



# Reimagining Arabic Learning in Aceh's Pesantren for a Sustainable Future

Kurniawan Arif Maspul\*, Muhammad Taha, Hasbi Yusron

Al-Madinah International University, Malaysia; [ck885@lms.mediu.edu.my](mailto:ck885@lms.mediu.edu.my)

Islamic University of Madinah, Saudi Arabia; [471006956@stu.iu.edu.sa](mailto:471006956@stu.iu.edu.sa)

Islamic University of Madinah, Saudi Arabia; [4710006316@stu.iu.edu.sa](mailto:4710006316@stu.iu.edu.sa)

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.47134/frontiers.v2i2.506>

\*Correspondence: **Kurniawan Arif Maspul**

Email: [ck885@lms.mediu.edu.my](mailto:ck885@lms.mediu.edu.my)

Received: 03-09-2025

Accepted: 14-10-2025

Published: 28-11-2025



**Copyright:** © 2024 by the authors. Submitted for open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

*roadmap provides practical, culturally relevant steps for policymakers, educators, and communities to transform Aceh's boarding schools into resilient, globally respected centres of Islamic learning.*

**Keywords:** Arabic language proficiency; Pesantren modernisation; Technology-enhanced language learning (LMS); Communicative Language Teaching (CLT); Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

**Abstract:** *In Aceh Besar, Pesantren face a crucial challenge: maintaining Arabic as a vibrant religious medium while preparing students for a digital, interconnected world. This paper introduces an integrative model that rejuvenates traditional teaching methods through communicative, task-based techniques and context-aware technologies—localised LMS platforms and mobile-mediated interaction—rooted in Acehnese wisdom and Islamic ethics. It combines empirical and theoretical insights to show how blended learning, teacher professional development, competency-based assessment, and community-engaged curricula work together to enhance linguistic skills, learner motivation, and critical literacy. Comparative insights from Malaysia and Türkiye highlight scalable practices—such as national digital content archives, teacher exchange programs, and competency frameworks—that balance local authenticity with international standards and UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development. Policy recommendations focus on infrastructure development, ongoing in-service training, curriculum reform that integrates sustainability themes into Arabic instruction, and public-private partnerships to democratise access and support innovation. The model emphasises sustainability across social, economic, and ecological dimensions, positioning pesantren as communities of civic engagement, environmental stewardship, and ethical leadership. The article argues that by viewing modernisation as cultural stewardship rather than cultural displacement, Arabic proficiency can extend beyond ceremonial mastery to serve as a tool for scholarship, civic engagement, and global dialogue. The*

## Introduction

In the beautiful spiritual terrain of Aceh Besar, Indonesia, the resonant recitation of the Qur'an in Arabic is more than just an intellectual exercise; it is the beating heart of cultural and religious identity. For generations, the *Dayahs* (Islamic boarding schools) of this special region have stood as bastions of faith, preserving Islamic knowledge and shaping moral character (Ikhwansyah *et al.*, 2023; Riska, 2018). Here, Arabic is the sacred key that unlocks divine scripture, classical jurisprudence, and a connection to the global Muslim community, the Ummah. Yet, this revered tradition now faces a critical moment, caught between unwavering devotion to its heritage and the relentless wave of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The

classrooms where students once studied centuries-old *kitab kuning* (classical texts) now compete for attention with the glow of smartphones and the vast, often distracting, universe of social media (Halimi *et al.*, 2022). This is not just a challenge of modernisation; it is a deep struggle for relevance, sustainability, and the very soul of Islamic education in a rapidly changing world.

The urgency of this transformation is underscored by stark global realities. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has unequivocally stated that to tackle the world's most pressing challenges—from climate crises to deepening inequality—education must be repurposed to empower learners with not just knowledge, but also values, skills, and critical thinking. This concept, known as Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), posits that education must be 'transformative' and allow everyone to 'to be part of the solution to complex global challenges' (UNESCO, 2025). For Aceh's *pesantren*, this global mandate presents a poignant question: how can they equip their *santri* (students) to be faithful stewards of the Earth and engaged global citizens, using a language taught primarily for liturgical purposes? The answer lies in reimagining Arabic not as a relic of the past, but as a living, dynamic tool for navigating the future.

