



Bringing the Qur'an to life: Teaching students the art of reciting the Qur'an

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ABSTRACT

The majority of Thailand's population is Buddhist. However, there are four provinces in the southern part of Thailand that mostly Muslims inhabit. The UINSA International Community Engagement (UICE) delegation team was assigned to plunge into the Muslim community living in Thailand to revive the Qur'anic values in non-Muslim society. Thus, the Muslim population in Thailand would not lose the Qur'anic values even as a minority. This activity also tries to introduce Qur'an recitation art guidance to Muslims in Southern Thailand who are less familiar with this activity. Therefore, this paper aims to describe the activities of Al-Qur'an reading art education by providing intensive guidance on the recitation of Al-Qur'an as a form of community service. The approach used is a qualitative approach that is Asset Based Community Development that is conducted in five stages, namely initial preparation, analysis, designing expectations, program implementation, and results evaluation. The Qur'an recitation art guidance method involves intensive recitation guidance classes, periodic evaluations, performances, competitions, and presenting prizes. Based on the implementation of these activities, some significant achievements have been obtained to increase the potential of Qur'an recitation art of Attarkiah Islamiyah Institute students.

Keywords: education; qur'an; tilawah; student

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INTRODUCTION

This program is called UINSA International Community Engagement (UICE), which the authors will further refer to as UICE. This program is one of UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya's steps in realizing its academic quality, namely the internationalization of Higher Education. The focus of Higher Education Internationalization is none other than preparing the capacity of its students to be able to compete on an international scale (Mali, 2020). Program strategies that can be applied are related to academic activities, research, external relations, and public services (Zulfa, 2016). UINSA then dispatched several delegates to several



provinces in Thailand, one of which was in a province called Narathiwat in Southern Thailand with a majority Muslim population.

The majority of the population in Thailand is not Muslim. Even though Islam is the second most practiced religion among its citizens, the percentage of only 5.4% is a clear indication that Islam is a minority religion (The Institute, 2022). Buddhism with a percentage of 93% is the main religion practiced by the Thai population. Followed by Christianity, Hinduism, and others, each only makes up approximately 1% of the Thai population. Despite this, however, several parts of Thailand have Muslims as the majority, namely in the four southern regions of the country; Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Songkhla (Sanurdi, 2018).

Narathiwat is one of the provinces in Southern Thailand that is inhabited by a majority of Muslims. As this province borders directly with Malaysia, it is no wonder that the population uses Malay as their mother tongue. As a Muslim province, Narathiwat certainly tries to fulfill the needs of the community by providing facilities for its citizens in the form of access to Islamic school education. One such school is Attarkiah Islamiah Institute located on Treerat Road, Bang Nak Sub-district, Mueang District, Narathiwat Province. Attarkiah Islamiah Institute is a large Islamic private school founded by Hj. Mat Diah, Chairman of the Narathiwat Islamic Committee for Education, on June 11, 1963. Its growing development has made Attarkiah have a total land area of about 2.36 hectares. This is certainly supported by financial assistance from various parties, especially for the construction of school buildings and all the facilities needed, such as a mosque, canteen, school cooperative, sports field, garden, sound laboratory, computer room, science room, library, children's study room, electronic classroom, DVD room, and conference hall. Attarkiah Islamiah Institute also has two curricula running in the school; firstly, the academic curriculum with a total of 149 teachers; and secondly, the religious curriculum with a total of 118 teachers. All of these teachers are tasked with educating approximately 4000 students with the applicable curriculum.

As an Islamic standard private school that lives in the middle of a secular country, Attarkiah Islamiah has a vision and mission to strengthen the Islamic character of students. Strengthening the Islamic education-based character is reflected through several activities such as reading prayers at every morning assembly; dhuha, dhuhr, and asar prayers in the congregation; reading the Al-Qur'an for 15 minutes at each initial lesson session; Islamic lectures; reading Asmaul Husna together at the end of each class session; and reading travel prayers before leaving the school gate to go home. Based on research conducted by Dea Farhani (2019) entitled *Manajemen Pendidikan Karakter Melalui Kegiatan Kurikuler Keagamaan*, reveals that character development efforts through disciplining the implementation of these activities are carried out to achieve the goal of creating independent, sincere, responsible, disciplined, and polite characters. This is also in line with Attarkiah Islamiah's slogan of religion, discipline, and knowledge.

