

## **INTEGRATION OF *KULIYYATU-L MU'ALLIMIN AL-ISLAMIYAH* (KMI) CURRICULUM AND MERDEKA CURRICULUM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to describe the integration forms and strategies of the Kulliyatu-l Mu'allimin Al-Islamiyyah (KMI) Gontor Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug Indramayu. Furthermore, it analyzes the roles of teachers and institutional policies, identifies supporting and inhibiting factors, and examines the impact of this integration on students' character, academic performance, and independence. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The findings reveal that curriculum integration is executed through structural and practical approaches. Structurally, the school combines both curricula within learning schedules, teaching modules, and a dual assessment system. Practically, integration is evident in trilingual instruction (Arabic, English, and Indonesian), character-based and project-based learning, and a 24-hour boarding system.

**Key Words:** Integration Curriculum, KMI Gontor Curriculum, Merdeka Curriculum

### **ABSTRAK**

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan bentuk dan strategi integrasi antara Kurikulum Kulliyatul Mu'allimin Al-Islamiyyah (KMI) Gontor dan Kurikulum Merdeka di SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug Indramayu. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga menganalisis peran guru dan kebijakan kelembagaan dalam proses implementasi, mengidentifikasi faktor pendukung dan penghambat, serta mengkaji dampak integrasi tersebut terhadap karakter, prestasi akademik, dan kemandirian siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif.*

*Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa integrasi kurikulum dilaksanakan melalui pendekatan struktural dan praktis. Secara struktural, sekolah memadukan Kurikulum KMI dan Kurikulum Merdeka ke dalam jadwal pembelajaran, modul ajar, dan sistem penilaian ganda. Secara praktis, integrasi terlihat pada penggunaan pengantar tiga bahasa (Arab, Inggris, dan Indonesia), pembelajaran berbasis karakter dan proyek, serta penerapan sistem asrama 24 jam.*

**Kata Kunci:** Integrasi Kurikulum, Kurikulum KMI Gontor, Kurikulum Merdeka.

## INTRODUCTION

The curriculum holds a central position in the entire educational process, directing all learning activities toward achieving educational goals. It serves as a guideline and framework for creating effective and efficient learning processes while maintaining the essential content delivered to students (Jayadi, et al., 2024). Islamic education teaches a balance between knowledge and religious values by integrating the two, aiming to ensure that students not only excel academically but also possess strong moral and spiritual foundations (Brutu, Annur, & Ibrahim, 2023). The emergence of modern Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) reflects an Islamic educational initiative in which students are expected not only to study religion but also to harmonize it with general knowledge.

Pesantren are the oldest and most influential Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. They function not only as centers for religious learning but also as institutions that cultivate character, morality, and spirituality, producing many national figures. Over time, pesantren have played a significant role in shaping young generations who are ethical, independent, and equipped with leadership qualities. However, with the rapid development of the times, social changes, and technological advancement, pesantren face challenges related to the relevance of their curriculum in the modern era. Traditionally, pesantren curricula focus on religious education, yet these must be aligned with the national curriculum that includes general education. Such alignment is crucial to improve the quality of education in pesantren and to ensure that they remain relevant in modern society (Kurnia & Akbar, 2025). Thus, pesantren must adapt to the national education system without losing their identity as religious-based institutions that uphold Islamic values. One form of adaptation is the integration of pesantren curricula with the national curriculum. This effort aims to create an educational model that develops not only academic competencies but also fosters strong moral and spiritual values, enabling students to compete at both national and global levels. Therefore, pesantren need to innovate their curriculum to bridge the two systems by maintaining Islamic values while incorporating academic competencies required in the Merdeka Curriculum. By integrating general education elements into the pesantren curriculum, students are expected

to gain religious understanding alongside the skills and knowledge needed to thrive globally (Kurnia & Akbar, 2025).