Compounding this pedagogical imperative is a stark digital divide. While urban centres in Indonesia and across Southeast Asia rapidly integrate technology into learning, rural communities like those in Aceh Besar risk being left behind (Zahara *et al.*, 2024). A 2022 report by the Brookings Institution highlighted that the digital divide is not merely about hardware and connectivity; it is a profound gap in the use of technology for meaningful learning, which severely limits opportunities for marginalised populations (The Brookings Institution, 2022). In Aceh, this translates to a painful paradox: young Muslims have the spiritual yearning to master the language of the Qur'an but often lack access to the modern tools and methodologies that could make this journey engaging, effective, and connected to the wider world. This deprivation is more than an educational shortfall; it is a potential rupture in the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, threatening to isolate Acehnese youth from the intellectual currents of the global Islamic community.

The stakes of inaction are devastatingly high. Research on educational systems in developing contexts consistently shows that pedagogies reliant solely on rote memorisation and grammar-translation methods fail to foster the communicative competence needed for real-world application (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). When students cannot use a language to speak, debate, create, or solve problems, their motivation plummets. For Aceh, this could mean a generation of youth who, despite their deep faith, view Arabic as an insurmountable barrier rather than a bridge—a subject to be endured rather than embraced. The potential loss is not only linguistic but civilizational: the erosion of a community's ability to contribute its unique, faith-based perspective to global dialogues on sustainability, ethics, and peace.

Therefore, this study is not merely an academic inquiry; it is a call to action. It moves beyond identifying gaps in resources to champion a visionary synthesis. It argues that the future of Arabic education in Aceh depends on a courageous, spiritually grounded integration of modern pedagogy—such as Communicative Language Teaching and project-

based learning—with cutting-edge, yet accessible, technology. The dayahs of Aceh Besar can flourish by incorporating these features into the rich mosaic of Acehese Islamic beliefs and local expertise. They have the potential to become hubs of sustainable learning, producing not only pious scholars but also articulate, critical-thinking, and environmentally conscientious global citizens who can use Arabic with confidence and purpose. This paper seeks to illuminate that path, demonstrating that honouring a sacred heritage now requires the courage to innovate, ensuring that the spirit of education in Aceh does not merely endure but ignites for generations to come.

## Methodology

Using a qualitative, co-constructive approach, this study will employ in-depth, semi-structured interviews and group discussions with two main groups: firstly, international pedagogical consultants specialising in Arabic as a second language and technology integration; and secondly, a purposive sample of Indonesian master's students at the Islamic University of Madinah, who have direct experience with the *pesantren* system and are now part of a global Islamic academic setting. This method aims to gather rich, nuanced data by fostering a critical dialogue that connects expert pedagogical theories with the on-the-ground insights of cultural insiders, thereby collaboratively developing transformative strategies for Aceh's Arabic education that are both pedagogically effective and culturally meaningful. This co-research approach is supported by Cresswell & Poth (2018), who state that qualitative research is well-suited for exploring complex human issues through collaborative methods that respect participants' perspectives and lived experiences as co-constructors of meaning.

## Result and Discussion

In Aceh Besar, Indonesia's deeply Islamic heartland, Arabic language education is both a sacred heritage and a pressing challenge. Young Acehese in state-accredited dayahs (*pesantren*) are expected to master Arabic – not as native speakers, but as students of their faith. Yet in an era of smartphones, social media, and global exchange, traditional boarding schools must reconcile centuries-old pedagogy with 21st-century tools. Research shows that a passionate '*spirit of education*' has long animated Acehese *pesantren* despite austere conditions (Nilan, 2009). However, to keep that spirit alive, institutions must integrate modern educational factors – from language learning centres to digital platforms – that can sustain Indonesian Islamic schooling for generations. This paper deeply examines how modern pedagogical methods (e.g. communicative approaches, technology, LMS systems) can enhance Arabic competence for Acehese high school students (non-native speakers). It brings in local wisdom and global perspectives (Malaysia, Türkiye, UNESCO goals, etc.) to propose a visionary policy for Indonesia's *pesantren* future. We argue that melding tradition with innovation – just as Lukens-Bull notes *pesantren* blend secular and religious studies to create an "Islamically Indonesian" modernity (Lukens-Bull, 2018) – is the surest path to academic and spiritual flourishing.

