

Curriculum Integration in Islamic Boarding School: A Case Study of Al-Ihsan Boarding School, Riau

Rini Setyaningsih^{1*}, Muhammad Aryo Ramadhan², Merrina Ulfa³,
Siti Anne Barkah Nur Fauziah⁴

^{1,2,3} Universitas Islam Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, Indonesia

⁴ Mersin Üniversitesi, Turkey

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received
25-03-2025

Accepted
25-07-2025

Published
29-07-2025

ABSTRACT

The increasing demand for Islamic boarding schools to deliver both religious and academic education has prompted curriculum integration efforts nationwide. However, previous studies have not fully addressed how pesantren practically implement this integration while maintaining educational quality. This study explores how Al-Ihsan Boarding School in Riau integrates the Diniyah Curriculum with the National Curriculum, focusing on implementation practices, challenges, and institutional responses. The main research problem centers on how pesantren can balance two different pedagogical frameworks within a limited time and capacity. Using a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis, data were collected through in-depth interviews and observations involving the Deputy Head of Curriculum and the Boarding School Leader. The data were analyzed thematically through stages of data condensation, categorization, interpretation, and verification. Findings reveal that integration enhances students' competencies across both curriculum domains, yet faces challenges including contrasting instructional methods, time constraints, and varied student preparedness. To overcome these, Al-Ihsan has developed contextualized support strategies, such as study clubs and tutoring sessions, which help students adapt and succeed. This study contributes a context-specific model for curriculum integration in pesantren and recommends future research on broader institutional comparisons, as well as policy support for adaptive academic management in Islamic boarding schools.

KEYWORDS

Curriculum; Integration; Diniyah Curriculum; National Curriculum;
Islamic Boarding School



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).
Copyright © 2025 [Nadwa: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam](#)

***Corresponding author:** Rini Setyaningsih ✉(rinisetyaningsih28@gmail.com), Universitas Islam Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, Indonesia.

Introduction

Boarding school is an Islamic educational institution that has long been an important part of the education system in Indonesia. As a center of religious learning, the Boarding School focuses on deepening Islamic knowledge with a traditional approach based on the Yellow Book. Along with the times, modern Boarding schools emerged that not only teach religious education, but also include the national curriculum so that students have a broader insight and can compete in the academic and professional world (Isbah & Sakhiyya, 2023).

Modern Boarding School is an educational concept that harmonizes two main aspects in the learning system, namely the Boarding School curriculum and the national curriculum. Curriculum integration in this context aims to harmonize religious education that characterizes Boarding schools with general education that has been determined in the national curriculum, thus students can gain a deep understanding of Islam while developing broader academic competencies, so that they can compete in various fields of life (Ade Putri Wulandari, 2020).

Curriculum integration is a form of educational collaboration that has a strategic role in improving the quality of an institution. The implementation of this integration, the quality standards of education can be better guaranteed, as well as encourage active community involvement in supporting the development of these institutions (Mastur, 2022). This shows that curriculum integration not only has an impact on learning effectiveness but also strengthens the relationship between educational institutions and the surrounding environment (Jamalia et al., 2021).

Philosophically, the integration of the madrasah curriculum into the Boarding School curriculum is based on the views of the caregivers who believe that education must be holistic and not separated between aspects of religion and general science (Abror & Rohmaniyah, 2023). From a sociological perspective, this integration is a response to changing times, where Boarding schools continue to adapt through a dynamic dialectical process to social developments and community needs (Munjiat, 2017). The unification of this curriculum is not just an internal policy of the Boarding School, but part of the evolution of Islamic education that balances traditional values with the demands of modernity (Lucia Maduningtias, 2022).

Facing curriculum changes and government policies, Islamic boarding schools need to adjust their educational orientation to collaborate with the curriculum system that has been implemented in formal institutions (Jayadi et al. 2024). Islamic boarding schools accommodate the national curriculum by adjusting their learning structure

without eliminating the Islamic identity that characterizes them (Anwar et al., 2022). The national curriculum, both from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, is integrated into the Boarding School education system as part of the learning process. This accommodation mechanism is carried out by adopting general subjects and adjusting them to the needs and characteristics of the santri, thus creating a balance between religious and academic education (Firman & Indriawati, 2021).

Al-Ihsan Boarding School is one of the Islamic educational institutions that implements integration between the diniyah curriculum and the national curriculum. The diniyah curriculum focuses on learning Islamic sciences such as tafsir, hadith, fiqh, and morals, while the national curriculum includes general subjects such as math, science, language, and social sciences. However, the implementation of the integration of these two curricula often faces various challenges, such as the allocation of learning time, the dense curriculum, and the ability of santri to balance the two learning systems.

In the context of Al-Ihsan Boarding School, curriculum integration faces its challenges, especially in dealing with the dynamics of changes in santri every year, which include differences in educational backgrounds, academic abilities, and varying levels of religious understanding. In addition, another challenge is the difference in learning methods between the Diniyah Curriculum and the National Curriculum. This requires Boarding schools to adjust learning methods to meet the needs of all students without sacrificing the quality of education. The time challenge is also a crucial factor in applying these two curricula optimally, given the limited learning hours that must be divided between the diniyah curriculum and the national curriculum (Rofiq, 2022). This condition often results in academic pressure for students and educators in delivering the material thoroughly in a limited time (Khafifah et al., 2023).

