



## Integration of integrated Islamic school curriculum into Kurikulum Merdeka

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### ABSTRACT

*Integrated Islamic Schools (SIT) is a unique entity specifically born in Indonesia at the same time as the Nurul Fikri Integrated Islamic Elementary School in Depok in 1993. This school model developed rapidly until 2003 when the Integrated Islamic Schools Network was declared, and more than 1000 schools were established throughout Indonesia. This research discusses the stages and layers in developing a typical curriculum for Integrated Islamic Schools. The research results show that integrated Islamic schools organize themselves, including organizing the curriculum to align with all applicable rules and regulations in Indonesia. On the other hand, it aligns with the established institutional vision. In this way, integrated Islamic schools carry out a curriculum development process. This development process is carried out through various stages and layers, namely through conceptual aspects to realize belief in the creator, aspects of subject matter containing religious knowledge (kauliyah) and worldly knowledge (kauniyah), as well as integration in implementation to create education that is academic, spiritual, ethics, and social.*

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### ABSTRAK

Integrated Islamic Schools merupakan entitas unik yang secara spesifik lahir di Indonesia bersamaan dengan hadirnya Sekolah Dasar Islam Terpadu Nurul Fikri di Depok pada tahun 1993. Model sekolah ini berkembang pesat, hingga tahun 2003 saat Jaringan Integrated Islamic Schools dideklarasikan telah tercatat lebih dari 1000 sekolah berdiri di seluruh Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membahas tentang tahapan dan lapisan yang dimaksud dalam konteks pengembangan kurikulum khas Integrated Islamic Schools. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sekolah islam terpadu melakukan penataan dirinya termasuk menata kurikulum agar sejalan dengan seluruh peraturan dan ketentuan yang berlaku di Indonesia dan disisi lain sejalan dengan visi kelembagaan yang didirikan. Dengan demikian maka sekolah islam terpadu melakukan proses pengembangan kurikulum. Proses pengembangan ini dilakukan melalui berbagai tahapan dan lapisan, yaitu melalui aspek konseptual untuk mewujudkan keyakinan kepada pencipta, aspek materi pelajaran yang mengandung ilmu agama (kauliyah) maupun ilmu duniawi (kauniyah), serta integrasi dalam implementasi untuk menciptakan pendidikan yang bersifat akademis, spiritual, etika, dan sosial.

**Kata Kunci:** *Integrated Islamic Schools; kurikulum merdeka; kurikulum nasional; kurikulum terpadu; pengembangan kurikulum*

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1993, a group of Bimbingan Belajar Nurul Fikri founders conceived a new school model that broke away from the two pre-existing school models. At the time, two school models had already been established: the national and Islamic-based ones known as Madrasah. The newly conceived model was named the Integrated Islamic School (SIT). Schools adopting this model are commonly referred to as Integrated Islamic Kindergartens (TKIT), Integrated Islamic Elementary Schools (SDIT), Integrated Islamic Junior High Schools (SMP IT), and Integrated Islamic Senior High Schools, more popularly known as SMA IT. This model highlighted a new concept—educating students to be proficient in basic religious knowledge (pious) while simultaneously mastering science and technology. The founders' idea could be summarized as mastery of divine sciences (knowledge that is revealed) and natural sciences (knowledge written in the universe and its contents) (Ma'rufah, 2020).

As time progressed, the public warmly received this new school model. Nurul Fikri Elementary Integrated Islamic School (SDIT) began to gain recognition, mainly as it produced students who were diligent in worship and proficient in scientific knowledge. Gradually, people from various regions began to arrive to conduct comparative studies and emulate the establishment of schools with this new model. Time continued to pass, and by 2003, a decade since the inception of the SIT model, over 1,500 schools had adopted this approach. Organizations administering this model joined to form a community and network known as the Indonesian SIT Network (JSIT Indonesia). As of July 26, 2022, JSIT Indonesia has 2,497 member schools, broken down into 934 kindergartens, 1,004 elementary schools, 421 junior high schools, and 138 senior high schools (source: JSIT Indonesia Sekretariat). The number of schools not yet members of this association is believed to be even higher (Ismael, 2022).

As time has progressed, educational reforms have continually evolved. The pandemic that struck in 2019 has changed many aspects of education. The government has indicated that learning loss has occurred during the Covid-19 period. Data from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 2021 states that Indonesia experienced a decline in Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling (LAYS) by 6.13%, dropping from 7.83 to 7.35. Although the data reflects macro-level conditions, it can also be observed at the micro-level, where limited public access to the internet—only 40%—ensures that online-based learning is likely less effective. Thus, when the pandemic subsided and the 2022/2023 academic year began, students in second or third grade of elementary school generally demonstrated competencies almost equivalent to their younger peers entering first grade, such as not yet being able to read, write, or perform age-appropriate arithmetic (Rofah & Mulyawati, 2022).

