Islam."

learning innovations. All sources were selected based on their relevance, credibility and contribution to strengthening the research conceptual framework.<sup>13</sup>

Data collection techniques were carried out through systematic searches and reviews of related documents and literature. The author uses a thematic literature strategy by utilizing academic databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, DOAJ, and Sinta and Scopus indexed journals to obtain up-to-date and valid data.<sup>14</sup>

The data analysis technique in this research uses a content analysis approach. This procedure includes identification of themes, classification of main ideas, and critical interpretation of text content to find patterns of thought and theoretical contributions relevant to the strategic role of teachers in curriculum development. The analysis was conducted in a descriptive-analytical manner by considering the perspectives of critical education theory, social constructivism, and curriculum development.<sup>15</sup>

Through this method, this research seeks to build a strong and systematic conceptual argumentation regarding the urgency and strategy of empowering teachers as learning architects in the context of Arabic language learning that is more contextual, communicative, and transformative.<sup>16</sup>

## Results and Discussion

Based on the review of various books, journals and relevant educational documents, this study found four important things about the role of teachers in developing the Arabic curriculum in Madrasah Tsanawiyah. These findings not only show the condition of the field, but also open a new space for thinking about how teachers should be empowered as the main driver of meaningful learning.

### 1. Teachers are Not Just Implementers, but Curriculum Designers

Teachers should not only be seen as curriculum implementers who simply follow textbooks, but as active and creative learning designers in adapting materials to student needs. In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum and the 2013 Curriculum, teachers are given pedagogical freedom to develop learning

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<sup>13</sup> Helmi Delvia dan Indah Muliati, "Strategi Pembelajaran Membaca Al-Qur'an di SLBN 1 Solok (Study pada Anak Tunagrahita)," *PENSA* 6, no. 3 (2024): 63–74.

<sup>14</sup> Syahida Nursahidah Awalia dan Nurhidayati Nurhidayati, "Video Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Materi Nahwu Pada Siswa Kelas VIII Madrasah Tsanawiyah," *Journal of Language Literature and Arts* 3, no. 10 (2023): 1524–38.

<sup>15</sup> Kamaluddin, Sarnita, dan Setiyadi, "Literatur Review."

strategies, media, and assessments according to the characteristics of their students. This means that teachers are not just delivering material, but also mapping student competencies, determining relevant approaches, and designing contextual and meaningful learning experiences. For example, when the syllabus only mentions the topic of "fi'il madhi" (*past tense verbs in Arabic*), teachers can design activities that connect the material to students' daily lives, such as composing stories about their weekend experiences in the past tense. Such activities not only facilitate understanding of the concept, but also increase students' interest and participation in learning.

This approach is in line with research findings that show that teachers have an important role in developing contextual and integrative lesson plans. In a study by Winaya, teachers at SD No. 4 Banyuasri showed a very good understanding of developing lesson plans, although there were still challenges in designing creative learning steps<sup>17</sup>. Other research also states that teachers who understand the principles of integration between subjects and contextual learning will be more successful in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, as they are able to align learning with the environment and students' experiences.<sup>18</sup> To understand how teachers can play the role of contextual curriculum designers, the following table summarizes the real picture in the field, the challenges faced, and possible solutions.

Table 1. Teachers as Contextual Curriculum Designer

Aspect	Explanation
<b>Main Finding</b>	Teachers should not only act as curriculum implementers but also as active and contextual instructional designers. They need to tailor learning materials to students' needs, interests, and local environments.
<b>Practical Example</b>	The teacher asks students to write stories about their weekend experiences using past-tense Arabic verbs ( <i>fi'il</i>

<sup>16</sup> Elvia Desy Sya'bani, "Pengembangan Media Arabic Docard pada Pembelajaran Kosakata Bahasa Arab Siswa Kelas III" (Phd Thesis, Universitas Islam Lamongan, 2021), <Http://Eprints.Unisla.Ac.Id/158/>.

<sup>17</sup> I. Kadek Winaya, I. Made Suarjana, dan Luh Putu Putrini Mahadewi, "Analisis rencana pelaksanaan pembelajaran menurut kurikulum 2013 kelas iv sd no. 4 banyuasri," *Mimbar PGSD Undiksha* 3, no. 1 (2015), <https://ejournal.undiksha.ac.id/index.php/JJPGSD/article/view/5730>.

<sup>18</sup> Kamaluddin, Sarnita, dan Setiyadi, "Literatur Review."