## Aceh Besar and Pesantren Education

Aceh's education is unique. Governed by Sharia and historically loyal to the Shāfi'ī school (Imam Shafii's tradition), Aceh places Arabic at the core of its identity. In Aceh Besar's rural districts, institutions like *Dayah Abu Lam U*, *Pesantren Babun Najah*, *Dayah Insan Qurani*, and Imam Shafii's legacy schools exemplify this heritage. These schools combine rigorous Qur'anic and *kitāb kuning* (classical texts) instruction with government curricula (science, civics). Despite this blend, many santri (students) struggle to achieve high Arabic proficiency. Linguistically, they are Malay-speaking; culturally, they rely on memorisation. Modern research observes stark gaps: Aceh's remote villages often lack tech infrastructure, leaving a wide rural–urban divide in resources (Herman, 2025). Moreover, dropout rates remain high when families can't afford boarding costs. Yet Acehnese educators insist Arabic mastery is non-negotiable: it opens the Qur'ān and ḥadīth in the original, shapes character through Islamic spirituality and connects Indonesia to the wider Muslim world (Lukens-Bull, 2018; Nilan, 2009).

As one Aceh teacher noted, Aceh's curriculum "integrates Islam in all subjects" alongside national standards. The government even urges daily Qur'ān recitation to instil character. But to compete globally (and with secular schools), Aceh's leaders recognise the need to balance religiosity with modern skills (Herman, 2025). In this vacuum, modernisation efforts are underway. For example, the Indonesian Ministry of Religion has promoted *kebangsaan* (nationalism) and technology literacy in pesantren, reflecting the national Pesantren Law's call to modernise institutions. Many *dayah* now have facilities for computers and offer formal high school diplomas (Madrasah Aliyah) alongside *Ulum* studies. Yet challenges remain: teacher training is uneven, materials are outdated, and planning often lacks vision for the digital age (Mardinsyah & Tumiran, 2024; Maspul *et al.*, 2025).

### **Aceh Education: Between Tradition and modernity**

Globally, scholars highlight that Indonesian pesantren are not relics but dynamic actors in globalisation. Pamela Nilan's (2009) ethnography finds that *pesantren* instil a *passion for knowledge* – "the spirit of education" – even in poverty. Ronald Lukens-Bull (2018) similarly observes that traditional schools reinvent tradition and modernity together: their leaders schedule secular classes alongside six hours of religious lessons, aiming for a "fully modern, globalised, and Islamically Indonesian" society. These insights suggest pedagogic fusion: blending Western-style curriculum with Islamic pedagogy is not only possible but already happening in Java and Aceh.

Language acquisition theory underscores this fusion. Arabic in pesantren is learned as a second language: modern pedagogies (Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Learning, etc.) stress interaction over rote grammar. Studies emphasise that technology enhances language skills; for instance, integrating language learning apps and conversation partners online has been found to boost speaking and listening proficiency (Ilyas *et al.*, 2022). Open educational resources can provide comprehensible input in Arabic at students' levels, aligning with Krashen's Input Hypothesis by matching content to learners' backgrounds (The Brookings Institution, 2022). Moreover, Vygotsky's social

constructivism applies: peer study circles (*halaqas*), teacher scaffolding, and community immersion (mosque activities) are potent.

Crucially, local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*) and values must guide modernisation. Acehnese teachers view education as character-building. Research on Indonesian pesantren finds digital literacy programs are framed by Islamic values like *tawassuth* (moderation). In other words, technology use is seen as an opportunity (*peluang*) rather than a threat, provided it is balanced with *taqwa* and critical thinking (Fadli & Dwiningrum, 2021). UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) lens is relevant: learners must get knowledge and values to tackle global issues (climate change, inequality) through education. As UNESCO notes, "ESD equips learners with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed to respond to complex global challenges" (UNESCO, 2025). Integrating Arabic teaching with, say, environmental concepts or civic discourse could align pesantren with global citizenship goals while reinforcing religious ethics of stewardship.