A strategic adaptation increasingly implemented in modern pesantren is the integration of the pesantren curriculum with the national curriculum, combining religious education, character development, and academic learning into a unified system. This integration does not focus solely on instructional materials but also on aligning educational goals namely, shaping students who are faithful, well-mannered, and intellectually capable. According to Amin Abdullah, an Indonesian Muslim scholar who supports the integration of various scientific disciplines, several key indicators characterize such integration: (1) the Qur'an and Sunnah serve as the foundation of the scientific hierarchy, (2) the integrative approach values existing knowledge, (3) epistemological, ontological, and axiological foundations must be considered, (4) it integrates the triangle of knowledge, *hadlarah al-nash*, *hadlarah al-'ilm*, and *hadlarah al-falsafah*, and (5) religion and science share a relevant relationship in higher education. Amin Abdullah further emphasizes that integrating religious and general knowledge is essential for navigating the modern world

Curriculum integration in Islamic educational institutions has become a vital strategy for improving educational quality. Modern pesantren face demands to adapt to contemporary developments without abandoning their long-standing traditions. Meanwhile, the government has introduced the Merdeka Curriculum as a national standard that emphasizes differentiated learning and the strengthening of literacy and numeracy skills. Previous studies have explored curriculum integration within Islamic educational settings, such as the integration of madrasah curricula with the Gontor system (Kusumawati & Nurfuadi, 2024), the implementation of the KMI curriculum in formal education institutions (Islamiyati, 2022), and the integration of KMI and national curricula (Jayadi et al., 2024). However, most prior studies focus only on structural integration, such as scheduling and subject equivalence. Few have examined the practical aspects of implementing two curricula simultaneously, including teachers' roles, dormitory culture, language practices, and the day-to-day enactment of the integrated system. Likewise, limited research discusses how pesantren adapt while implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, which philosophically emphasizes student-centered learning, project-based learning, and differentiation, contrasting sharply with the teacher-centered orientation of the KMI curriculum. These differences highlight the need for deeper research on the forms, strategies, and impacts both positive and negative of integrating the two curricula

Pondok Pesantren Modern Darussalam Gontor is recognized as a pioneer in implementing the *Kuliyyatul Mu'allimin Al-Islamiyyah* (KMI) curriculum, which aims to balance general knowledge and religious instruction through an integrated system focusing on three major components: mastery of Arabic and English, character building and discipline, and a 24-hour boarding school learning environment (Budi & Apud, 2019). This system has been adopted by many modern pesantren in Indonesia, including Pondok Pesantren Al-Ishlah Tajug Indramayu, which integrates the Gontor KMI curriculum with the Merdeka Curriculum. This integration is designed to ensure that students master Islamic studies with Arabic as the medium of instruction, aligned with KMI standards while also meeting governmental requirements through the implementation of the

national curriculum. The primary goal of this integration is to create a balanced education that strengthens spiritual and moral values while advancing students' critical thinking skills as emphasized in the Merdeka Curriculum. As a result, students are expected to become individuals who embody Islamic character, possess academic competence, and adapt effectively to social changes.

Pondok pesantren Al-Ishlah Tajug Indramayu stands as one of the modern pesantren that integrates the Gontor-inspired KMI curriculum with the national Merdeka Curriculum. The concept of modern pesantren seeks to merge two essential educational components—Islamic studies taught within the pesantren and general education established by the national curriculum (Atikah, Fitriyah, & Nikmah, 2025). This integration ensures that students receive both academic knowledge and moral-spiritual values. However, the practical implementation of two curricula with distinct orientations poses several challenges. The KMI curriculum includes religious and pesantren-based subjects such as *muthola'ah*, *nahwu*, *shorof*, *balaghoh*, and *fiqh*, all taught in Arabic (Tahir, Muhammad, & Subki, 2024). In contrast, the Merdeka Curriculum focuses on general subjects rooted in science, social studies, and technology, with academic achievement aligned with national educational standards. Integrating two systems with divergent aims and characteristics requires careful balancing to ensure that students benefit equally from both moral-religious and academic development.