Religious education by instilling Qur'anic values is not limited to understanding the text, but also related to the art in exhibiting its beauty,

tranquility, and value. One of the ways to achieve such is through learning about the art of reading the Qur'an. The art of reciting the Qur'an is the art of reciting the holy verse of Al-Qur'an. The art of reading the Qur'an is also commonly referred to as the art of tilawah which means reading the Qur'anic verses properly and beautifully (Arieska, 2019). The art of reciting the Qur'an is not just a technical skill in pronouncing letters and words but can be a sustainable motivation for individuals to memorize and love the Qur'an more deeply (Saeful, 2019). Competence in the art of reciting the Qur'an is proven to improve one's ability to recite the Qur'an. Individuals who already have talent in this field will certainly get more opportunities to be able to expand their knowledge through the beauty of the chanting of the holy verses of the Qur'an (Faiza, 2023). The benefits of sessions of tilawah Al-Qur'an can influence a person to have a high awareness and sense of knowledge of the process of memorizing the Qur'an (Saeful, 2019).

Further Qur'an reading art education also occurs in the realm of competition, in Arabic called Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an, which means Qur'an reading contest. Competitions like this can be used as a forum to train the participants' resolve to display the beauty of the Qur'an recitation they have learned. This type of contest will also test the participants' level in Qur'an recitation. It also can instill competitive character education to create students that are more enthusiastic about developing their potential (Hasan, 1970). Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an can also be a place for people to always try to increase their love for the values within the Qur'an. Because Al-Qur'an also comprises aspects of science, society, and Islamic values to vitalize *rahmatan lil alamin* (Azwar, 2018).

Based on previous studies conducted at Attarkiah Islamiah Institute, Narathiwat Province, Thailand, Al-Qur'an is one of the mediums for character development for students. This is done as a form of effort to strengthen Islamic values so that they are firmly embedded in the hearts of every student as a religious minority in the era of cultural mix-ups in secular countries (Devi, 2020). We found through observations that many students have potential in the field of vocals, many of whom also have an interest in the field of recitation, but are still hesitant to show their abilities mostly due to the lack of confidence. We found the spark of this interest by noticing students' habit of listening to murottal al-Qur'an through social media during break times. This can create opportunities for further self-development, so attention to the matter is required. However, the school encounters an obstacle in the absence of qualified teaching staff to guide students in reading the Qur'an. Therefore, the access of Attarkiah Islamiah students to learn about the Art of Reading al-Qur'an needs intensive guidance and special attention. In addition, the absence of an adequate forum for students causes a low level of confidence in students to perform their recitation of the Qur'an in public. This is based on the results of in-depth observations at Attarkiah Islamiah during classes in subjects related to the Qur'an, namely Tafsir, Qur'an, and Tajweed, as the students tend to act sheepish and nervous when asked to read a verse in front of their classmates.

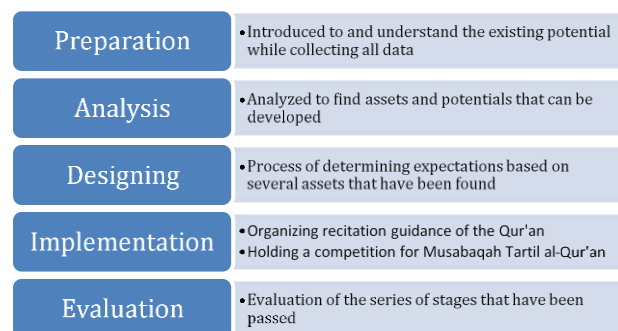
Based on the data provided above, the authors carry the theme of Qur'an Recitation Guidance for Attarkiah Islamiah students who have an interest and

potential in the art of recitation Al-Qur'an. This effort aims to increase the students' innate capability, as well as train the courage of students to display their recitation in front of a large audience.

METHOD

UINSA International Community Engagement (UICE) is a program initiated by *Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Masyarakat* (LP2M) UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya in the context of international community service. This program is carried out for approximately one month using the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach. Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is a sustainable community empowerment approach that focuses on the assets, strengths, and potential of the community (Setyawan et al., 2022). ABCD theory as a whole aims to empower communities to become agents of change in improving their conditions. The approach emphasizes collaboration, active participation, and community empowerment to achieve sustainable development (*Panduan KKN ABCD, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2016*). This program has been designed in structured and planned stages to achieve the previously set goals. The stages carried out include initial preparation, analysis, designing expectations, program implementation, and evaluation of results.

In the preparation stage, the authors are introduced to and understand the existing potential while collecting all data related to Attarkiah Islamiah Institute. After that, all the data that has been collected is further analyzed to find assets and potentials contained in the institution that can be developed. The next stage is the process of determining expectations based on several assets that have been found to create better conditions than before. Then at the program implementation stage, the authors carry out two continuous activities, namely: *first*, organizing recitation guidance of the Qur'an; and *second*, holding a competition for Musabaqah Tartil al-Qur'an. The last stage is an evaluation of the series of stages that have been passed to see the success of the program.