This research offers novelty by analyzing the implementation model of curriculum integration that not only aligns with national education policies but also preserves the distinctive identity of Islamic boarding schools. What distinguishes this study is its relevance in the context of the digital era, where education systems are increasingly required to adapt to technological developments. The integration of the Diniyah Curriculum and the National Curriculum is analyzed not merely as an administrative or pedagogical strategy but as a critical response to the evolving landscape of Islamic education amidst digital transformation. This study highlights how Al-Ihsan Boarding School seeks to harmonize traditional religious learning with modern

academic demands, including efforts to adopt digital tools and flexible learning strategies. Thus, the findings contribute to a broader understanding of how Islamic educational institutions can maintain their foundational values while remaining adaptive and responsive to the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital age.

Method

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore the integration of the Diniyah Curriculum and the National Curriculum at Al-Ihsan Boarding School, Riau. A case study approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of a specific educational setting, particularly to capture the complexity of curriculum implementation in a real-life context. The research focuses on a single institution as a bounded system to understand the dynamics, challenges, and strategies of curriculum integration. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and non-participant observations. The key informants were the Deputy Head of Curriculum and the Boarding School Leader, who are directly involved in curriculum planning and implementation. The interview guide focused on curriculum planning, integration challenges, and pedagogical adjustments. Observations were conducted in both diniyah and national classes to capture teaching interactions, time management, and student engagement.

The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (2014) interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To enhance the validity and trustworthiness, triangulation was applied by comparing data from interviews and observations. Member checking was also conducted by sharing preliminary findings with the participants to confirm accuracy and interpretation. This methodological approach ensures that the findings reflect the actual practices and perspectives within the boarding school. The research subjects were the Deputy Head of Curriculum and the Boarding School Leader, who are responsible for planning, managing, and implementing curriculum integration.

The Deputy Head of Curriculum plays a role in academic policy and learning supervision, while the Boarding School Leader sets the educational vision and ensures curriculum alignment with Boarding School values and national policies. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and observations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Head of Curriculum and the Head of Boarding School to gather information on integration strategies, challenges, and academic policies. Observations were made to directly observe the learning process, teaching patterns,

and interactions between educators and students in the implementation of the two curricula.

Data were analyzed using descriptive analysis, including data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Relevant information from interviews and observations was filtered, presented in the form of descriptive narratives, and analyzed to identify patterns in curriculum integration and formulate recommendations for improving the effectiveness of learning in the Boarding School.

Results and Discussions

Curriculum Used at Al-Ihsan Boarding School, Riau

The findings of this study are discussed through the lens of Integrated Curriculum Theory Drake and Burns (2004), which emphasizes the alignment of content, pedagogy, and assessment across traditionally separated domains of learning. In the context of Al-Ihsan Boarding School, this theoretical framework helps analyze how religious (Diniyah) and academic (National) curricula can be merged both structurally and functionally to support comprehensive learning outcomes.

The integration is grounded in the philosophical foundation of Islamic education as proposed by Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas (Sassi, 2018). His concept of *ta'dib*, which refers to the holistic education of the soul, mind, and body, provides a meaningful perspective to examine how curriculum integration in Islamic boarding schools addresses not only intellectual development but also spiritual and moral formation. Together, these two perspectives offer a deeper understanding of how pesantren curriculum integration responds to both contemporary educational standards and the epistemological framework of Islamic education. Al-Ihsan Boarding School Riau implements an educational system that integrates two curricula: the Diniyah Curriculum and the National Curriculum. The Diniyah Curriculum is designed to strengthen students' understanding of Islamic sciences such as tafsir, hadith, fiqh, akhlaq, and Arabic. This curriculum aims to shape Islamic character, enhance spirituality, and instill strong religious values in the students.

According to the Deputy Head of Curriculum, "The diniyah curriculum is the soul of our pesantren. It forms the moral foundation of the students and instills discipline that cannot be taught by the national curriculum alone." This integration is reflected in the daily schedule, where Diniyah subjects are taught in the early morning and evening, while general subjects are delivered during regular school hours.

The National Curriculum applied follows the standards set by the Ministry of Education and Culture. For Grade 10, the pesantren has adopted the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes student-centered learning and flexibility. For Grades 11 and 12, the school still uses the 2013 Curriculum, which is based on thematic learning and competency-based assessment. An academic staff member stated, "We want our students to be able to compete with those in public schools. That is why we fully implement national standards in subjects like math, science, and languages."

These findings are supported by research by Alfaeni et.al, (2023), which shows that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in pesantren provides students with opportunities to develop their potential according to their interests and talents, as well as foster independent learning. Meanwhile, research by Fitra (2023) highlights that the flexibility of the Merdeka Curriculum structure enables pesantren administrators to adjust general learning without disrupting the established diniyah content. For the upper grades, the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum remains relevant because its thematic learning approach supports cross-disciplinary integration that aligns with the pesantren context (Aspiyah, 2024). The pesantren integrates relevant content across both curricula to avoid redundancy and maximize coherence. For example, in fiqh classes, students study both classical Islamic texts and contemporary textbooks issued by the government. A fiqh teacher explained, "When I teach muamalah topics, I combine the Fath al-Qarib kitab with the national fiqh textbook to help students understand the application of Islamic law in today's context."