### Modern Educational Methods and Technology

A key innovation is the Learning Management System (LMS) and e-learning platforms. Recent Indonesian studies show that when boarding schools adopt a regional LMS (like *E-Belajar*), student engagement and autonomy rise (Amalia *et al.*, 2025; Kim & Park, 2023). Santri reported that the LMS improved their comprehension, enabled on-time task completion with automated reminders, and made lessons "enjoyable and engaging" with videos and games (Amalia *et al.*, 2025). Their confidence in expressing ideas grew as well. However, they also noted the need for proper guidance; without teacher direction on using the LMS, students sometimes misused it, and many still "preferred in-person learning" for discussion (ICESCO, 2025). This reflects a blend: *blended learning* models. The LMS can house interactive Qur'anic recitation videos, Arabic grammar quizzes, and forums for santri to chat in Arabic. But face-to-face *halaqa* sessions remain invaluable.

Beyond LMS, mobile and AI tools are emerging. Islamic educational forums now explicitly emphasise AI. In July 2025, ICESCO's Southeast Asia forum in Malaysia championed "leveraging artificial intelligence and digital transformation" to elevate Arabic for native and non-native speakers. They trained educators on computational linguistics, AI apps for Arabic learning, and interactive e-learning platforms (Fadli & Dwiningrum, 2021; Maspul *et al.*, 2025). This global push suggests even Acehnese schools can explore AI: think simple vocabulary chatbots or speech-recognition *tajwid* practice tools. Meanwhile, computer labs and smartphones can host Arabic language games (Scrabble, Kahoot quizzes on Qur'an translation) and digital storybooks. All this tech must be pedagogically grounded: teachers require TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) training so that technology boosts rather than distracts. UNESCO and Brookings highlight that open educational resources and knowledge platforms can democratize learning: for example, free online Arabic courses or textbooks (like Khan Academy for language, but Arabic) allow learners to align materials with their needs (Maspul *et al.*, 2025a; The Brookings Institution, 2022).

## Innovative Pedagogy at Aceh's Dayahs

In practical terms, Aceh Besar's pesantren have begun experimenting. Some have established Language Improvement Centres (LICs) – specialised hubs dedicated to intensive Arabic – mirroring Malaysia's Institutes of Tahfiz or Gontor's *Da'wah Council* (Habibi *et al.*, 2024). These LICs develop custom curricula and immersive activities. In fact, a 2024 study finds that Islamic schools in Indonesia set up LICs as “hubs for innovation” in Arabic pedagogy (Ilyas *et al.*, 2022; Maspul, 2024). For instance, a LIC may offer Conversation Clubs (learning to speak with peers), recital workshops, and computer labs with Arabic learning software. Such centres deliberately design programs aligned with competency goals (reading, speaking, writing) rather than rote memorisation. Importantly, they often employ modern methods – role-plays, cultural media, group projects – in addition to traditional drills.

Teachers in these LICs are typically trained in both classical scholarship and modern ESL techniques. Indonesian research notes that where schools emphasise innovation (e.g. via LICs and media use), student engagement soars (Pormann, 2012). Arabic educators are encouraged to use multimedia: films of the *Al-Haramayn*, recordings of lectures, online grammar tools, and apps for ḥurūf (Arabic letters). A case study in Malaysia similarly found that in one boarding school, key obstacles were teacher skills and resources – suggesting that upgrading teacher training with ICT skills can make class “effective and not boring”. The study literally urges “computers, internet, and systematic methods” to help teachers innovate (Amalia *et al.*, 2025; Mardinsyah & Tumiran, 2024). Aceh can take heed: encouraging santri to produce digital content (e.g. Arabic blogs or YouTube recitations with subtitles) could be transformative, providing real-world communication practice.

At the same time, the content of Arabic learning is evolving. Instead of focusing solely on fiqh or Nahw grammar, modern curricula weave in contemporary issues. For instance, courses in Arabic could address sustainability by reading Qur'anic verses on stewardship (Khilāfa) or discussing current events in Arabic media. This makes language study relevant – and aligns with global calls to include environmental awareness in education (Hepni *et al.*, 2025). A creative approach could be an Arabic “Green Curriculum” module, where students analyse Hadith on caring for the Earth. Such thematic integration reinforces Islamic local wisdom (like Acehese respect for nature) and satisfies UNESCO's urging to equip youth for “complex challenges” (UNESCO, 2025).