Before the pandemic had significantly waned, ChatGPT appeared as a new representation in the evolution of artificial intelligence (AI). While previous generations of AI primarily functioned as repositories and managers of information—where users would obtain data based on pre-existing sources—the generative AI now provides users with processed information tailored to their requests. According to a research study by Kompas on June 28, 2023, the advent of AI has successfully penetrated the information and communication sectors by 58.1%, the financial and insurance services by 55.2%, and the education sector by 33.0%. Naturally, these advancements should shift the meaning, process, and direction of education (Makruf & Asrori, 2022).

Cheng's paper rightly deserves consideration when he warns of the arrival of a third wave of educational effectiveness. Cheng divides educational reform into three waves, where the first wave is termed "internal effectiveness." In this first wave, the focus of education is more directed toward internal effectiveness in terms of learning outcomes. As time progresses, the results of this internal effectiveness need to be publicly accountable, at least to parents, the community, and the government managing public funds. This second wave is what Cheng refers to as "interface effectiveness." The third wave is a response to the

rapid changes in technology and sociocultural factors. As such, awareness of the importance of tailoring the educational process to the needs of students in their current time becomes a strengthening issue. Therefore, this third wave focuses on "future effectiveness" (Triatmo et al., 2020).

Cheng's model of educational reform through three waves—internal effectiveness, interface effectiveness, and future effectiveness—provides an excellent framework to evaluate the current educational landscape, especially considering the disruptions caused by the pandemic and technological advancements such as AI. For internal Effectiveness: The pandemic emphasized the importance of adaptable learning systems. Schools had to transition to online platforms swiftly, raising questions about the effectiveness of traditional methods. As many students experienced learning loss, the need to improve the internal effectiveness of educational systems has never been more apparent. In interface Effectiveness: Accountability became even more critical during the pandemic. Governments, parents, and communities are scrutinizing the ability of educational systems to deliver under challenging conditions (Bahri & Muzaki, 2021).

Transparency and communication between schools, parents, and educational authorities are crucial for mutual accountability. Then, for future Effectiveness: The rapid adoption of technologies like AI in education points to the third wave of future effectiveness. AI can personalize education, provide instant feedback, and even assist in administrative tasks, freeing educators to focus more on teaching. However, its effectiveness will be determined by how well it meets students' real-world, immediate needs. In summary, the pandemic and the technological shifts in education are acting as catalysts, pushing us more rapidly through Cheng's waves of reform. It is a challenging yet transformative period for education, requiring careful planning, open dialogue, and embracing new technologies to ensure effectiveness on all three levels—internal, interface, and future (Puspitasari et al., 2020). In the post-pandemic reality and the continuously evolving waves of educational effectiveness, the government—particularly the Ministry of Education—has recognized the need for curriculum reforms, introducing emergency curricula and the "Kurikulum Merdeka." Under this new curriculum, schools can simplify their curricula according to their unique circumstances while still adhering to minimum standards. The primary strategies for implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka include differentiated and project-based learning (Darlis & Movitaria, 2021).

Given these rapid developments in the education ecosystem and broader society, how should Integrated Islamic Schools (SIT) respond? *First*, relevance of founding ideals: With SIT being more than 30 years old, it is crucial to ask whether the idealism upon which it was founded still holds relevance. If so, how can it be adapted to contemporary times? *Second*, curriculum design: to maintain its essence while staying relevant, the curriculum for SIT needs to be carefully reconsidered. The curriculum must continue to embody the school's foundational principles while incorporating elements consistent with today's educational requirements. *Third*, local wisdom: One critical point is that SIT represents a model of local Muslim wisdom unique to Indonesia. Therefore, optimizing the educational process in SIT is about staying relevant and preserving and enhancing a distinctively Indonesian model that resonates with a considerable segment of the country's Muslim population. *Fourth*, adjustment and adaptation: What aspects need adjustment, and what should the adaptation process look like? Whether it is technology integration, pedagogical methods, or community engagement, each aspect needs a strategy for modernization without losing its original essence (Kasiman et al., 2022).

Previous research conducted by Rojii et al. (2019) showed that the curriculum design at SMPIT Insan Kamil Sidoarjo emphasizes the internalization of Islamic values in each national curriculum content without ignoring the national curriculum that the Ministry of Education has determined. Meanwhile, other research by Ismael (2022) showed that both studies discuss Integrated Islamic Schools as an integral part of the national education system. Therefore, this research discusses the stages and layers of developing a typical curriculum for an Integrated Islamic School. To respond effectively to these changes and challenges, SIT may need to undergo a comprehensive review and potentially re-envision its mission,

curriculum, and teaching methods. This is necessary in shaping Indonesia's educational future, ensuring that SIT continues to provide a locally grounded and globally relevant educational model.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Curriculum Development

Lunenberg describes curriculum development as a series of activities, ranging from planning, execution, and implementation to evaluation, aimed at achieving optimal outcomes in the context of curriculum planning. This definition is grounded in the perspective of Wiles and Bondi, who argue that curriculum development involves the selection of various learning experiences for students, which are then operationalized through a series of pre-designed learning activities. These two definitions are the foundation for choosing a curriculum development model. This is because the role of a model in curriculum development is a guide for practitioners to implement the curriculum in a phased manner, per the designed plan. A practitioner must understand its essential elements and stages using a specific model. If no particular model is chosen, practitioners can develop their model or modify an existing one to suit their needs and available resources (Gluchman, 2018).