Picture 1. Flowchart of the Activity Implementation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

UINSA International Community Engagement (UICE) activities carried out at Attarkiah Islamiah Institute, Narathiwat, Thailand, focus on educational activities

in the art of reading the Qur'an. Through innovative learning methods, this activity has involved several parties, namely 1) Al-Hidayah Waqaf Foundation, Songkhla, Thailand; 2) Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Masyarakat (LP2M) UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya; 3) Attarkiah Islamiah Institute of Education, Narathiwat, Thailand.

The results of this UICE activity consist of several stages, including initial preparation, analysis, designing expectations, program implementation, and results evaluation. The first stage is preparation. This stage is the beginning before moving on to the implementation activities. The preparation stage began on the first day of arrival at Attarkiah Islamiah. The first step taken was to coordinate with the Attarkiah Islamiah using the Appreciative Inquiry method. In this step, we conduct an interview that focuses on the achievements and potential of the community. This method is used as a first step in community development and effective communication with the community (Afandi et al., 2022).

One of the results obtained based on coordination with the school is the direction to follow the rules and activities in the school and dormitory as well as curfew for female students and staff. The Attarkiah Islamiah Institute is very open to the entire UICE Narathiwat delegation team, Thailand, to carry out their activities to the fullest while in the Institute. As said by Dr. Phaisan Toryib the Manager and Licensee of Attarkiah Islamiah Institute that:

“Take all you want, and give all that you can”



Picture 2. Coordination with Attarkiah Islamiah Institute

In this initial stage, we continue to identify the assets owned by Attarkiah Islamiah institutions. The data was obtained through in-depth observations and interviews with teachers and students at Attarkiah Islamiah. This correlates with Cunningham and Mathie, who stated that asset identification is a tool used to explore the potential of a region or community (Afandi et al., 2022).

Following the observations conducted, there are four key assets found in the school. These assets are institutional, human assets, financial assets, and socio-cultural assets. Based on the four assets found, the analysis emphasizes the potentials that already exist in school institutions but have not been able to be developed optimally.



Picture 3. The Asset Identification Process

The second stage is the designing expectations. At this stage, the writers outline the targets to be achieved by utilizing the assets owned by Attarkiah students. The authors conduct further discussions to be able to determine the achievements that will be targeted in the program to be implemented. This discussion was conducted to find alternatives that had never been thought of before (Afandi et al., 2022). Based on the results of observations and interviews, we found that students lack confidence in reciting the holy verses of the Qur'an in front of a crowd. Fitriana Mios Pradika said that there is a positive and significant relationship between the intensity of reading the holy verse of the Qur'an and self-confidence. The higher the intensity of reading the holy verse of the Qur'an, the higher the level of self-confidence (Pradika, 2014). Based on this, we concluded that the assets to be further developed were those related to the art of reciting the Qur'an.

The third stage is program design. After analyzing assets and determining achievements, the stage continued by designing several strategic plans to implement the program. This stage is also known as Low Hanging Fruits, which focuses on preparing and developing programs in a fast, easy and has a high success rate way according to the potential that has been found (Afandi et al., 2022). The strategic plan includes the following; the first one is to run a recitation class, the second one is to conduct regular evaluation sessions to assess participants' progress as well as provide motivation, feedback, and suggestions to students for continuous improvement, the third one is encouraging the students to perform recitation performances in front of many people, the fourth one is holding Qur'an recitation competitions (Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an), and the fifth one is the awarding of prizes and certificates for students.

Table 1. Activities table

No	Activities	Objective
1	Guidance of Tilawatil Qur'an	To produce Qori' who not only are skilled in the art of reciting the Qur'an with a melodious voice but also have a good comprehension of the Qur'anic verses they read.
2	Periodic Evaluations	To assess participants' progress in reciting the Qur'an and provide motivation, as well as feedback and suggestions to students for continuous improvement.
3	Tilawah Performance	To increase students' confidence in reading in front of others.

4	Qur'an recitation competition (Musabaqah Tartil al-Qur'an)	To test the quality of recitation while motivating students to improve the quality of their reading, such as fluency, and mastery of tajweed and fashahah.
5	Presenting Prizes and Certificate	A form of appreciation for students who have won competitions and participated in intensive recitation of the Qur'an.

The fourth stage is program implementation. After designing the steps required to achieve the objectives, the next stage is determining the details of the activities. The first activity is the Qur'an recitation guidance class. Tilawah Al-Qur'an is the skill of reading the Qur'an in a careful and precise pronunciation so that the meanings contained in the verses would be easier to understand (Rauf, n.d.). In this activity, participants are given lessons on seven naghmah in the art of recitation, namely Bayyati, Sika, Shoba, Rast, Hijaz, Jiharkah, and Nahawand. (Noorhidayati et al., 2020) The second activity is conducting periodic evaluation sessions. This step is necessary to assess the participants' progress in the Qur'an recitation.