The study by Sholehuddin & Karimah (2021) supports this integration, noting that the combination of classical and modern materials in fiqh lessons improves students' contextual understanding of Islamic legal values and their application in modern society. Their research recommends a curriculum-based integrative approach so that pesantren graduates have academic competitiveness without losing their religious identity. In classroom observations, students were actively engaged in discussions linking classical content with modern applications. In the Grade 10 Arabic lesson, the teacher used classical nahwu texts and digital tools to reinforce grammar concepts. The observer noted, "The teacher introduced i'rab from a classical text, then reinforced the concept through an interactive app that translated Arabic sentences into Bahasa Indonesia." This approach aligns with the general goals of pesantren education, which aim to produce students who are deeply rooted in Islamic values while being able to thrive in a modern, knowledge-based society. The integration of the two curricula ensures that students receive a deep religious understanding along

with academic preparedness to pursue higher education or contribute directly to the community.

The integration of the Diniyah and National Curricula at Al-Ihsan Boarding School is not merely an administrative structure, but also part of a cultural ecosystem shaped by Islamic traditions. The school environment is characterized by a disciplined daily routine, close interaction between students and the kyai, and the consistent application of Islamic values in daily life. A dormitory teacher stated, "Discipline here is not just about rules, it's about building character. Students learn to wake up early for tahajjud, follow study routines, and respect teachers as part of adab."

These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that the pesantren environment significantly contributes to shaping individuals who are responsible, honest, and disciplined (Ma'arif et al., 2021). Moreover, the pesantren culture promotes respectful behavior, appreciation for teachers, and the development of leadership and social solidarity among students (Apiyah & Suharsiwi, 2021). Observations at Al-Ihsan also revealed daily practices such as congregational prayers, communal meals, and student-led discussions, which strengthen social bonds and foster leadership from an early age.

This integrated curriculum model, supported by strong institutional culture and values, not only meets the academic standards set by the government but also fulfills the spiritual and character-building goals that are the essence of Islamic education. One of the strategies implemented at Al-Ihsan Boarding School is the integration of subjects that have thematic and conceptual links between the diniyah and national curricula. In fiqh learning, for instance, students do not rely solely on classical Islamic legal texts but also engage with contemporary fiqh textbooks published by the national education authorities. This dual reference helps bridge traditional Islamic jurisprudence with modern educational expectations.

Previous studies, such as that by Basri (2012), emphasize the foundational role of classical fiqh texts—such as Taqrib, Safinah an-Najah, Fath al-Mu'in, Fath al-Qarib, and Sullam at-Taufiq—in pesantren education. These texts, derived from the main schools of classical Islamic law, are typically delivered through traditional learning methods like talaqqi and require strong textual comprehension. Khaq (2024) adds that this method of instruction enables santri to attain a nuanced understanding of Islamic law that is deeply rooted in classical tradition while also being applicable to contemporary issues.

By combining both classical and national curriculum sources, the pesantren facilitates a more holistic understanding of fiqh. Students are not only able to grasp

theoretical concepts from traditional texts but also learn how to apply them in practical, real-life contexts, as emphasized in national curriculum materials. This integration strategy ensures that santri acquire comprehensive legal insight that is aligned with both Islamic intellectual heritage and current societal needs.

The main difference between the learning system in Boarding schools and the approach that adopts fiqh books from the national curriculum lies in the teaching methods and coverage of the material. In a Boarding School, the study of fiqh focuses more on understanding the yellow Islamic classic books in Arabic without harakat, so that students are required to master *Nahwu* and *Sharaf* to understand the text well. Meanwhile, fiqh textbooks from the national curriculum are more organized in Indonesian with a more applicable and contextual approach, which allows students to understand fiqh in everyday life, following the times. By combining these two approaches, santri not only gain a deep understanding of fiqh from classical sources, but are also able to apply their knowledge in a broader social and legal context. This shows that curriculum integration in Boarding schools not only enriches the santri's Islamic insight but also makes them more adaptive in facing the challenges of modern life.

Nahwu and *Sharaf* subjects, which are integral components of Arabic learning in pesantren, are harmonized with the national curriculum through structured Arabic language lessons. While the national curriculum emphasizes Arabic as a functional language for communication, Al-Ihsan Boarding School maintains a strong emphasis on classical grammar rooted in traditional Islamic texts.

Field observations revealed that the teaching of *Nahwu* and *Sharaf* involves a combination of classical texts such as *Jurumiyah* and *Imrithi* alongside exercises from national curriculum materials. Teachers use both approaches to ensure students grasp the grammatical theory and can apply it in practical linguistic contexts. Typically, instruction begins with traditional grammar explanation and is then reinforced through structured national textbook activities. Based on interview data, it was found that educators at Al-Ihsan intentionally align classical grammar content with the competency standards of the national curriculum. For example, lessons on *i'rab* from classical texts support outcomes related to syntax and sentence construction in Arabic language instruction.