The Merdeka Curriculum provides opportunities for educational institutions such as madrasah and pesantren to design more flexible and adaptive learning systems based on students' needs. This aligns with the foundational values of pesantren education, which prioritize independence, creativity, and innovation. The curriculum also encourages critical thinking (Rizal, Budi, & Azizah, 2025). and it allows students to learn more comfortably and freely, experience reduced academic pressure, and maximize their potential. Such an approach enables students not only to memorize learning content but also to analyze and articulate ideas effectively (Maulidiyah & Muhammad, 2025). Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in pesantren is therefore a strategic step toward integrating Islamic values with 21st-century competencies. This approach emphasizes not only cognitive and academic aspects but also character education, soft skills development, and the formation of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila as a moral and social foundation.

Despite its potential, the integration of the KMI Gontor curriculum and the national curriculum faces several fundamental challenges. First, there is an imbalance between pesantren subjects and general subjects, resulting in heavy student workloads that may affect learning effectiveness and rest time. Second, teachers possess diverse competencies and educational backgrounds; while some teachers with pesantren backgrounds excel in religious studies, they may not be familiar with the pedagogical approaches required in the Merdeka Curriculum. Conversely, teachers from general education backgrounds may not fully understand pesantren-based instructional methods. Third, administrative and technical adjustments to the national curriculum—such as the preparation of lesson plans, evaluation systems, and academic reporting—present significant challenges (Oernika Mahanani & Sulistyorini, 2023).

This study offers novelty by examining the integration of two curricula with opposing orientations: the teacher-centered KMI curriculum and the student-

centered, differentiated, project-based Merdeka Curriculum. Unlike previous studies that focused primarily on structural aspects such as scheduling and subject alignment, this study explores institutional policies, teacher roles, dormitory culture, language practices, and the daily learning dynamics that occur within the integrated system

Based on the issues and challenges described above, this research aims to describe the forms and strategies of integration between the KMI Gontor Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug Indramayu; analyze the roles of teachers and institutional policies in implementing the integrated system; identify supporting and inhibiting factors in curriculum integration; and explore the impacts of integration on students' character development, academic abilities, and independence. This research is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of curriculum integration at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug Indramayu. Furthermore, it reaffirms the role of pesantren as adaptive, innovative educational institutions that remain firmly rooted in Islamic values as their moral and spiritual foundation

## **METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the integration process between the *Kuliyyatul Mu'allimin Al-Islamiyah* (KMI) Gontor Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum implemented at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug Boarding School Indramayu. The qualitative approach was selected because it enables the researcher to explore the meanings, values, and experiences of the research subjects. The focus of this study is not merely to measure the effectiveness of the curriculum but also to describe how the integration of the two systems operates in practice, how daily learning activities are carried out, how teachers adjust their teaching strategies, and how students perceive the impact on their academic and character development.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected directly in the field through in-depth interviews, observations, and document collection at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug Indramayu. These data represent direct insights from educational practitioners regarding the implementation of the integrated curriculum. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from documents such as the pesantren profile, curriculum documents, lesson plans (RPP), class schedules, and annual activity reports.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, which involves choosing participants who are considered knowledgeable and directly involved in the process (Zakariah, Afriani, & Zakariah, 2020). The main informants in this study consisted of one pesantren leader, one pesantren director, one school principal, one student affairs vice principal, two teachers, and two students, totaling eight informants. Data were collected through three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis employed the Miles and Huberman model, which includes three key steps: data reduction, data display, and verification (Sarosa, n.d.). In practice, the researcher conducted data reduction by filtering, grouping, and organizing the information according to the main themes of the study. The reduced data were then presented in narrative

form and thematic categories to identify patterns and relationships. Finally, conclusions were drawn to ensure that the interpretations produced were valid.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Overview of the implementation of the integrated KMI Gontor Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Boarding School Indramayu

SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug is one of the educational institutions under the Al-Ishlah Tajug Islamic Boarding School in Indramayu, known as a modern pesantren with an integrated system between Islamic values and general knowledge. The pesantren was established with the spirit of Islamic educational reform inspired by Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor. Since its foundation, Al-Ishlah Tajug has positioned education as a means of shaping individuals who are knowledgeable, well-mannered, and independent. Over time, SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug began implementing a dual curriculum: the *Kulliyatu-l Mu'allimin Al-Islamiyah* (KMI) Gontor Curriculum and the national curriculum, the Merdeka Curriculum. This policy emerged from the need to bridge two different educational orientations: religious education rooted in pesantren tradition and formal education oriented toward academic competency achievement. Through this integration, the pesantren aims to produce graduates who not only possess strong religious foundations but are also ready to compete in a modern world that demands critical thinking, literacy and numeracy skills, technological competence, and effective communication skills.

The research findings show several fundamental differences between the philosophies of the Merdeka Curriculum and the KMI Curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum promotes flexible, relaxed, and student-centered learning. In contrast, the KMI emphasizes high discipline, intensive memorization, and teacher-directed learning. When these two systems are combined, certain clashes naturally arise. In practice, KMI-based learning remains more dominant, particularly in pesantren subjects. Teachers remain the central source of instruction, students follow teacher direction, and lecture-based and memorization methods are still prevalent. As a result, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum does not fully align with its initial concept of providing students with greater space for exploration.

Nevertheless, the pesantren has taken several steps to harmonize the two approaches. First, the school divides learning focus: religious and language subjects continue to follow the KMI pattern, while general subjects allow wider space for discussions, presentations, and projects in accordance with the Merdeka principles. Second, school management makes adjustments in instructional planning, such as developing integrative modules that combine Merdeka Curriculum learning outcomes with pesantren curriculum standards. Teachers are instructed to apply modern methods in general classes while maintaining the pesantren's discipline culture. Third, pesantren leaders view discipline not as an obstacle, but as a foundation that supports the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. They believe that creativity and independence can only grow when students are accustomed to managing time, focusing on their studies, and taking responsibility. Based on these findings, it

can be concluded that curriculum integration at Pesantren Al-Ishlah Tajug does not mean that the Merdeka Curriculum loses its essence; rather, it undergoes adaptation to the pesantren culture. The Merdeka Curriculum is still implemented, but in a more guided form that suits the institution's character. Meanwhile, KMI remains the cultural and rhythmic foundation of education, complemented by modern methods to make learning more varied.

Adaptation of the KMI Gontor curriculum into the Merdeka Curriculum context at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug is conducted both structurally and contextually. Structurally, the pesantren curriculum is incorporated into the academic calendar, enabling students to obtain two types of certification: the formal government-issued diploma and the *muadalah* report recognized by Al-Azhar University and Cairo University in Egypt. Culturally, KMI values such as discipline, 24-hour learning, and Arabic–English language habituation are integrated into students' daily activities both inside and outside the classroom.

Practically, learning at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug is conducted through a full-day learning system, characteristic of modern pesantren. Students attend formal learning activities from morning until late afternoon for eight lesson hours, combining both general and pesantren subjects within one day. Afternoon activities include extracurricular programs, language learning, tutoring sessions, and communal activities such as afternoon clean-up under the supervision of pesantren administrators. In addition to academic activities, students are required to participate in various self-development programs, particularly language development such as (1) *muhadatsah* (dialogue), (2) *muhadhoroh* (speech practice), and (3) *mufrodat* (vocabulary building), conducted in Arabic and English. These programs aim to enhance students' proficiency in both languages and build their confidence in public speaking.