Picture 4. Tilawah tutoring class

The third activity is training students to perform recitations in front of a large audience. Recitation performances are held during school activities, such as big events or abroad guests welcoming. The fourth activity is to hold a competition in the art of reading the Qur'an (Musabaqah Tartil al-Qur'an). This activity was greeted by Attarkiah Islamiah students with great enthusiasm. The school also highly appreciates this activity by preparing cash prizes for the winners. The fifth activity is awarding prizes and certificates to students. This activity was carried out as an appreciation step for the contestants who had ventured to take part in the Qur'an Reading Art Competition. The winner was announced in front of all Attarkiah Islamiah students so that it could be a motivation for other students to further pursue and train in the quality of the Art of Reciting the Qur'an.

Table 2. Performance Table

No	Activities	Time
1	Guidance of Tilawatil Qur'an	Sunday-Thursday, 2nd Break Hour
2	Periodic Evaluations	Customized
3	Tilawah Performance	Big Event / Welcoming Guests
4	Qur'an Recitation Art Competition (Musabaqah Tartil Qur'an)	November 22nd, 2023
5	Presenting Prizes and Certificate	November 27th, 2023

After going through the previous four stages, the fifth stage is evaluating the results. This stage is conducted to assess the success of these programs. The tilawah guidance class is carried out intensively for approximately one month. The implementation of Tilawatil Qur'an guidance was carried out well and followed by all participants with enthusiasm. Participants are able to understand and practice Nagham Al-Qur'an according to the examples provided properly and correctly. The best participant in the recitation of the Qur'an was Luqman Wongsontham, by considered the liveliness of students in the learning process. Then for the winner of the competition, Musabaqah Tartil al-Qur'an male branch was achieved by: 1) Imron Wongsontham; 2) Anas Paju; 3) Ammar Binseng. The winners of the female branch of the Musabaqah Tartil al-Qur'an competition were 1) Nurratilah Daoh; 2) Nur-Amirah Yusoh; and 3) Nawal Nima.

Table 3. Percentage Comparison of Students' Understanding Before and After Guidance

Qur'an Recitation Rate	Percentage	N
Before Intensive Guidance	30%	21
After Intensive Guidance	80%	21

The table above shows that the level of recitation of the Qur'an of the Attarkiah Islamiah Institute students has increased to 80% after being guided by experts in their fields. And as a manifestation of the success of the implementation of Community Engagement activities has led to several changes that can be seen from the comparison between before and after the implementation of a series of Qur'an Reading Art Education programs as follows:

Table 4. Changes before and after a series of intensive guidance of recitation of the Qur'an

Before Intensive Guidance	After Intensive Guidance
Students have a low level of confidence in reading the Qur'an in public.	Increased level of confidence in reading the Qur'an in public.
Students' fashahah and tajweed in reading the Qur'an are still considered poor.	Increased student fashahah and tajweed in reading the Qur'an.

With the implementation of the program planned based on desires and expectations, namely the guidance of recitation of the Qur'an and the competition for Musabaqah Tartil al-Qur'an, it can be said that the success rate of this activity reaches more than 80%. This success is mostly measured by the increase of students' confidence and quality in Qur'an recitation. As seen in the success of one of the students of the intensive recitation class, Luqman Wongsontham, who was awarded first place in the Narathiwat Provincial Inter-Student Tilawatil Qur'an Competition. Through the guidance of recitation of the Qur'an has become one of the platforms for the development of the potential and skills possessed by students.



Picture 5. Tartil al-Qur'an Competition

Starting from this coaching, we hope that there will be more and more students who excel in the field of reciting the Qur'an and willing to participate and win the recitation competition at the provincial and even national levels. In addition, Musabaqah Tartil Al-Qur'an is a place to hone the mentality of students to perform and be assessed in public. This competition is the result of the development of the assets of many students who are skilled in the art of murottal. We also hope that this program will pioneer other Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an program between Attarkiah students that will be held annually.

CONCLUSION

UINSA International Community Engagement (UICE) in Attarkiah Islamiah Institute carried out by the UICE team focuses on the development of the art of reading the Qur'an. Through an innovative approach to the provision of Qur'an recitation education, we hope it will leave a positive impact on the students' skills relating to the art of Qur'an recitation. This impact can be achieved by intensive assistance and guidance in tilawah taught by experienced teachers, training to perform in public, and the Musabaqah Tartil al-Qur'an. The success rate of this activity reaches more than 80%, because it helps increasing the confidence and quality of students' Qur'an recitation. As seen in the success of one of the students of the intensive tilawah guidance class, Luqman Wongsontham, who was awarded first place in the Narathiwat Provincial Inter-Student Qur'an Competition. We hope that this program will inspire continuity of activities such as holding the Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an between Attarkiah students annually.

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program. Hopefully, this program will have a lasting impact, make a real contribution, and can be sustainable in the future.

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