The document analysis also showed that lesson plans explicitly map classical Arabic learning objectives to national curriculum targets in reading comprehension and writing. This integrated strategy enables students to develop a deep understanding of

classical Arabic while also equipping them with practical language skills relevant to modern education.

Hajar and Qohar (2024) highlights the growing role of modern technology in Arabic grammar instruction, particularly through the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and interactive methods. Their study demonstrates that AI-based tools such as those utilizing Natural Language Processing (NLP) can significantly enhance students' ability to understand complex Nahwu and Sharaf concepts by offering personalized and real-time grammatical feedback. These innovations facilitate a more engaging and accessible learning process compared to traditional rote memorization.

Compared to the approach at Al-Ihsan Boarding School, which relies primarily on classical texts and face-to-face instruction, the model proposed by Hajar and Qohar presents a contrast in pedagogical orientation. While Al-Ihsan emphasizes internalization through classical reading and teacher-led explanations, the use of technology in Hajar and Qohar's framework prioritizes learner autonomy, interactive learning, and adaptability to diverse student needs.

This contrast illustrates the diverse pathways that pesantren and modern institutions can take in responding to the challenges of Arabic grammar instruction. Although Al-Ihsan does not yet fully integrate AI into its curriculum, its current strategy ensures depth of understanding through traditional methods. Meanwhile, the findings of Hajar and Qohar (2024) provide an alternative perspective that can inspire further development in pesantren, especially in incorporating technology that complements rather than replaces classical learning traditions. The curriculum integration strategy implemented by Al-Ihsan Boarding School is in line with various studies that have examined the effectiveness of integration between the Diniyah Curriculum and the National Curriculum in Boarding School education. Maduningtias (2022) confirms that curriculum integration in Boarding schools aims to improve the quality of graduates by ensuring a balance between mastery of religious knowledge and academic competencies following national education standards.

Sobali (2024) shows that curriculum integration between Boarding School and madrasah education has a positive impact on the readiness of graduates to face the challenges of the modern world. With this approach, santri not only explore Islamic knowledge comprehensively but also acquire relevant academic skills, allowing them to contribute more widely in various fields without losing their Islamic identity.

The integrated curriculum model at Al-Ihsan, supported by a strong institutional culture, not only meets national academic standards but also reflects the holistic

objectives of Islamic education. These findings were derived through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and curriculum document analysis, providing a comprehensive picture of how curriculum integration is implemented in practice.

Challenges Faced in Integrating the Diniyah Curriculum and the National Curriculum

The integration of the Diniyah Curriculum and the National Curriculum at Al-Ihsan Boarding School presents several complex and interrelated challenges that impact the effectiveness of learning. These challenges emerge not only from technical aspects such as time management and pedagogical methods but also from deeper sociocultural dynamics related to student diversity and institutional adaptation. Referring to the integrated curriculum theory of Beane as cited by Dowden et al. (2024), curriculum integration is understood as an educational approach that emphasizes the meaningful connection between subject content, students' real-life experiences, and relevant social issues. This perspective views the curriculum not as a collection of isolated disciplines but as a cohesive learning experience built around interdisciplinary themes that actively engage students in constructing knowledge.

In the pesantren context, this framework offers a valuable lens for addressing the fragmentation between the Diniyah and National Curricula. By designing integrated learning experiences that align with both the spiritual and academic dimensions of students' lives, educators can foster a more holistic and contextually relevant educational process.

The Dynamics of Student Diversity

Every academic year, Al-Ihsan receives new santri from varying educational, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Some santri come from madrasah or other pesantren and have strong foundations in diniyah education, while others are graduates of public schools with limited exposure to classical Islamic texts. This diversity impacts their ability to adapt to the integrated learning system. As the Deputy Head of Curriculum stated, "There are students who already understand kitab kuning, while others are encountering Arabic texts without harakat for the first time. We cannot use a one-size-fits-all approach."

This situation resonates with Beane's assertion that curriculum must be rooted in students' real experiences to remain meaningful. The pesantren must bridge disparities by designing adaptive and responsive instructional models that consider students' previous learning experiences.

A study by Hestyaningsih et al. (2024) supports this finding, indicating that santri from regions with limited access to Islamic education often struggle more in adjusting to pesantren life. The use of talaqqi, memorization, and kitab kuning as core methods creates a steep learning curve for students unfamiliar with this system. These findings suggest that without adequate scaffolding and differentiated instruction, integration risks becoming exclusionary rather than inclusive. Engeström's CHAT framework further explains that the learning process is shaped by the interaction between the subject (santri), tools (curriculum, pedagogy), and community (teachers and peers), all of which must be consciously aligned to facilitate effective adaptation (Cong-Lem, 2022).

Time Management Constraint.

Another major challenge lies in the allocation of time between diniyah and academic subjects. Both curricula demand considerable instructional hours, and santri must navigate overlapping schedules and cognitive fatigue. Fiqh, nahwu, and sharaf require extended, focused sessions, while academic subjects like mathematics and science also require structured, sequential engagement. Observations during the field study revealed instances where santri were struggling to maintain focus during afternoon diniyah lessons after completing a full day of academic classes. As one santri expressed in an interview, "Sometimes we study fiqh at 5 p.m., even though our mornings until noon are already packed with national curriculum subjects. Our heads are already full."