A curriculum model that has been around for quite some time is the Tyler Model. Developed by Ralph W. Tyler in his work "Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction," this model is most famous for its initial section that poses four questions that must be answered when developing a curriculum. *First*, what educational objectives should the school aim to achieve? *Second*, what learning experiences should be provided to attain those objectives? *Third*, how should these learning experiences be organized? *Fourth*, how do we determine whether the educational objectives have been met? To determine educational objectives as the starting point for curriculum development, Tyler suggests studying the students as one of the sources for developing educational goals. For example, teachers or curriculum designers are advised to conduct interviews, surveys, or tests with parents or students when utilizing students as a data source. This is aimed at identifying the learners' interests, needs, and expectations. A list of potential learning objectives can then be compiled based on this information. In addition, curriculum developers also need to study contemporary life in the surrounding educational institutions. Community research can cover various dimensions such as health, social norms, beliefs, and recreational activities. This information is crucial in setting curriculum objectives, such as priorities in health education. To develop the curriculum, it is also considered necessary to discuss with experts in the field of study, known as Subject Matter Experts (SME). Tyler suggests using learning psychology to select the learning objectives (Sormin, 2020).

Another model in curriculum development is the Oliva Model, one of the most detailed and comprehensive curriculum development models. This model has 12 components arranged sequentially with Roman numerals, from component I to XII. In component I, the curriculum designer establishes the objectives and philosophical and psychological principles of education, reflecting the needs and conditions of society. Component II focuses on local needs based on the school's location, ensuring that the teaching materials align with the specific needs of the local community. Though similar, component I is more general, while component II is more specific. Components III and IV are related to formulating general and more specific curriculum objectives. Component V deals with the organization and implementation of educational activities. In components VI and VII, learning objectives and indicators are specified further. Component VIII involves designing learning strategies to achieve these objectives. Components IXA and IXB focus on evaluation. In IXA, evaluation techniques are selected, while in IXB, evaluation instruments are implemented. Component X is where learning strategies are executed. Components XI and XII are the final evaluation stages at the learning level and for the curriculum. In the context of Islamic education, it is interesting to consider the approach proposed by Dr. Adian Husaini. He suggests that Islamic educational

institutions should focus their curriculum on the formation of taqwa (piety or mindfulness of God) as the primary objective, which he refers to as adab-based education ([Rahmat, 2020](#)).

### **Concept of Integrated Islamic School**

A curriculum should at least stand on four foundations: philosophical, psychological, sociological, and technological. Of all these foundations, the philosophical foundation concerning life and the afterlife distinguishes Islamic schools from schools based on other religions. The fact that many parents willingly enroll their children in private Islamic schools, even though the cost is higher than public schools, suggests that there must be a strong reason for this. One possibility is ideological reasons. On the other hand, it is essential to pay attention to what Abraham Lincoln stated more than two centuries ago, *"The philosophy of the school room in one generation will be the philosophy of government in the next."* This statement highlights the crucial role that education plays in individual development and shaping the future of society and governance. Therefore, the ideological reasons parents might have for choosing Islamic education could have long-term implications for their children and the society they will eventually help shape. Indeed, the philosophy that prevails in today's classrooms will become the philosophy of governance in the future. This idea aligns with what Ornstein, Pajak, and Ornstein wrote, stating that philosophy is the basis and framework for a school's operation. Philosophy directs teachers, principals, and all stakeholders in determining educational goals, subjects taught, values instilled, student learning processes, and even the most technical aspects, such as methods, teaching materials, and media used. This shows how deeply intertwined a school's underlying philosophy is with every element of the educational experience. Therefore, it is not just about what is taught but also how it is taught and for what purpose. The philosophy helps to unify the school's actions and decisions, aligning them towards a standard set of objectives and values ([Muthohirin et al., 2022](#)).

A school's philosophy essentially serves as the vision upon which the institution is founded. You could say that philosophy acts as the bedrock, the underlying reason why an educational institution exists in the first place. Typically, this philosophy is mirrored in the vision and mission statements of the organization that manages the school, whether a foundation or a community organization. Given this perspective, it makes perfect sense for the organizational structure, decision-making mechanisms, and even technical classroom operations to form a harmonious, cohesive whole that aligns with the founding philosophy. All these elements should ideally work in unison, driven by a standard set of objectives and values, to fulfill the institution's overarching vision. This unity is essential for the effective implementation of the curriculum and for meeting the diverse educational needs of the students, all while staying true to the institution's core philosophy. Ornstein and Hunkins posit that philosophy provides an indispensable framework for managing schools and executing educational processes within classrooms. Philosophy serves as a conceptual guide and influences the practical aspects of education, ranging from curriculum planning and teaching strategies to evaluation and school policies. This framework becomes crucial in ensuring that all components within the educational system function coherently and in alignment with the educational institution's established objectives, vision, and mission ([Mansir, 2020](#)).