From this discussion, it is evident that the students' learning load indicates a structural tension between the KMI curriculum which prioritizes religious and language learning and the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes differentiation and balanced academic load. The learning schedule that runs from 07.00 to 15.15, followed by dormitory activities until night, shows that integrating the two curriculums creates *curriculum overload*. This finding aligns with Masnun (2021) and Wekke (2018), who state that modern pesantren often face challenges in balancing religious and general subjects when adopting dual curriculums. However, despite the heavy schedule, the pesantren's strong discipline and full-day boarding model help reduce the risk of burnout. Students continue to show positive character development and strong discipline. Thus, curriculum integration in pesantren should not be viewed solely from an academic perspective but must also consider cultural and spiritual dimensions.

Interviewed results indicate that the integration process is carried out gradually. The school principal stated that the integration aims to balance students' spiritual, religious, and academic abilities. Learning tools such as lesson plans (RPP) and teaching modules for general subjects follow the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly differentiated instruction. Meanwhile, lesson plans for pesantren subjects follow KMI Gontor standards using *I'dad*, an Arabic-language instructional design with teacher-centered methods.

Pesantren leaders affirm that this curriculum integration is a strategic step to prepare Muslim generations who excel both spiritually and intellectually. The

pesantren recognizes that contemporary challenges require graduates not only to master religious knowledge but also to contribute meaningfully to society. Observations show that the implementation of the integrated KMI Gontor and Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug emphasizes not only knowledge transfer but also character formation through a learning environment that fosters discipline, responsibility, and a sense of community. Although various technical challenges remain such as limited learning time and diverse teacher competencies the integration of the two curriculums creates an educational model aligned with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum: character education and relevance to contemporary developments.

### **Forms of Curriculum Integration at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug Boarding School**

Curriculum integration at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug is a strategic effort by the institution to harmonize the values of modern pesantren education with national policy demands. This integration is implemented both structurally and practically, covering academic policies, curriculum document development, learning systems, and the internalization of character values in students' daily lives.

#### 1. Structural Integration

Structurally, curriculum integration is carried out by adjusting academic policies so that the pesantren can accommodate two different learning systems. The KMI curriculum focuses on religious studies, languages, and character formation, which is integrated with the Merdeka Curriculum that emphasizes literacy, numeracy, and 21st-century skills. This integration can be categorized as a *dual-track boarding school curriculum model*, which combines the national curriculum structure with the pesantren curriculum and implements them in parallel (Jayadi et al., 2024). in addition, this integration model shows that the KMI curriculum is not applied as an independent system; rather, it is adapted to fit the context of a formal educational institution. The school develops both Merdeka Curriculum documents and the Pesantren KMI Curriculum, covering subject structures, the academic calendar, and instructional plans. This preparation involves collaboration between pesantren teachers and formal school teachers to prevent scheduling conflicts and ensure balanced learning loads between the KMI Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum.

Furthermore, the institution also develops integrated teaching modules that combine Islamic values with competencies required in the Merdeka Curriculum. For example, science learning is connected to the concept of *tauhid* and human responsibility toward nature, so that students are expected to understand the material not only intellectually but also morally and spiritually. Likewise, the evaluation system is arranged in an integrated manner. Students are assessed through two assessment systems: the national assessments such as school examinations and project-based evaluations from the Merdeka Curriculum, and the traditional pesantren assessments, namely *tahriri* and *syafahi* exams (written and oral tests), which include kitab memorization, Arabic language examinations, and worship practice.

Table 1  
*List of Lesson Subject*

No.	Category	Lesson Subject
1.	Merdeka Curriculum	English Bahasa Indonesia Mathematics History Biology Physics Chemistry Sociology Economy Geography Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
2.	KMI Gontor Curriculum	Muthola'ah Tauhid Grammar Mustholahul Hadis Nahwu Tarbiyah Mahfulot Fiqh Sunnah Islamic History Balaghoh Shorof Arabic Ulumul Qur'an

## 2. Practical Integration

Practical Integration refers to the implementation of the curriculum in classroom activities and students' daily learning routines. Learning at SMA Al-Ishlah Tajug uses Arabic, English, and Indonesian as instructional languages in accordance with the KMI Gontor educational tradition. Arabic is used in religious and language-related subjects, English is used for English and grammar subjects, while Indonesian is applied to general subjects from the Merdeka Curriculum.