Nurkholis and Santosa (2022) emphasize the importance of time coordination in pesantren curriculum design. The current structure, although comprehensive, risks overburdening students if not supported by intentional scheduling and mental health support mechanisms.

This also aligns with the CHAT perspective, where contradictions between components (e.g., rules vs. time vs. learner capacity) can hinder learning outcomes unless mediated appropriately. Misbahudin and Munawaroh (2024) found that excessive academic pressure can result in emotional burnout and declining performance among santri, highlighting the need for balanced scheduling.

Differences in Pedagogical Approaches

The Diniyah Curriculum and National Curriculum are grounded in fundamentally different pedagogical paradigms. Diniyah subjects rely on traditional methods such as talaqqi (oral transmission), memorization, and deep reading of Arabic texts without harakat, requiring high mastery of nahwu and sharaf. In contrast, the National

Curriculum promotes competency-based learning, collaborative discussions, and inquiry-based scientific approaches.

As one teacher explained, “In fiqh class, we emphasize memorization and understanding of classical texts, but when teaching science or mathematics, we have to shift to discussion and practice.” This duality often causes confusion among students, especially those with limited experience in either domain. Hafidhuddin et al. (2023) note that santri frequently struggle when transitioning between these pedagogical modes. Without intentional alignment, students face cognitive dissonance that can weaken engagement and comprehension.

Beane’s integrated curriculum model encourages thematic and issue-based instruction that connects subject matter meaningfully across disciplines. However, the lack of cross-curricular linkage at Al-Ihsan, such as using fiqh themes in science projects or Arabic grammar in Bahasa assignments, limits the potential synergy between curricula.

According to Engeström’s theory, the teacher functions as a “mediator” of cultural tools and meanings. The effectiveness of integration thus depends on the teacher’s ability to navigate between epistemologies and make learning coherent across both religious and secular domains. By articulating these challenges through theoretical lenses, this study contributes to a nuanced understanding of curriculum integration beyond surface-level implementation. It shows that the success of integration is not merely technical but deeply relational and cultural, requiring ongoing dialogue between curriculum design, teaching practices, and student needs.

Strategies Used by Al-Ihsan Boarding School in Facing the Challenges of Integrating the Diniyah Curriculum and the National Curriculum

The integration of the Diniyah Curriculum and the National Curriculum at Al-Ihsan Boarding School presents several complex and interrelated challenges that impact the effectiveness of learning. These challenges emerge not only from technical aspects such as time management and pedagogical methods but also from deeper sociocultural dynamics related to student diversity and institutional adaptation. Referring to the integrated curriculum theory of Beane as cited by Dowden et al. (2024), curriculum integration is understood as an educational approach that emphasizes the meaningful connection between subject content, students’ real-life experiences, and relevant social issues. This perspective views the curriculum not as a

collection of isolated disciplines but as a cohesive learning experience built around interdisciplinary themes that actively engage students in constructing knowledge.

In response to the multifaceted challenges posed by curriculum integration, Al-Ihsan Boarding School has adopted targeted academic support programs that address both cognitive overload and disparities in students' prior knowledge. Referring to the integrated curriculum framework of Beane, as cited by Dowden et al. (2024), these strategies reflect an effort to design learning experiences that are not only interdisciplinary but also responsive to students' lived experiences and learning needs.

One of the primary interventions is the implementation of study clubs and tutoring sessions held regularly during the ba'da Asr time slot. This period is deliberately chosen as it is traditionally a more relaxed time in the pesantren daily routine. By transforming this window into a structured academic support space, Al-Ihsan provides students, particularly those struggling to balance the dual curriculum, with opportunities for reinforcement and recovery learning.

A teacher remarked during the interview, "We use the afternoon hours to help those who are left behind. It's the only time we can focus solely on addressing their difficulties without rushing the curriculum." This demonstrates how instructional flexibility is used to mitigate the time constraints previously identified as a major challenge in integration.

Study Clubs as Peer-Supported Communities

Study clubs at Al-Ihsan are structured group learning sessions aimed at fostering collaborative learning among students. These clubs are not merely remedial; they serve as interactive spaces where santri can consolidate their understanding through peer teaching, discussion, and shared problem-solving. This approach aligns with the constructivist learning principles within Engeström's CHAT framework, where the community element plays a crucial role in knowledge construction.

Observations showed that in these sessions, students who had mastered a particular topic often took on the role of peer tutors, explaining complex concepts in fiqh, nahwu, or math in more accessible terms. This form of social learning enhances not only students' comprehension of the material but also fosters confidence, collaboration, and the development of leadership skills among peers.

Study clubs integrate both diniyah and academic subjects thematically, demonstrating an early form of interdisciplinary linkage. For example, in one session, discussions on economic transactions in fiqh were linked to math exercises on

percentages and profit-loss analysis—an application of Beane’s thematic integration principle.