Consequently, the philosophy of an educational institution becomes more than a mere declaration or statement; it serves as an active tool utilized to shape and influence the educational reality on the ground. Ideally, all stakeholders—from school principals and teachers to administrative staff—should collaborate within this philosophical framework to achieve the desired educational outcomes. According to Ornstein & Hunkins, the educational philosophy adopted by administrators plays a pivotal role in shaping the vision, mission, teacher recruitment, and faculty training, as well as the selection of an educational institution's study fields and learning strategies. They assert that the choice of an educational philosophy fundamentally directs the design and orientation of the educational activities to be undertaken. According to Ornstein & Hunkins, philosophy serves two main functions: 1) as a starting point or foundation in



curriculum development and 2) as a component interconnected with other elements in the curriculum development process. Building on the work of John Dewey, an eminent American educational philosopher, Ornstein and Hunkins suggest that philosophy not only provides the framework for the school's objectives but also instills a way of thinking that imbues life with meaning (Hafidz et al., 2022).

The philosophical foundations of SIT are closely tied to the ideas presented in Syed Naquib Al-Attas' book on Islamic education, which posits that all knowledge originates from Allah SWT and can be interpreted in both spiritual and physical terms. In this conceptual framework, divine "verses" — where "verse" refers to a symbol or sign — are bifurcated into two broad categories: *Kauliyah* and *Kauniyah*. *Kauliyah* pertains to the written words of God found in His scripture, the Quran. Conversely, *Kauniyah* consists of God's words manifested in the natural universe. Similarly, Ibn Khaldun divides knowledge into two primary forms: *Naqliyah* and *Aqliyah*. *Naqliyah* knowledge is sourced from the Quran and Hadith, encompassing fields such as *Tafsir* (exegesis), *Qira'at* (recitation), Hadith studies, *Ushul Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *Kalam* (Islamic theology), Arabic linguistics, *Tasawuf* (Sufism), and dream interpretation. In contrast, *Aqliyah* knowledge refers to natural human knowledge obtained through rational and empirical processes, including but not limited to logic, physics, metaphysics, and mathematics. Based on this dichotomy, Ibn Khaldun categorizes knowledge into four groups according to a hierarchical scale of priorities (Hergianasari, 2019).

1. Religious Knowledge (*Sharia*), which includes *Tafsir* (exegesis), Hadith, Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), and *Kalam* (Islamic theology).
2. Rational Knowledge (*Aqliyah*), consisting of *Kalam*, Physics, and Theology (Metaphysics).
3. Tool Sciences that aid in studying religious knowledge, such as Arabic language, arithmetic, and other supplementary subjects.

Tool Sciences that facilitate the study of philosophy, namely Logic. The philosophy positing that all knowledge originates from the One Almighty is not universally accepted across Muslim-majority countries. For instance, in Egypt, educators' perspectives on science and religion can be categorized into four groups. Firstly, some educators in Egypt believe that conflicts between religious and scientific perspectives arise primarily from the scientific side. Secondly, they argue that religion and science are entirely independent disciplines, each existing in its own right without intersection. Thirdly, there is a call for dialogue between scientific and Islamic scholars to reach fundamental agreements. Lastly, there is the perspective of integrating science as a part of Islam (Saepudin, 2019).

Integrating Islam and science is not an easy task. Hardline scientists reject any form of interaction between science and religion, even going as far as saying that religion is not needed at all. They contend that all natural phenomena can be scientifically explained, negating the need for religious explanation. Indeed, if one views God as the Creator, then it stands to reason that He is also the originator of all scientific knowledge, both revealed and still mysterious. In constructing the universe, God would have done so according to rational patterns, rules, and behaviors, thus making it possible for humans to comprehend it. Therefore, human understanding of science should not lead one to forget about the Creator of the universe. On the contrary, advancing scientific knowledge should assist humans in gradually improving their understanding of the mysteries of His creation. As a result, human comprehension of the universe should increasingly approach the truth over time, and understanding of His entire creation should also grow (Ien, 2020).

The educational process must integrate religious and secular knowledge with the belief that all knowledge originates from Allah SWT. Therefore, instilling faith in Islamic-based schools like SIT is as crucial as training and teaching critical thinking skills. Educating students to read the Quran skillfully ensures they master literacy, numeracy, research, and social ethics. To achieve this, SIT needs to develop diverse learning strategies that train students to think critically, analytically, evaluatively, and creatively while instilling a belief in the One Almighty God. Critical thinking involves assessing things critically, being aware

of one's strengths and weaknesses, and considering how to improve for a better future. Critical thinking skills also teach students to learn from the thoughts and experiences of others and continually seek answers to emerging questions to solve problems. Gluchman adds that all efforts in education should be capable of enhancing abilities in reflection, decision-making, critical thinking, and engagement in public affairs (Gluchman, 2018).