	<i>madhi</i> ). The teacher creates vocabulary lists derived from students' daily activities at home, the market, or the mosque.
<b>Common Problems</b>	Many teachers feel constrained by rigid textbooks and syllabi. As a result, they lack confidence or are reluctant to design context-based materials. Moreover, most teachers have not received training on how to develop flexible and localized lesson plans.
<b>Solutions / Recommendations</b>	Madrasahs should allow teachers more freedom to develop contextual learning, beyond rigid textbooks. This includes developing school-level operational curricula. Practical training is also needed to help teachers design lesson plans based on student needs and local realities.

From the table, it can be concluded that teachers' flexibility in designing lessons is highly dependent on system support and relevant training. It is not enough for teachers to be given the task of teaching, but they also need to be given the space to think and be creative according to the context of their students.

Furthermore, teacher training in developing holistic assessment-based learning has been proven to improve their pedagogical competence, as shown by Aditama in the training on implementing assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum, which succeeded in making all participants able to develop integrated learning plans.<sup>19</sup>

With such a strategic role, it is important for teachers to continue to develop themselves as learning designers who not only teach, but also shape rich, fun, and meaningful learning experiences for their students.

## 2. Teacher Innovation Is Not Just About Technology, but Also About Meaning

Many studies encourage the use of technology such as animated videos, digital quiz applications, or other interactive media as tools for educational innovation. However, the essence of innovation in education does not always lie

<sup>19</sup> Madya Aditama dkk., "Peningkatan kompetensi guru SMP dalam implementasi 3 bentuk asesmen Kurikulum Merdeka," *Community Empowerment Journal* 1, no. 2 (2023): 52–61.

in technological sophistication, but rather in the meaning constructed and the relationships built between teachers and students during the learning process. True innovation is the teacher's ability to deliver meaningful, contextual, and engaging learning experiences for students, even without modern technological tools.

For example, a teacher in a madrasah with limited technological facilities can still create innovative learning through simple approaches. The teacher may compose short stories in Arabic based on students' daily lives, such as stories about friendship, activities at the market, or Ramadan experiences. These stories are read together, followed by paired discussions about the content and the values within. Then, students are asked to create sentences or dialogues using vocabulary and past-tense (*fi'il madhi*) structures from the story. Although simple, this activity effectively builds contextual Arabic language competence, increases student engagement, and develops critical and collaborative thinking skills.

Research supports this approach. According to Hasibuan and Harahap, pedagogical innovation does not solely depend on digital media, but rather on the teacher's ability to design strategies that engage students emotionally and cognitively, even with limited resources. Their study found that story-based learning significantly enhances student engagement and strengthens contextual understanding of Arabic.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, Sari argues that innovative teachers are those who can connect instructional content with students lived experiences and local values without relying on advanced technology. They emphasize that participatory and meaning-based approaches can yield deeper impacts than simply using digital teaching aids.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, teacher innovation should be understood more broadly, not merely as the integration of technology, but as a conscious and creative effort to build meaning, connection, and engagement in the learning process. Most perceptions of educational innovation tend to lean toward the use of technology. However, the

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<sup>20</sup> Hasibuan, S., & Harahap, A., "Inovasi pembelajaran bahasa Arab berbasis cerita di madrasah," *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pemikiran Islam* 7, no. 2 (2022): 145-158., <https://doi.org/10.24042/atjpi.v7i2.14569>.

<sup>21</sup> Sari, D. P., Rahmawati, N., & Utami, D. A., "Inovasi pembelajaran kontekstual berbasis nilai budaya lokal," *Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan Dasar* 8, no. 1 (2023): 45–56, <https://doi.org/10.21009/jkpd.081.04>.

following table shows that the true meaning of innovation goes deeper than just the use of digital tools.

Table 2. Innovation Is Not Just About Technology

Aspect	Explanation
<b>Main Finding</b>	Educational innovation is not necessarily about using technology. More importantly, it lies in how teachers create meaning, engagement, and learning relevance for students.
<b>Practical Example</b>	A teacher guides students in staging an Arabic drama based on familiar themes from their lives. A teacher designs a paper, based interactive quiz using a whiteboard and colored paper, without any digital tools.
<b>Common Problems</b>	There is a general belief that innovative teaching must involve technological tools like projectors, videos, or apps. When such resources are unavailable, teachers feel they cannot innovate, thus suppressing creativity.
<b>Solutions / Recommendations</b>	Teachers should understand that innovation is more about creativity and student engagement than tools. Training should focus on how to create meaningful learning experiences using minimal resources. Simple success stories from fellow teachers can inspire broader innovation.

Thus, building awareness that innovation comes from teacher creativity will open up great opportunities for madrasahs that have limited facilities, but still want to create meaningful and interactive learning.