Tutoring for Targeted Remediation

Tutoring (bimbingan belajar or bimbel) is more individualized form of academic intervening. Led by subject teachers, tutoring sessions focus on specific difficulties faced by students, particularly in subjects with high conceptual demand such as Arabic grammar, physics, or mathematics. According to CHAT, this represents the interaction between tools (instructional materials), subject (students), and division of labor (the teacher as mediator of knowledge). During these sessions, teachers often simplify dense material, assign targeted practice, and guide students through problem-solving strategies tailored to their learning profiles.

Teachers reported that some students struggle to keep up with the pace of regular classroom instruction, making tutoring sessions crucial for providing slower, more personalized explanations using relatable analogies. This individualized scaffolding is essential in bridging the academic gap among students with varied backgrounds.

The multidimensional nature of Al-Ihsan’s tutoring program reflects broader global findings regarding the psychological and motivational benefits of targeted academic support. For instance, Al Yahyaei et al. (2024) found that peer tutoring significantly enhanced students’ psychological empowerment and academic satisfaction, which are essential factors in sustaining motivation in demanding learning environments. In the context of pesantren, where students navigate both religious and national curricula under strict schedules, such empowerment becomes even more critical. Additionally, Moliner and Alegre (2020) demonstrated that structured peer learning environments reduce learning-related anxiety, particularly in subjects perceived as challenging. These insights align with observations at Al-Ihsan, where santri often report increased confidence and reduced cognitive overload after receiving individualized academic support. Farooq et al. (2020) further emphasized that peer tutoring can strengthen intrinsic motivation, especially in learners with initial academic struggles, which echoes the transformative impact of tutoring sessions in restoring students’ sense of competence and control over their learning. Thus, the Al-Ihsan case illustrates how context-sensitive tutoring can serve as a strategic mechanism for both academic resilience and emotional stability, reinforcing the potential of curriculum integration when supported by well-designed interventions.

Integration with Broader Guidance and Counseling Systems

These academic strategies are not isolated; they are embedded within the pesantren's broader guidance system. Drawing from Rohmah et al., (2018), effective educational institutions offer a triadic model of guidance: personal-social, academic, and career. At Al-Ihsan, teachers double as mentors who provide not only instructional but also emotional and social support, especially critical for students adapting to the pesantren lifestyle. Santri with low academic performance often face intersecting challenges, such as poor nutrition, lack of parental involvement, or adjustment stress (Ilham & Suyatno, 2020). Tutoring and study clubs thus serve a dual function: they address academic gaps and act as early interventions for broader learning difficulties (Kholiq et al., 2023).

By combining communal and individualized learning interventions, Al-Ihsan Boarding School offers a contextualized model of curriculum support that is both culturally rooted and pedagogically adaptive. These strategies exemplify how pesantren can operationalize curriculum integration not only at the structural level but also at the level of student experience and support. This approach not only reinforces the theoretical significance of integrated curriculum design but also contributes a practical model for Islamic educational institutions navigating the tensions between tradition and modernity.

Conclusion

This study finds that the integration of the Diniyah Curriculum and the National Curriculum at Al-Ihsan Boarding School Riau is a pedagogical and managerial effort that involves more than aligning subject content. It requires adaptive strategies that support students in managing cognitive load and limited instructional time. The most significant finding reveals that student-centered academic support programs, such as study clubs and tutoring, are crucial in facilitating the integration process. These interventions help bridge conceptual and pedagogical gaps between the two curricula and enhance students' motivation, academic confidence, and overall well-being.

The study also identifies several major challenges in the integration process. These include variations in students' educational backgrounds, diverse learning styles, limited classroom time, and differing teaching methods between the two curricula. These findings highlight the importance of implementing flexible and context-responsive educational management practices in pesantren settings.

The implications of this study suggest that successful curriculum integration depends not only on structural or policy-level alignment but also on day-to-day implementation strategies that are rooted in the cultural and educational realities of Islamic boarding schools. Al-Ihsan's approach may serve as a reference for other institutions that seek to develop sustainable integration between religious and national education.

However, the study is limited to one pesantren and may not fully represent the diversity of integration experiences in other contexts. Further research is recommended to explore integrated curriculum practices in a wider range of pesantren models. Future studies could examine the long-term effects of integration on students' academic and religious development and assess how institutional leadership and teacher training contribute to the success of such efforts.

Author Contribution Statement

The first author initiated the study by formulating the proposal, conducting interviews and observations, coding and reducing data, and validating the research outcomes. The second author played a key role in analyzing and interpreting the thematic data. The third author contributed to synthesizing and writing the results section. The fourth author assisted in the initial planning of the study and facilitated data collection during fieldwork.

Disclosure Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the publication of this study.

Funding

The researchers would like to express their sincere gratitude to Al-Ihsan Boarding School, including the school leadership, teachers, and staff, for their support and cooperation throughout the research process. Appreciation is also extended to all stakeholders who contributed valuable insights and facilitated access to resources that made this study possible.