The philosophical construct of SIT, which posits that all knowledge forms a unified whole, suggests that teaching religious principles is as essential as teaching thinking skills. This concept represents a foundational ideal in educational philosophy. However, the question arises regarding how this foundational idea is implemented in schools and classrooms. How can all school community members, from leadership to teachers, serve as effective implementers and contribute to successfully realizing this vision? Implementation requires a multifaceted approach. Here are some suggestions based on Gluchman (2018):

1. Leadership Support: School leaders must fully understand and endorse the philosophical foundation. This includes allocating resources and setting policies that support the integration of religious and secular knowledge.
2. Curriculum Design: The curriculum should be structured to integrate both realms of knowledge seamlessly. This can include comparative studies, interdisciplinary projects, or dedicated times for religious and critical thinking discussions.
3. Teacher Training: Teachers must be trained in their specific subjects and the pedagogical approaches for this integrated teaching. This may include specialized professional development sessions or even degree programs.
4. Student-Centered Learning: The approach to teaching should also consider students' individual needs, offering them opportunities to explore these dual realms in ways that are most meaningful to them.
5. Community Involvement: Parents and community leaders can be involved to reinforce the learning that happens in school, ensuring a more holistic educational experience.
6. Assessment and Feedback: A robust system for evaluation and feedback should be implemented to measure the effectiveness of the integrated approach. Adjustments should be made based on empirical evidence.
7. Ongoing Review and Adaptation: Education is not static, and neither should this approach be. Regular reviews should be conducted to adapt to new findings in pedagogy, shifts in community beliefs, or changes in the educational landscape.
8. Transparency and Communication: Keeping all stakeholders informed and involved is crucial for long-term success. This includes regular updates, forums for discussion, and avenues for input.

By involving all facets of the educational community coherently and comprehensively, it is possible to more fully realize the philosophical ideals that underpin the vision of schools like SIT.

## **National Curriculum**

On base Undang-Undang Dasar Republik Indonesia Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional states "*Kurikulum adalah seperangkat rencana dan pengaturan mengenai tujuan, isi, dan bahan pelajaran serta cara yang digunakan sebagai pedoman penyelenggaraan kegiatan pembelajaran untuk mencapai tujuan pendidikan tertentu.*" This legal framework provides the basis for educational institutions to design and implement a curriculum that aligns with their educational philosophy and objectives. Given the philosophical foundations of institutions like SIT, which seek to integrate both religious and secular knowledge, it becomes essential to design a curriculum that not only fulfills the requirements of this law but also captures the essence of the institution's vision. Elements of the curriculum design and implementation process are as follows (Ismael, 2022):

1. **Objective Alignment:** The curriculum should clearly outline how its objectives align with the broader philosophical underpinnings of the educational institution. It should specify the skills, knowledge, and attitudes students must acquire and demonstrate.
2. **Content Integration:** The curriculum content should be chosen carefully to reflect a balanced integration of religious and secular subjects. This could be achieved through modules offering interdisciplinary perspectives or lessons incorporating religious and secular themes.
3. **Methodology:** The teaching methods should align with the objectives and content. For example, problem-based learning could be employed if critical thinking is a crucial goal. Similarly, if moral or spiritual development is a focus, methods that engage students in reflection and discussion around ethical issues could be used.
4. **Assessment:** Mechanisms must be in place to assess whether the curriculum effectively achieves its objectives. This could involve standard academic assessments, student and teacher feedback, or community input for broader goals like moral and civic development.
5. **Review and Update:** Following the guidelines, educational institutions should regularly review the curriculum to ensure it remains aligned with its objectives and relevant to the needs of the students and the community.
6. **Legal Compliance:** While innovating and personalizing the curriculum, it is essential to ensure that the basic stipulations and standards set by the National Education System Law are met.
7. **Stakeholder Involvement:** Include all stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, and community leaders, in curriculum development and review processes. Their input can provide valuable insights into how effectively the curriculum serves its intended purpose.

By incorporating these elements into the curriculum design and implementation process, educational institutions can ensure they comply with the National Education System Law while realizing their unique educational visions. The legislation grants schools the authority to develop curricula, albeit within the framework of national standards, to achieve national education goals. It empowers educational institutions to undertake curriculum development with consideration for the principles of diversification that are unique to their respective educational units, the local region's potentialities, and the student body's characteristics (Ismael, 2022).