## Comparative Insights: Malaysia and Türkiye

By looking at peer countries, we glean lessons. Malaysia's experience with Arabic in Islamic schools mirrors Aceh's. In Malacca's *Al-Muhibbin* boarding school, researchers observed that Arabic is historically “a main base” of Islamic education, but that teachers face difficulties with modern pedagogy (Conexio Consulting, 2023; Khadafi *et al.*, 2024). They also documented the same three problem factors: underqualified teachers, insufficient materials, and inadequate learning environment. To counter these, Malaysian educators stress innovation. The *Al-Muhibbin* study explicitly concludes that “innovation is very necessary” for effective classrooms (Alfalaah / Darul Falaah Turkey, 2023; Ekawati *et al.*,

2024). Practical suggestions included using computers and multimedia as teaching aids. This aligns with Aceh's needs: by partnering with Malaysian institutions, Acehese schools could share curricula or digital materials. Malaysia even convened regional forums (ICESCO) on Arabic that included Indonesian educators, signalling a cooperative spirit in Southeast Asia.

In Türkiye (Turkey), the national Education Vision 2023 has gone further by systematising e-learning infrastructure across all subjects. The Turkish plan commits to building a "digital content ecosystem" and a national content archive (Conexio Consulting, 2023; Özer & Suna, 2019). While not all of that is specific to Islamic education, it indicates that Turkish schools (including Imam Hatip and Diyanet institutions) will have abundant e-resources. Aceh's pesantren could advocate for a similar archive – perhaps storing *kitab kuning* texts, lecture recordings, and student projects in digital form. Moreover, accounts from Turkish Islamic schools show that online platforms are increasingly central: institutions like Alfalaah Turkey highlight that they 'integrate digital tools into teaching', using online lectures and collaborative forums (Alfalaah / Darul Falaah Turkey, 2023; Tinmaz & Ozturk, 2019). This mirrors Aceh's move toward remote learning (especially made urgent by the pandemic). We can conclude that Aceh's Islamic education system can and should learn from its Indonesian, Malaysian, and Turkish counterparts: all are juggling tradition and innovation.

### **Pedagogical Factors Influencing Arabic Competence**

Synthesising theory with these case studies, several high-impact factors emerge:

1. **Educational Technology:** Access to ICT and a well-designed LMS drastically changes learning. When technology is user-friendly and content-rich, students report increased motivation and autonomy. Multimedia aids pronunciation and listening. Online quizzes with instant feedback allow self-paced learning. Furthermore, digital repositories enable personalised learning (students can pick texts suited to their level and interest). However, tech alone is not a silver bullet: human support remains crucial. Teachers must mentor students on how to learn online and supplement virtual tasks with in-person guidance.
2. **Innovative Teaching Methods:** Methods like **task-based learning** and **project work** in Arabic encourage active use of the language. For example, assigning group presentations on Islamic history or debates in Arabic about moral issues can sharpen skills in context. *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)* – emphasising speaking and listening through interaction – is gaining ground in Indonesia. For instance, one study showed CLT improved conversation skills significantly. Coupling these with modern devices (e.g. recording dialogues on smartphones, using language learning apps) multiplies impact.
3. **Teacher Professional Development:** Well-trained teachers are the linchpin. If teachers themselves are fluent in Arabic and adept at new pedagogy, they can guide students effectively. Research in Malaysia noted that teacher proficiency was a prime challenge. Thus, Aceh's strategy should include scholarships for pesantren teachers

to study at universities (perhaps abroad in the Middle East) and in pedagogical methods courses. In-service workshops on digital tools (e.g. how to run online reading circles) are vital. *Co-teaching* models, pairing senior kyais with fresh graduates versed in technology, could spread skills across the faculty.