### 3. Challenges and Support: Two Ever Present Sides

It is undeniable that teachers often face various challenges in carrying out their role as learning innovators. These challenges include limited time to design innovative learning, high administrative burden, lack of continuous professional training, and pressure from a less supportive school environment. In some cases, teachers feel trapped in routines and have no room for creativity, despite their desire to develop new learning methods. For example, an Arabic teacher in a

madrasa said that she struggled to implement contextualized learning because she had to complete administrative reports and routine supervision that took up time.

Teachers face complex challenges in developing innovative learning. The following table summarizes some of the real constraints teachers experience in the field, as well as opportunities and solutions that can be encouraged by the madrasah environment and education policy.

Table 3: Challenges and Support

Aspect	Explanation
<b>Main Finding</b>	Teachers face multiple challenges in innovating due to workload and system limitations, yet they also benefit from opportunities offered by supportive policies and professional communities.
<b>Practical Example</b>	A teacher wants to create instructional media but is overwhelmed by administrative tasks. Through the Teacher Leader program, a teacher gains support to implement project-based learning.
<b>Common Problems</b>	Many teachers are burdened by excessive administrative duties (e.g., reports, grading, documentation). Schools often lack regular forums for sharing and discussing instructional innovations.
<b>Solutions / Recommendations</b>	Schools should create active teacher learning communities for regular idea sharing. Policies like Kurikulum Merdeka should be used to give teachers more content autonomy. Recognition and appreciation for innovative teachers can boost morale and motivation.

With the right structural support, such as strengthening learning communities and recognizing teachers' work, these challenges can be turned into opportunities to promote educational reform from the grassroots.

On the other hand, there are also opportunities for support, especially with the Merdeka Curriculum policy, which provides flexibility for teachers to adapt teaching materials to students' needs and local contexts. Support from school principals or madrasah heads who are open to new ideas and collaborative

colleagues are also key factors in supporting teachers' enthusiasm for innovation. A study by Ainin, Tampus and Eliseo found that teacher leadership and collaboration between teachers are crucial to the success of curriculum innovation, especially when teachers feel heard and given space to try new approaches to learning.<sup>22</sup>

Another study by Wang emphasized the importance of collaboration not only with fellow teachers, but also with principals, parents and education experts. This all-round support can create a healthy and conducive working environment, which in turn encourages teachers to remain enthusiastic in facing the challenges of the new curriculum.<sup>23</sup>

In a broader context, Liu highlights that the transformation of the role of teachers in curriculum reform requires changes in thinking, teaching behavior, and self-development as curriculum designers. Without structural support and an adaptive school organizational culture, this transformation is difficult to achieve.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, educational innovation cannot be blamed entirely on teachers. The synergy between enabling policies, supportive school leadership and strong collaboration in the work environment is key to helping teachers face challenges and remain agents of change in education.

#### **4. Reflective Awareness: A Rarely Discussed Starting Point of Innovation**

A fundamental but often overlooked aspect of discussions of educational innovation is teachers' reflective awareness, the ability to consciously evaluate their own teaching practice, identify its strengths and weaknesses, and devise concrete improvement measures. Teachers who regularly ask themselves questions such as, "What works?" and "What needs to be improved?" are more likely to come up with innovations naturally, as this critical thinking process

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<sup>22</sup> Jamela Ainin, Maria Gloria Tampus, dan John Mart Eliseo, "Teacher Leadership and Collaboration in Leading Curriculum Innovation: A Case Study on Effective Practices," *International Journal of Research in Social Science and Humanities (IJRSS)* ISSN: 2582-6220, DOI: 10.47505/IJRSS 6, no. 1 (2025): 96–114.

<sup>23</sup> Wang Jue, "On Challenges Teachers Have to Face in the Curriculum Reform," *Journal of Hubei Institute of Education*, 2007, <https://consensus.app/papers/on-challenges-teachers-have-to-face-in-the-curriculum-jue/95fe49b3cef65d69bb875b75d25f8585/>.

<sup>24</sup> Liu Jing-ying, "Challenges Raised by the New Curriculum Reform to Teachers," *Journal of Fuzhou Teachers College*, 2003, <https://consensus.app/papers/challenges-raised-by-the-new-curriculum-reform-to-teachers-jing-ying/0dbc28cec4825260b30e2b595d3d9ff5/>.

helps them understand student needs and adapt teaching approaches to the actual context of the classroom.

To illustrate, an Arabic teacher teaching mufrodat (vocabulary) material realizes that students are able to memorize lists of words but have difficulty using them in sentences. Based on reflection on the effectiveness of her previous teaching methods, the teacher then modified her approach: at the next meeting, she asked students to create a mini-drama in Arabic using the vocabulary they had learned. This activity not only improves contextual understanding, but also strengthens students' confidence in using Arabic actively. This kind of reflection, though simple, can be the beginning of a significant pedagogical innovation.