Since the law's enactment, up until 2023, several changes have occurred in the national curriculum. In 2006, a curriculum known as the "Curriculum at the Unit Level of Education" was released, later replaced by the 2013 Curriculum, and most recently, the "Freedom Curriculum" officially launched in 2022. The evolution of the curriculum is inevitable, given that society itself is in a state of flux. As Ornstein and Hunkins have pointed out, societal changes will invariably guide curricular revisions, although it is also true that curricula play a formative role in shaping society. The significant change in the Merdeka (Freedom) Curriculum compared to the 2013 Curriculum, as explained in episode 15 of the Merdeka Belajar series, is that learning is expected to focus on essential material, and schools are encouraged to develop and manage curricula according to their specific characteristics. Consequently, this presents a substantial opportunity for private schools with unique features to legally and independently develop their curriculum (Maimun et al., 2021).

## **METHODS**

This research uses a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through a literature review. Literature review research critically examines knowledge, ideas, and findings from various scientific journals. This data collection technique aims to find theories, laws, postulates, principles, and ideas as solutions to the research problems. This research collected data from the propositions in the Al-Quran and 22 scientific journals related to integrated Islamic schools. Next, the data was analyzed using descriptive analysis to obtain a comprehensible understanding and explanation (Pusparani, 2021).



## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Curriculum development is necessary for educational institutions due to efforts to achieve predetermined educational goals. The curriculum development carried out by schools can be pretty diverse, ranging from the development of philosophical aspects, content, and implementation to curriculum evaluation. As for SIT (Integrated Islamic Schools), the questions that arise include: How does SIT go about curriculum development, which aspects are being developed, and how do they ensure that the curriculum development conducted is operational in the field?

### Curriculum Integration Through Conceptual Development

SIT (Integrated Islamic Schools) emerges as an alternative to educational systems that create a dichotomy between studying religious science and natural sciences. In such systems, science is often considered to stand alone and excludes God in advancing knowledge. However, in Islam, Allah SWT strongly encourages humans to explore the entire contents of the universe. SIT aims to reconcile these two seemingly separate realms by integrating them into a unified educational framework. The school aligns itself with the Islamic principle that encourages the exploration of both religious and empirical truths (Kurniawan, 2021). Therefore, SIT's curriculum development focuses on mastery of various subjects and ensuring that the teaching aligns with core Islamic principles, serving both spiritual and intellectual growth.

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالاخْتِلافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لآيَاتٍ لِأُولَى الْأَلْبَابِ

*"Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, there are signs (of Allah's greatness) for people of understanding"* (Q.S Al Imron, 3:190)

This phrase underscores the Islamic view that the natural world is a whole of signs pointing toward the existence and attributes of Allah, the Creator. It implies that understanding the world scientifically can be a form of worship and a means of getting closer to God, as it enables one to appreciate the intricacy and beauty of His creation. This philosophy aligns closely with the ethos of educational institutions like SIT, which aim to integrate religious teachings with scientific understanding, thereby enriching their students' spiritual and intellectual lives. Indeed, in Islamic teachings, Allah SWT (God) encourages humans to observe His creations in detail (Ramlafatma et al., 2021). This can be seen as a divine mandate to engage in scientific inquiry and to explore the natural world, as understanding it is considered a pathway to understanding and appreciating God's majesty. The Qur'an and Hadith contain numerous verses and sayings that urge believers to study the world around them, from the heavens and the earth to the oceans and living creatures (Hafidz et al., 2022). This perspective provides a strong foundation for educational models like SIT, which seek to integrate religious and scientific learning, reinforcing that both types of knowledge can coexist harmoniously and enhance each other.

وَوَالَى الْجِبَالِ كَيْفَ نُصِبَتْ ۗ وَوَالَى السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ ۗ ۗ أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ

*"Do they not look at the camel, how it is created? How the sky is raised high? How the mountains are erected?"* (Q.S Al Ghasiyah, 88: 17 - 19).

The verse you refer to appears from the Qur'an, specifically Surah Al-Ghasiyah (The Overwhelming, Chapter 88), verses 17-19. The verse calls for reflection on the natural world, including camels, the sky, and mountains, as signs of God's creative power. This is a prime example of how Islamic teachings actively encourage the study of nature and the universe to understand and appreciate the divine. In educational settings like SIT (Integrated Islamic Schools), these teachings can serve as a framework for curriculum

development that integrates scientific and religious knowledge (Musthofa & Ali, 2021). The focus is not just on how things are but on why they are the way they are, thereby encouraging scientific inquiry and theological reflection. This approach allows for a holistic education, nurturing students' intellectual and spiritual aspects. From this perspective, the concept of education in the SIT (Integrated Islamic Schools) model no longer dichotomizes science and religion. Rather than negating each other, the two aspects mutually reinforce each other. The presence of religion in the development of science is an effort to fulfill God's command to study all of His creations (Dupni & Rosadi, 2020).

The findings from such a study are ultimately used for the well-being of humanity and the universe. This perspective aligns with the national education goals and ideals of independence in Indonesia's 1945 Constitution. The Constitution states that one of the primary responsibilities of the Indonesian Government is to enlighten the nation based on the belief in the One Supreme God (Mansir, 2020). This concept is further elaborated in Undang-Undang Dasar Republik Indonesia Tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional, which aims for the development of student's potential to become individuals who are faithful and devout to the One Supreme God, possess noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, skilled, creative, independent, and responsible democratic citizens. Therefore, conceptual integration in the SIT model can more accurately be described as a reinforcement or emphasis on the religious aspect of the national education system (Pribadi, 2022).