4. **Curriculum and Assessment:** Curriculum matters. As Mardinsyah & Tumiran (2024) note, Acehese pesantren have already been re-evaluating their instructional objectives, curriculum materials, and learning models for the 21st century. The goal is to maintain core Islamic subjects while also embedding 21st-century skills (communication, critical thinking, digital literacy). Assessment should similarly evolve: instead of only written exams on grammar, include oral proficiency tests, projects, or portfolios of digital content. Even national accreditation bodies recognise the need for competence-based grading.
5. **Community and Cultural Factors:** Motivation and values play a subtler role. Acehese communities greatly esteem Arabic knowledge – it confers religious prestige and global opportunity. However, economic pressures (poverty, migration for work) can impede study. Programs must therefore be sustainable: scholarships for poor santri, support for boarding costs, and partnerships with diaspora networks. Moreover, local culture should be integrated: Acehese proverbs, history, and adat can be used as teaching material in Arabic classes, making learning relatable. Studies in Indonesia stress that anchoring education in local wisdom helps retention; pesantren themselves historically served as community centres, and they still do for social welfare.
6. **Global Influences:** Adoption of international benchmarks, such as those encouraged by UNESCO, lends credibility and clear goals. Indonesia participates in global assessments (like PISA) and Islamic networks (like ICESCO), which raise domestic expectations. Aceh can leverage this by collaborating with global institutions: e.g. study-tour exchanges with Middle Eastern universities, translation projects that publish Indonesian religious scholarship in Arabic, etc. The global Muslim educational community's support can also bring resources and trust – fulfilling the need for global trust mentioned in Ilyas *et al.* (2022).

### Sustainable Education and Islamic Values

Modernising Arabic teaching must also be sustainable in the broad sense – environmentally, socially, and economically. UNESCO's ESD agenda urges schools to incorporate sustainability into curricula. Pesantren, as community pillars, should be examples of this integration. For instance, pesantren could run recycling programs, farm organic food for the school (teaching relevant Arabic terms), or include green projects in Islamic studies, thus uniting pedagogy with ecological stewardship. A recent study argues that Indonesian pesantren are re-anchoring on ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) principles, embodying local wisdom while 'embracing changes'. Aceh's curriculum reforms could explicitly insert lessons on sustainability – both as local wisdom (Islamic care for nature) and universal good – in Arabic classes and beyond. This aligns with Indonesia's

own commitments: the national congress on sustainability urged pesantren to address climate change as part of education.

Furthermore, the following thorough recommendations that integrate evidence and vision will improve, such as:

1. **Enhance Infrastructure & Access:** Government and philanthropists must fund ICT infrastructure in Aceh's pesantren (computers, Internet, projectors). Public-private partnerships can create an educational network linking pesantren to universities and online libraries. As Turkey's Vision 2023 shows, investing in a "digital content archive" for education can pay huge dividends. Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs could develop a shared Arabic-learning portal that all pesantren can access.
2. **Strengthen Teacher Training:** Prioritise sending pesantren teachers to summer institutes (perhaps Indonesia–Saudi exchange programs for Arabic pedagogy). Train existing teachers in LMS usage and CLT methods. Foster teacher learning communities (like Walī Malaysia) where lessons learned in one dayah are shared nationwide.
3. **Modernise Curriculum & Assessment:** Formalise the concept of *Language Improvement Centres* in policy, incentivising pesantren to establish dedicated Arabic labs. Develop a competency-based Arabic syllabus for grades 10–12, integrating cultural media and sustainable development themes. Revise exam systems to include oral proficiency and projects (not just written grammar).
4. **Leverage Technology with Pedagogical Intent:** Adopt proven ed-tech tools. For example, create mobile apps in Bahasa Aceh and Indonesian that teach Arabic vocabulary through games. Encourage pesantren to produce podcasts or short videos on Islamic topics in Arabic. Align with UNESCO and ICESCO curricula by using their training materials in local languages. Crucially, ensure tech is always paired with teacher facilitation to maintain the human connection.
5. **Honour Local Wisdom while Reaching Global Standards:** Encourage pesantren to document Acehese wisdom (pantun, tales) in Arabic, showcasing Islam Nusantara in practice. This both preserves culture and enhances language skills. Promote Aceh as a model: as IIIT suggests, Indonesia can lead by demonstrating pluralistic, inclusive Islamic education in a global age. Policies should stress the comparative advantage of the Acehese curriculum (Qur'an and modern science together) as a benchmark for other regions.
6. **Engage Communities and Abroad:** Mobilise local businesses and alumni to support pesantren (adopt-a-school schemes). Facilitate Indonesian pesantren partnerships with universities in Malaysia, Turkey, or Arab countries for student exchanges or joint programs. UNESCO and Arab organisations (like ICESCO) can be liaisons to bring the best practices. For instance, Acehese Arabic teachers could join ICESCO's future forums on digital Arabic teaching.