The learning methods applied also align with the characteristics of the two integrated curricula. From the Merdeka Curriculum, the school adopts student-centered learning and project-based learning, while from the KMI curriculum, it applies teacher-centered methods such as lectures and memorization. Additionally, because the KMI curriculum is adopted and implemented within a 24-hour learning framework, learning does not only occur in classrooms but also in non-formal settings in the dormitory through the enforcement of discipline, role modeling, and habitual practices embedded in the pesantren environment. Learning schedules are strictly arranged from dawn until night, combining academic learning and religious activities. This *full-day learning system* shapes students to become disciplined, resilient, and capable of managing their time (Imdadur, 2024). The success of curriculum integration at SMA Al-Ishlah Tajug is supported by three main strategies: teacher collaboration, professional development, and continuous evaluation. Collaboration is carried out through regular teacher meetings aimed at aligning learning approaches and assessment systems. In these discussions, teachers evaluate the most effective methods for integrating both curricula without reducing the essence of each.

Table 2  
*Daily Schedule of Students*

Time	Activity
04.15 – 05.15	Subuh Prayer, Dzikir, dan Asmaul Husna
05.30 – 05.45	Mufrodat (Arabic and English vocabulary enrichment)
05.50 – 06.10	Cleaning duties
06.10 – 06.35	Preparation (personal hygiene, breakfast)
06.40 – 07.00	Muhadatsah (Arabic and English Conversation practice)
07.00 – 15.15	Classroom Learning with breaks at 09.00, 11.00 dan 12.15
15.15 – 15.45	Ashar prayer
15.45 – 16.00	Cleaning duties
16.00 – 17.00	Extracurriculars, language coaching, free activities
17.00 – 17.45	Preparation (personal hygiene, dinner)
17.45 – 19.00	Maghrib prayer, group recitation, isya prayer
19.00 – 21.30	Group study, academic guidance with homeroom teacher, speech training
22.00 – 04.15	Rest

Additionally, the pesantren routinely conducts teacher training or in-house training focused on the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum such as the Pancasila Student Profile, differentiated learning, and the use of digital media. This aims to ensure that pesantren teachers accustomed to traditional methods can integrate modern approaches into their teaching. Meanwhile, evaluation integration is carried out through two mechanisms: formal academic evaluation, which measures knowledge and skill competencies through mid-semester tests or written examinations, and character evaluation, which is conducted through observation of discipline, responsibility, and student behavior both inside the classroom and in the dormitory.

### **The Role of Teachers and Institutional Policies in Implementing Curriculum Integration**

Teachers hold a strategic position in the implementation of the integration between the KMI Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug. As the primary executors of learning, teachers are not only responsible for delivering material but also act as facilitators, spiritual mentors, and role models of character for the students.

#### **1. Teaching methods and Development of Teaching Materials**

Teachers at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug are required to adjust their instructional strategies to align with two curricula that have different orientations. From the KMI Gontor Curriculum, teachers adopt approaches based on habituation, exemplary conduct, and character strengthening, while from the Merdeka Curriculum they adopt the principles of student-centered learning and Project-Based Learning. The teaching materials used are integrative in nature. Teachers who teach general subjects design learning modules in accordance with the standards set in the Merdeka Curriculum, which include cognitive dimensions. Meanwhile, teachers who teach subjects under the KMI Gontor Curriculum develop modules characteristic of modern pesantren education, integrating Islamic values and using Arabic as the medium of instruction. These efforts to develop teaching materials demonstrate the teachers' ability to bridge two different educational systems by integrating scientific knowledge with moral and character values.