### **Curriculum Integration Through Content Development**

Integrating a curriculum does not solely revolve around the harmonization of philosophical concepts; it also extends to the realm of content. Schools or educational institutions like SIT (Integrated Islamic Schools) are responsible for ensuring that the developed curriculum serves as a comprehensive guide for educators and students alike, fostering a deeper understanding of scientific and religious knowledge (Muthohirin et al., 2022). In terms of content, the curriculum needs to be designed to facilitate the cross-pollination of ideas between different subject areas—natural sciences, social sciences, or religious studies. This could mean developing interdisciplinary modules that explain scientific theories alongside religious tenets, promoting a more holistic education. For example, Islamic teachings on stewardship of the Earth could enrich a lesson on environmental science, thereby providing a multifaceted understanding of the subject matter (Hergianasari, 2019).

In addition, modern pedagogical tools and methods can be employed to ensure the curriculum is engaging and effective. Digital platforms could offer interactive simulations, quizzes, and assignments that test rote memorization, critical thinking, and ethical reasoning. These elements serve not only to integrate content but also to cater to diverse learning styles, thus meeting the broader objectives of education as stipulated in the national guidelines (Saepudin, 2019). The underlying aim is to prepare students to become well-rounded individuals who are proficient in the practical application of science and technology and grounded in ethical and religious principles. By carefully planning, evaluating, and revising the curriculum content, educational institutions like SIT can achieve a balanced and integrated curriculum that genuinely serves the educational and spiritual needs of the student body (Robbaniyah, 2022).

Indeed, the Kurikulum Merdeka offers educational institutions like SIT (Integrated Islamic Schools) a unique opportunity to integrate various aspects into the educational content. Here are some points based on what you have said (Ien, 2020).

1. Expanding the Scope: Kurikulum Merdeka is designed to be applicable across Indonesia, a country of diverse cultures and geographies. Schools have the opportunity to enrich the curriculum with local wisdom and knowledge. For example, SIT could incorporate teachings from local Islamic scholars related to Indonesia's post-independence period.

2. Rearranging Sequencing: Kurikulum Merdeka's phased approach means the material could be covered in various sequences, depending on the student's specific needs and capabilities. This allows for greater customization, especially in diverse learning environments.
3. Integrating Islamic Values: One of the core principles of SIT is that the Quran and the universe come from the same Creator. This makes the study of sciences, social studies, languages, and math an exploration of the 'verses' of God in nature. Thus, subjects would always be related to the greatness and teachings of Allah SWT.
4. Balancing KSAVE Aspects: Kurikulum Merdeka can be enhanced by a balanced focus on Knowledge, Skills, Attitude, Values, and Ethics (KSAVE). This involves linking knowledge in one field with foundational understandings in another and emphasizing the soft skills and values that are part of SIT's unique education model.
5. Pacing of Discussions: Differentiated learning strategies enable schools to emphasize particular aspects in line with their educational philosophies. For instance, in SIT, lessons on family in natural sciences could be expanded to include prayers for parents and ethical considerations towards siblings and others, thus taking more time than other topics.
6. Formulating Continuity: Some competencies may not continue from one level to another. With the freedom offered by Kurikulum Merdeka, SIT can pay attention to these points to ensure a more holistic education.

By carefully considering these aspects, SIT can create a well-integrated, comprehensive curriculum that aligns with Kurikulum Merdeka while fulfilling its educational philosophy and objectives.

### **Curriculum integration through the development of subjects is a strategic step that allows schools like Integrated Islamic Schools (SIT) to unify religious and scientific knowledge.**

On base Keputusan Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia Nomor 262/M/2022 tentang Perubahan atas Keputusan Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Nomor 56/M/2022 tentang Pedoman Penerapan Kurikulum dalam Rangka Pemulihan Pembelajaran "*Satuan pendidikan yang memilih Kurikulum Merdeka dapat mengimplementasikannya melalui 3 (tiga) pilihan sebagai berikut: A. menerapkan beberapa bagian dan prinsip Kurikulum Merdeka, tanpa mengganti kurikulum satuan pendidikan, misalnya menerapkan proyek penguatan profil pelajar Pancasila sebagai kurikuler atau ekstrakurikuler dengan konsekuensi menambah jam pelajaran, menerapkan pembelajaran sesuai tahap capaian peserta didik atau pembelajaran terdiferensiasi; B. menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka dengan menggunakan perangkat ajar yang sudah disediakan oleh Pemerintah Pusat; atau C. menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka dengan pengembangan berbagai perangkat ajar oleh satuan pendidikan.*" On this basis, Integrated Islamic Schools (SIT) are given the authority to develop a curriculum that aligns with their vision and mission (Maimun et al., 2021). From here, the model of curriculum integration through the development of subjects or fields of study has evolved. The subjects or fields of study in question are diverse, but generally are derivatives of Islamic Religious Education studies, such as reading, writing, and memorizing the Quran, practical worship, and Islamic Personal Development (Sormin, 2020).