## Conclusion

Aceh Besar's quest to develop Arabic competence among its youth is a microcosm of a grand, global educational challenge: how do religious schools thrive in modernity? As evidenced by international experience and local studies is integration, not isolation. Pesantren must weave together their rich Islamic heritage with the fabric of modern pedagogy and technology. As researchers have shown, digital tools can turn the tide – improving comprehension, autonomy, and confidence – while still needing the guidance and spirit that only dedicated teachers and communities can supply. The ambitious sustainable development goals that UNESCO champions remind us that education must be transformative: it should prepare students to navigate climate, equality, and knowledge challenges. Aceh's Islamic boarding schools can be at the forefront of this transformation, preserving moderation, producing knowledgeable citizens, and serving as beacons of trust in education (both domestically and internationally).

In the end, as Lukens-Bull notes, Indonesia is 'experimenting' with complex educational reform. The lessons from Aceh could well chart the next course of Islamic education globally. Aceh's pesantren will not only benefit their own students, but will also encourage similar changes around the world by committing to well-funded, culturally grounded, and technologically advanced Arabic programmes. It is a fair dinkum opportunity: combine prayer-mat devotion with keyboard-driven learning, tradition with innovation, and local wisdom with global vision. The result will be a generation of Acehnese who speak Arabic not only as a liturgical tongue but as a language of learning, bridging worlds for the prosperity of Indonesia and the *ummah*.

## References

- Alfalaah / Darul Falaah Turkey. (2023, 25 November). *A glimpse into Turkey's Islamic education landscape with Darul Falah Türkiye*. <https://alfalaahturkey.com/turkeys-islamic-education-in-turkey/>
- Amalia, S. D., Fata, I. A., Marhaban, S., Huda, I., & Saidu, A. (2025). An analysis of students' voices towards a regional LMS for ELT in Indonesian Islamic schools. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 12(2), 790–808. <https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v12i2.38202>
- Conexio Consulting. (2023). *2023 Turkey education vision announced*. <https://conexioconsulting.com/2023-turkey-education-vision-announced/>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Ekawati, D., Hidayat, H. D., & Rosyada, D. (2024). Enhancing vocabulary, dialogue, and writing skills in Arabic through communicative language teaching: An experimental study. *International Journal of Religion*, 5(9), 896–907. <https://doi.org/10.61707/5880sz57>
- Fadli, M. R., & Dwiningrum, S. I. A. (2021). Pesantren's digital literacy: An effort to realize the advancement of pesantren education. *Ulul Albab*, 22(2), 338–359. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/0569/827364717a62f18ac4475134629bc4a2aac3.pdf>