References

Abror, D., & Rohmaniyah, N. (2023). Model Integrasi Kurikulum Pesantren Inklusif. Academia Publication.

https://play.google.com/store/books/details/Darul_Abror_Model_Integrasi_Kurikulum_Pesantren_In?id=_zLBAAAAQBAJ&pli=1

- Ade Putri Wulandari. (2020). Integrasi Kurikulum Pesantren Dalam Kurikulum 2013 Di SMK Al-Munawwir Krapyak Yogyakarta. *AL-FAHIM: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 2(1), 20–34. <https://doi.org/10.54396/alfahim.v2i1.68>
- Al Yahyaei, A., Natarajan, J. R., Seshan, V., Joseph, M. A., Valsaraj, B. P., & Hamed Al Abri, F. (2024). The Usefulness of Peer Tutoring and its Impact on Nursing Students' Academic Performance, Psychological Empowerment, and Satisfaction: Pre-Post Design. *SAGE Open Nursing*, 10, 23779608241282170. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23779608241282168>
- Alfaeni, S. I., Asbari, M., & Sholihah, H. (2023). Kurikulum Merdeka: Fleksibilitas Kurikulum bagi Guru dan Siswa. *Journal of Information Systems and Management*, 02(05). <https://jisma.org/index.php/jisma/article/view/661>
- Anwar, M. S., Huda, M., & Maghfiroh, R. (2022). Integrasi Kurikulum Pesantren dan Madrasah (Studi Kasus di Pondok Pesantren Al-Ishlah Jenggawah Jember). *Al-Tarbawi Al-Haditsah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 7(2), 142. <https://syekhnurjati.ac.id/jurnal/index.php/tarbawi/article/view/12013>
- Apiyah, A., & Suharsiwi, S. (2021). Pendidikan Karakter Santri di Pondok Pesantren Studi Kasus di Pesantren Al Ihrom Jakarta Barat. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Penelitian LPPM UMJ*. <https://jurnal.umj.ac.id/index.php/semnaslit/article/view/15545>
- Aspiyah, A. (2024). Integrasi Kurikulum Pesantren dan Madrasah dalam Meningkatkan Karakter Santri (Studi Kasus di Pondok Pesantren Azzahro). *Al-Madrasah: Jurnal Pendidikan Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, 8(1), 231. <https://doi.org/10.35931/am.v8i1.2948>
- Basri, H. H. (2012). Pengajaran Kitab-Kitab Fiqih di Pesantren. *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v10i1.148>
- Cong-Lem, N. (2022). Vygotsky's, Leontiev's and Engeström's Cultural-Historical (Activity) Theories: Overview, Clarifications and Implications. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 56(4), 1091–1112. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-022-09703-6>
- Dian Fitra. (2023). Kurikulum Merdeka dalam Pendidikan Modern. *JURNAL INOVASI EDUKASI*, 6(2), 149–156. <https://doi.org/10.35141/jie.v6i2.953>
- Dowden, T., Brough, C., & Fogarty-Perry, B. (2024). Student-centred curriculum integration in primary schools: nurturing democratic citizenship in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Curriculum Perspectives*, 44(4), 513–523. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41297-024-00234-1>
- Drake, S., & Burns, R. (2004). Meeting Standards through Integrated Curriculum. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). https://repository.bbg.ac.id/bitstream/606/1/Meeting_Standards_Through_Integrated_Curriculum.pdf
- Farooq, S. (2020). Role of Peer Tutoring on the Intrinsic Motivation of Student Teachers in Pakistan: An Experimental Investigation. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 4(1), 381–388. [https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2020\(4-1\)30](https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2020(4-1)30)
- Firman, F., & Indriawati, P. (2021). Akomodasi Pondok Pesantren Terhadap Kurikulum Nasional. *Jurnal Edueco*, 4(2), 116–122. <https://jurnal.peko.uniba-bpn.ac.id/index.php/Edueco/article/view/100>