## 2. Interdivisional Collaboration

The success of curriculum integration depends not only on the capability of individual teachers but also on the synergy and collaboration between divisions. At SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug, there are two categories of teachers: those responsible for pesantren-based subjects (KMI Curriculum) and those teaching general subjects. Some teachers also teach both types of subjects simultaneously. These two teacher divisions hold regular meetings to synchronize schedules, learning methods, and evaluation systems. Through these meetings, teachers discuss strategies for integration to ensure that students are not overwhelmed with academic workloads. Collaboration also extends to student mentoring in the dormitory, where teachers from both divisions participate in non-academic activities such as language monitoring and character building. With this system, the learning process does not only occur in the classroom but also in students' daily routines, strengthening the concept of 24-hour education which is the hallmark of modern pesantren.

## 3. Institutional Policies

Institutional policies focus on three main aspects: strengthening human resources, language development, and learning monitoring. First, in terms of human resource development, the pesantren routinely conducts semester-based teacher training focused on the adaptation of the Merdeka Curriculum, learning innovation, and the integration of Islamic values. Second, the institution implements language development programs for all members of the pesantren. Arabic and English are used as instructional languages in learning activities and as communication languages in the dormitory. Third, the institution conducts regular monitoring and evaluation of learning, carried out by the academic supervision team. Each teacher is required to prepare learning reports, including students' achievement progress.

Overall, teachers and institutional policies are two crucial elements in the successful integration of curricula at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug. Teachers function as implementers and mentors, while the institution serves as a facilitator and policy director ensuring that the curriculum system operates synergistically.

## **Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Implementing of Curriculum Integration at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug**

The implementation of the integrated curricula is inseparable from the presence of supporting factors that strengthen its success, as well as inhibiting factors that pose challenges during its execution. Both aspects play an essential role in determining the extent to which the integration process can run effectively and sustainably.

The following is an overview of the supporting and inhibiting factors identified through observations, interviews, and documentation in the field:

Table 3  
*Supporting and Inhibiting factors*

Aspek	Faktor pendukung	Faktor penghambat
Culture and System	A strong culture of discipline and a 24-hour boarding learning system support character formation, continuous supervision, and the development and use of Arabic and English in daily activities.	A dense academic schedule and tightly structured activities reduce students' rest time. Independent academic exploration becomes limited for example, students rarely use the library due to the lack of free periods.
Managerial	Strong support from the pesantren leadership, who is visionary and proactive in developing and integrating both curricula as a response to community needs. The existence of a dual assessment system: national assessments from the Merdeka Curriculum based on government standards, and <i>syafahi</i> and <i>tahriri</i> exams for KMI subjects based on Gontor's modern pesantren standards	The absence of teaching materials that directly integrate the KMI Curriculum with the Merdeka Curriculum; both are still administratively separate and only combined during implementation.
Human Resources	High motivation and loyalty of teachers in providing instruction inside and outside the classroom (in the dormitory). Some teachers are proficient in Arabic, which supports its daily use among students. Teachers are also actively involved in training activities.	Differences in teacher backgrounds (general education vs. pesantren). Some teachers do not consistently use Arabic when communicating with students.
Facility and technology	Availability of adequate facilities such as sufficient classrooms, a library, laboratories, offices, and a computer lab that support a conducive learning environment.	The library is not fully optimized, and some laboratory facilities are limited, making them rarely used. Technology integration in learning remains very minimal
Use of Arabic and English	The implementation of a daily Arabic and English language policy, supported by language development programs. Arabic is used as the medium of instruction for several subjects.	Inconsistent use of foreign languages, especially outside formal hours. There is an imbalance in language use, with English being rarely practiced in daily interactions

#### Supporting Factors in the implementation of Curriculum Integration

##### a. Discipline Culture and Boarding System

One of the main supporting factors for the successful integration of the curricula at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug is the strong culture of discipline and the implementation of a boarding school system. The pesantren environment, with its 24-hour learning model, enables students to remain continuously engaged in both academic and character-building activities. Daily routines such as religious practices, the use of foreign languages in everyday communication, and structured learning guidance create an intensive and well-organized learning environment. This culture also strengthens students' character, sense of responsibility, and independence.