- Habibi, I., Tobroni, T., Supriyatno, T., & Barizi, A. (2024). The Education of Ulama Cadres in Muhammadiyah Islamic Boarding School Karangasem Paciran Lamongan, Indonesia. *Progresiva: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Pendidikan Islam*, 13(01), 57-72.
- Halimi, H., Ulya, M., & Rahmatillah, S. (2022, February). The Digitalization of Kitab Kuning. In *International Symposium on Religious Literature and Heritage (ISLAGE 2021)* (pp. 282-288). Atlantis Press.
- Hepni; Muhammad Khusna Amal; Ubaidillah; Mohammad Nabil Almunawar; Mahmudah; Fauzan; & Khairunnisa Musari. (2025). Transformation of local wisdom based on Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) towards sustainable society: Evidence in Indonesia. In M. N. Almunawar, M. Z. Islam, & P. Ordóñez de Pablos (Eds.), *Organisational Learning and Sustainability: Advancing Knowledge for a Sustainable Future* (pp. 228–253). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003581918-12>
- Herman, S. Pd. I. (2025, 9 February). *Membangun masa depan Aceh: Pendidikan yang berkualitas dan berkarakter.* Lamuri Online. <https://www.lamurionline.com/2025/02/membangun-masa-depan-aceh-pendidikan.html>
- Ikhwansyah, M. F., Tanjung, R., Maspul, K. A., Firmanysah, F., & Amalia, F. (2023). Building Children Character in Islamic Education. *Jurnal Review Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran (JRPP)*, 6(4), 893-897.
- Ilyas, M., Ismail, Z., Zulfidar, F., Syarfuni, & Masrizal. (2022). Education transformation model of traditional pesantren in Aceh Province of Indonesia. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 14(4), 7197–7204. <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v14i4.2348>
- Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO). (2025, 24 July). *ICESCO convenes 2025 regional forum in Malaysia for Arabic education leaders in Southeast Asia.* <https://icesco.org/en/2025/07/24/icesco-convenes-2025-regional-forum-in-malaysia-for-arabic-education-leaders-in-southeast-asia/>
- Khadafi, M., Abrianto, D., Mardinsyah, M. A., Naibaho, S., Sitorus, P. A., Nasution, A., & Alaska, Y. (2024). Shaping the Religious Character of Students Through the Habituation Method at Madrasah Al-Muhibbin Melaka Malaysia. *International Conference Of Digital Sciences And Engineering Technology*, 1(1), 523-528.
- Kim, S., & Park, T. (2023). Understanding innovation resistance on the use of a new learning management system (LMS). *Sustainability*, 15(16), 12627.
- Lukens-Bull, R. (2018, July 5). *Indonesian Islamic education in a globalizing era.* International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). <https://iiit.org/en/dr-lukens-bull-indonesian-islamic-education-in-a-globalizing-era/>
- Mardinsyah, M. A., & Tumiran. (2024). Modernization of Arabic language learning based on Islamic boarding school at Perbobuhan Kebajikan Al-Muhibbin Malaka, Malaysia. *International Journal of Society and Law*, 2(3), 538–547. <https://journal.ysmk.or.id/index.php/IJSL/article/download/442/519/921>

- Maspul, K. A. (2024). Using interactive Language Development Tools to enhance cognitive and literacy skills in K-12 education. *J-SHMIC: Journal of English for Academic*, 11(1), 20-35.
- Maspul, K. A., Chemistry, V. I., Melinda, Y., Wisudayanti, K., Fedora, & Rochmah, D. F. (2025). ChatGPT as an Educative and Pedagogical Tool: Perspectives and Prospects in International Schools in Indonesia. *Innovative Technologica: Methodical Research Journal*, 4(2), 17. <https://doi.org/10.47134/innovative.v4i2.137>
- Maspul, K., Chemistry, V., Melinda, Y., Wisudayanti, K., Fedora, & Rochmah, D. F. (2025a). How Can ChatGPT Empower Indonesian Classrooms?. *Frontiers in Research Journal*, 1(3), 26. <https://doi.org/10.47134/frontiers.v1i3.423>
- Nilan, P. (2009). The “spirit of education” in Indonesian “pesantren”. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 30(2), 219–232. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425690802700321>
- Özer, M., & Suna, H. E. (2019). Future of vocational and technical education in Turkey: Solid steps taken after Education Vision 2023. *Eğitim ve İnsani Bilimler Dergisi: Teori ve Uygulama*, 10(20), 166-192.
- Pormann, P. E. (2012). Classical Scholarship and Arab Modernity. In *Modernity's Classics* (pp. 123-141). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Riska, N. (2018). *The nature of social capital developed in traditional Islamic boarding schools (dayah) and its effect on the employment of graduates from rural communities in Aceh, Indonesia* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Canberra).
- The Brookings Institution. (2022, May). *Digital public technologies and the Sustainable Development Goals* (commissioned paper/report). Brookings. [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Digital\\_public\\_technologies\\_and\\_SDGs.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Digital_public_technologies_and_SDGs.pdf)
- Tinmaz, H., & Ozturk, Y. E. (2019). ICT integration into education: A comparison of South Korea and Turkey. *Perspectives on global development and technology*, 18(4), 422-456.
- UNESCO. (2025, 15 October). *UNESCO convenes the ESD-Arab NET regional workshop towards mainstreaming education for sustainable development in the Arab region* [Press release]. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-convenes-esd-arab-net-regional-workshop-towards-mainstreaming-education-sustainable>
- Zahara, S., Zikri, I., & Safitri, A. S. (2024). Village Fund and Rural Poverty: Evidence from North Aceh, the Poorest Region in Aceh. *Sodality: Jurnal Sosiologi Pedesaan*, 12(2), 55-70.