- Hafidhuddin, D., Rabbani, F., Nazril, N., & Robbani, A. A. (2023). Gambaran Proses Adaptasi Santri Baru pada Peraturan Pondok Pesantren. *IECJ: Islamic Education and Counseling Journal*, 2(1). <https://jurnal.stitihsanulfikri.ac.id/index.php/iecj/article/view/52>
- Ibnu Hajar, H., & Abdul Qohar, H. (2024). Pendekatan Inovatif untuk Mengatasi Tantangan Pembelajaran Nahwu dan Sharaf bagi Peserta Didik. *Ranah Research : Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 6(6), 2995–3009. <https://doi.org/10.38035/rrj.v6i6.1473>
- Ilham, D., & Suyatno, S. (2020). Pengembangan manajemen kurikulum dan pembelajaran di pondok pesantren. *Jurnal Akuntabilitas Manajemen Pendidikan*, 8(2), 186–195. <https://doi.org/10.21831/jamp.v8i2.32867>
- Isbah, M. F., & Sakhiyya, Z. (2023). Pesantren in Contemporary Indonesia: Negotiating Between Equity and the Market. In *Education in the Asia-Pacific Region* (Vol. 70, pp. 137–152). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-1878-2_8
- Jamalia, J., Afif, H. S., & Mansyuri, A. (2021). Intergrasi Kurikulum Pesantren Dalam Kurikulum Madrasah di Madrasah Aliyah Al-Machfudzoh Sidoarjo. *Jurnal Kependidikan Islam*, 11(2), 252–260. <https://doi.org/10.15642/jkpi.2021.11.2.252-260>
- Khafifah, K. A., Hasanah, U., & Zulfa, V. (2023). Hubungan Antara Stres Akademik dengan Academic Performance pada Santri Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Al Hamid. *JKKP (Jurnal Kesejahteraan Keluarga Dan Pendidikan)*, 10(01), 27–37. <https://journal.unj.ac.id/unj/index.php/jkkp/article/view/28823>
- Khaq, M. B. (2024). Efektivitas metode pengajaran kitab kuning fathul qarib dalam pembelajaran fiqh di ponpes agro nuur el falah. *Indonesian Journal of Muhammadiyah Studies (IJMUS)*, 4(2), 78–84. <https://doi.org/10.62289/ijmus.v4i2.335>
- Kholiq, A., Fihris, Permata, K. I., & Apriliana, E. N. (2023). Web-based learning to promote intrinsic motivation in Islamic education during Covid-19 pandemic: A study on elementary school students in Indonesia. 090022. <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0153024>
- Lucia Maduningtias. (2022). Manajemen Integrasi Kurikulum Pesantren Dan Nasional Untuk Meningkatkan Mutu Lulusan Pesantren. *Al-Afkar, Journal For Islamic Studies*, 5(4), 323–331. <https://doi.org/10.31943/afkarjournal.v5i4.378>
- Ma'arif, S. D., Hasan, N., & Rodafi, D. (2021). Peran Pendidikan Pesantren dalam Pembentukan Karakter Santri. *Vicratina: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 6(3). <https://jim.unisma.ac.id/index.php/fai/article/view/11867/9174>
- Mastur, A. (2022). Integrasi Kurikulum di Pendidikan Diniyah Formal (PDF) Wustho Al Fithrah Surabaya. *TARBAWI*, 10(2), 165–183. <https://doi.org/10.36781/tarbawi.v10i2.215>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (K. et al Perry (ed.); 3rd ed.). SAGE Publication, Inc. <https://www.pdfdrive.com/qualitative-data-analysis-a-methods-sourcebook-d183985418.html>
- Misbahudin, & Munawaroh, H. (2024). Analisis Pengaruh Tekanan Psikologis Dan Beban Tugas Terhadap Kesejahteraan Mental Santri: Studi Kasus Santri Pondok Pesantren Safiinatunnaja (PPPQSN) Di Mekarsari RT.05, Rw 11 Kalibeer Mojotengah. *An Najah (Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Sosial Keagamaan)*, 3(4). <https://journal.nabest.id/index.php/annajah/article/view/355>

- Moliner, L., & Alegre, F. (2020). Peer Tutoring Effects on Students' Mathematics Anxiety: A Middle School Experience. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 1610. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01610>
- Munjiat, S. M. (2017). Integrasi Kurikulum Pesantren dan Madrasah pada Pondok Pesantren Manba'ul 'Ulum Sindangmekar Dukupuntang Cirebon. *Al-Tarbawi Al-Haditsah : Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 2(2), 2. <https://doi.org/10.24235/tarbawi.v2i2.2065>
- Nurkholis, N., & Santosa, A. B. (2022). Manajemen Pengembangan Kurikulum Berbasis Pesantren. *J-MPI (Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam)*, 7(2), 113–130. <https://ejournal.uin-malang.ac.id/index.php/jmpi/article/view/17023>
- Rofiq, A. (2022). Integrasi Kurikulum Pesantren dan Kurikulum Madrasah Aliyah di MA Islamiyah Pondok Pesantren Attanwir Desa Talun Kecamatan Sumberrejo Kabupaten Bojonegoro. *EDU-RELIGIA : Jurnal Keagamaan Dan Pembelajarannya*, 5(1), 89–97. <https://doi.org/10.52166/edu-religia.v5i1.2982>
- Rohmah, F. A., Setiawan, F., & Amalia, F. (2018). Implementasi Program Bimbingan Belajar Arf Bagi Santri MBS Prambanan. *Prosiding Hasil Pelaksanaan Program Pengenalan Lapangan Persekolahan*, 4(1). <https://seminar.uad.ac.id/index.php/semhasmengajar/article/view/14844>
- Sassi, K. (2018). Ta'dib As A Concept of Islamic Education Purification: Study on The Thoughts of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas. *Journal of Malay Islamic Studies*, 2(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.19109/JMIS.v2i1.2541>
- Sholehuddin, A. T., & Karimah, U. (2021). Implementasi Integrasi Kurikulum pada Proses Pembelajaran dalam Pembentukan Karakter Santri (Studi Kasus di Pesantren Tahfizh Daarul Qur'an Takhassus Banyuwangi). *Prosiding Seminar Nasional LP2M UMJ*, 1(2). <https://jurnal.umj.ac.id/index.php/semnaslit/article/view/15575>
- Sobali, L. (2024). Evaluasi Kurikulum Terintegrasi Antara Pondok Pesantren Dan Madrasah. *Oasis : Jurnal Ilmiah Kajian Islam*, 8(1), 49. <https://doi.org/10.24235/oasis.v8i1.11308>

This Page Intentionally Left Blank