Research shows that reflective practice plays an important role in improving teaching quality. Slade found that deep reflection encourages prospective and active teachers to develop pedagogical skills, improve teaching strategies, and increase social awareness in complex classroom contexts, such as poverty and diversity of student backgrounds.<sup>25</sup>

In the context of professional training, Gutierrez through the lesson study approach found that reflection conducted collaboratively and systematically is able to improve teachers' ability to critically evaluate their teaching practices, which in turn enriches teaching methods and strategies.<sup>26</sup>

Lazăr emphasized that reflection needs to be an intrinsic part of teachers' professional practice. Teachers who are accustomed to evaluating the impact of their work on student progress will more easily find ways to improve instructional effectiveness, even in challenging learning situations.<sup>27</sup>

Another example comes from teacher practice in Indonesia. In a study by Nurhidayah and Wirza, English teachers who participated in a teaching practice program noted that reflection activities helped them improve their delivery, clarify learning objectives and address classroom management issues. One

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<sup>25</sup> Mary L. Slade dkk., "The Impact of Reflective Practice on Teacher Candidates' Learning," *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 13, no. 2 (2019): 15.

<sup>26</sup> Sally Baricaua Gutierrez, "Teachers' reflective practice in lesson study: A tool for improving instructional practice," *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 61, no. 3 (2015): 314–28.

<sup>27</sup> Emil Lazăr, "The Efficiency of Teaching Activity through Reflective Practice," *Analele Universității Din Craiova, Seria Psihologie-Pedagogie/Annals of the University of Craiova, Series Psychology-Pedagogy* 44, no. 1 (30 Juni 2022): 136–45, <https://doi.org/10.52846/AUCPP.2022.1.12>.

teacher even stated that through reflection, she realized the importance of linking the material to students' experiences to increase learning engagement<sup>28</sup>.

Reflective awareness is thus not just an additional skill, but the foundation of professional development and learning innovation. Honest and consistent reflection will help teachers hone their sensitivity to classroom dynamics, strengthen their adaptability and create more meaningful learning experiences for students.

This kind of reflection does not require expensive technology, only honesty and a willingness to develop. It is precisely from this kind of awareness that many innovations begin. Unfortunately, this awareness is often not addressed in formal teacher training. One important but rarely discussed aspect of curriculum innovation is teachers' reflective awareness. The following table outlines how self reflection can be a source of learning and impactful change in teaching practice.

Table 4. Reflective Awareness as a Source of Innovation

Aspect	Explanation
<b>Main Finding</b>	Teachers' self-reflection on their teaching experiences is a critical starting point for meaningful innovation. Yet, reflection is often overlooked in training or supervision.
<b>Practical Example</b>	A teacher realizes lectures bore students, so they switch to group discussions and dialogue simulations. After seeing low exam scores, a teacher notes the test items are too abstract and redesigns them using real-life contexts.
<b>Common Problems</b>	Many teachers teach daily without assessing the effectiveness of their methods due to the absence of a reflective culture. Supervision is usually administrative, not dialogic.
<b>Solutions / Recommendations</b>	Teachers should get used to writing short reflections after each lesson, answering: What worked? What didn't? What can be improved? Supervision should become a space for constructive dialogue, not just

<sup>28</sup> Mila Ida Nurhidayah dan Yanty Wirza, "Reflective practice in the teaching practicum program: Pre-service English teachers' reflections," *Journal of Applied Studies in Language* 8, no. 1 (2024): 11–20.

	document checking. This will foster a reflective culture that drives internal innovation.
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From this explanation, it can be seen that building a reflective culture not only enriches the quality of learning, but also encourages teachers to grow professionally and spiritually as true educators.

## Conclusion

This research shows that Arabic language teachers in Madrasah Tsanawiyah have a strategic role as agents of innovation in curriculum development. This role is not only limited as an implementer of teaching materials, but also as a contextual, communicative, and adaptive learning designer to the needs of students and the challenges of the times.

The four main findings of this study are: (1) teachers need to be empowered as curriculum designers, not just technical implementers; (2) learning innovation does not have to rely on technology, but rather on meaning creation and student engagement; (3) teachers face various structural challenges that require policy support and institutional collaboration; and (4) teachers' reflective awareness is an important foundation in fostering sustainable innovation from within educators themselves.

Thus, the transformation of the Arabic curriculum depends not only on national policies, but also on empowering teachers as active subjects who are able to design and reflect on their learning process critically and creatively. This research is expected to be a theoretical basis for madrasahs and policy makers to create a more contextual, inclusive and transformative Arabic learning ecosystem.

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