### **Curriculum Integration Through Learning Process**

The most commonly used learning integration strategy in SIT is integration through the learning process, as outlined by Drake and Burns. SIT employs various types of integration, including multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary education (Rahmat, 2020):

1. Multidisciplinary Integration: This has been in use for quite some time in SIT, especially following the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum. Thematic learning serves as the primary foundation for this

strategy. Themes like "my family", "cultural diversity", and "my environment" are often chosen for multidisciplinary integration. For instance, in the theme "My family," various subjects like Bahasa Indonesia, mathematics, science, Pancasila, and civics education are involved.

2. **Interdisciplinary Integration:** This approach incorporates cross-curricular competencies like reading skills, research abilities, respectful attitudes towards others, and good moral conduct (*akhlakul karimah*). Skills like not interrupting someone while speaking, asking for permission to speak, and attentive listening during presentations are integrated into learning through this strategy. All existing subject fields are responsible for instilling these KSAVE (Knowledge, Skills, Attitude, Values, and Ethics) attributes.
3. **Transdisciplinary Integration:** In SIT, environment-related themes such as caring for underprivileged communities are approached through project-based learning that involves what is referred to as volunteering hours. This represents an integration strategy using a transdisciplinary approach.

Through these varied methods, SIT aims to provide a well-rounded educational experience that imparts academic knowledge and focuses on developing ethical, social, and spiritual competencies.

## **Discussion**

SIT (Integrated Islamic Schools) has two explanatory meanings: Islamic School and Integrated. "Islamic School" points to its roots in the Islamic religion. The "Integrated" concept arises from the belief that natural sciences and religious knowledge come from a SINGLE SUPREME SOURCE, implying that they cannot be partially separated in learning (Tharaba, 2020). Thus, studying science also means studying the knowledge of God, requiring the understanding and belief in the attributes and existence of God. Therefore, this concept leads us to the understanding of curriculum integration. Considering the curriculum as the foundation of school activities, it must be aligned with the school's fundamental principles. In this context, the term 'integrated' in SIT points to curriculum integration or integrated curriculum (Rojii et al., 2019).

What is meant by curriculum integration? The concept of curriculum integration is not new in the field of education. Beane released a book titled *"Curriculum Integration: Designing the Core of Democratic Education"* In this book, Beane asserts that the concept of progressive education has led him to focus on curriculum integration (Rahma & Agustin, 2021). Beane's interest in curriculum integration began as early as 1967 when his professor, Conrad Toepfer, asked him to read Thomas Hopkins' book titled *"Integration: Its Meaning and Application"* Beane explains that curriculum integration is a curriculum design focused on enhancing the possibilities of personal and social integration through organizing the curriculum around significant issues and problems, executed collaboratively without the constraints of subject areas. In curriculum integration, the organization is not based on subject areas but on problems and experiences, much like life (Salihin, 2021).

With the freedom for schools to independently develop their curricula, along with the concept of integration emphasizing the need for schools to consider opportunities for students' integration with societal realities, the "integrated" aspect of SIT will likely give rise to various models of curriculum integration. As a reference, Drake and Burns categorize integration models into three broad categories: multidisciplinary integration, interdisciplinary integration, and transdisciplinary integration (Gluchman, 2018).

## **CONCLUSION**

SIT (presumably an Islamic educational institution based on the context) represents another model that enriches the national education system. It operates on the belief in a Supreme Creator, who has revealed His book as written in the Quran and laid down the laws that govern the universe—what we know as

natural laws. Religious teachings and natural laws come from the same source, and studying both is considered an act of worship in understanding His "verses" or signs. A series of curriculum development steps are taken to ensure that this perspective is implemented. These steps are executed by developing various aspects, including conceptualization, content, and integration during the curriculum implementation. Conceptual Aspect: At the very foundation, the curriculum is designed to embody the belief in a Supreme Creator and the dual nature of His revelations—through religious texts and the natural world. Content Aspect: Subjects from religious (*kauliyah*) and worldly (*kauniyah*) sciences are included to offer a well-rounded education. The objective is to avoid a dichotomous view that separates these two kinds of knowledge. Integration in Implementation: During the implementation phase, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches are adopted to ensure that the educational experience is not just academic but also spiritual, ethical, and social. By carefully planning, evaluating, and revising these aspects, SIT aims to provide an education that truly serves not just the intellectual but also the spiritual and ethical needs of the student body. Future research will discuss the effectiveness of implementing the independent curriculum in integrated Islamic schools.

### AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author ensures no conflict of interest in writing this article. The writing is made with a strong effort to avoid and be free from the behavior of plagiarism.

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