##### b. Institutional Policies

Another supporting factor is the strong support from the institution's leadership and the commitment of the teachers. The pesantren leadership envisions SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug as an institution that combines the traditions of Islamic boarding schools with modern education. This support is reflected in the consistent enforcement of student discipline, spirituality, and moral values, alongside the development of students' academic abilities.

c. Human Resources

Teachers demonstrate strong motivation and loyalty, both in classroom teaching and in supervising students in the dormitory. Some teachers are proficient in Arabic, which supports its daily use among students. Teachers are also actively involved in professional development activities. Collaboration between pesantren teachers and general subject teachers allows them to share teaching methods and classroom management strategies.

d. Boarding Facilities and environment

The boarding school system adopted at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug, based on the KMI Gontor curriculum, provides a full 24-hour learning environment. Students learn not only in classrooms but also in the dormitory setting, where teachers serve not only as instructors but also as mentors in language activities, religious practices, and social programs. This demonstrates that character education and academic learning run simultaneously. Learning does not end in the classroom but continues into non-formal settings.

Meanwhile, there are some inhibiting factors in the implementation of the integrated curriculum at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug Boarding school, they are:

a. Use of Digital Facilities and Modern learning Resources

Despite having a strong traditional educational system, SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug still faces challenges regarding digital facilities and technology integration. Although projectors, computers, and internet access are available, their use remains limited. Teachers tend to rely heavily on conventional teaching methods rather than utilizing projectors, computers, or digital learning resources. This becomes a significant obstacle in adopting technology-based learning as encouraged by the Merdeka Curriculum. In addition, many teachers are not yet fully skilled in using digital platforms such as Google Classroom, Canva Edu, or Learning Management Systems (LMS), leading to suboptimal implementation of technology-based learning.

b. Imbalance in Learning Lead Between General Subjects and Pesantren Subjects

Another challenge lies in the imbalance between general subjects and pesantren subjects. The dense daily schedule limits students' rest time, which affects their learning effectiveness and physical stamina. General subjects must follow national standards, while pesantren subjects are more numerous in comparison, resulting in an increased learning load that challenges students' ability to maintain focus and performance across both systems.

c. Consistency in the use of Foreign Languages

Although the pesantren mandates the use of Arabic and English, its implementation in daily practice remains inconsistent. Many students and some teachers continue to use Indonesian in everyday communication. To address this, the institution needs to strengthen intensive language activities such as language clubs, public speaking programs, and structured reward-punishment systems, especially outside academic hours.

The supporting and inhibiting factors at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug illustrate a balanced dynamic between the institution's strengths and the challenges faced in modernizing its educational system. The discipline culture, leadership support, and boarding school structure serve as strong foundations for maintaining the essence of pesantren education. However, to optimize the integration of the KMI Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum, it is necessary to enhance the use of technology and incorporate digital-based learning so that pesantren education remains adaptive to ongoing educational changes.

### **Impact of Curriculum Integration on Students Character, Academic Achievement, and Independence**

The integration of KMI Gontor Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug has had a significant influence on character formation, the development of students' academic abilities, and the enhancement of their independence. Based on observations and interviews, the implementation of this integrated curriculum demonstrates positive impacts on students' personality and competencies.

#### **1. Impact on Students Character Formation**

One of the most evident outcomes is the strengthening of students' discipline and sense of responsibility. Values embedded in the KMI system—such as time management, personal responsibility, independent learning, and ethical behavior—have become part of the students' daily lives in the boarding school. Through the dormitory system, which integrates academic activities, students become accustomed to organizing their time for worship, studying, and social activities. The integration with the Merdeka Curriculum further enriches this aspect by encouraging students to think critically while practicing the values of the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*, such as cooperation and noble character (Neliwati, 2023).

Students are taught to respect teachers and parents, collaborate with peers, and maintain cleanliness and orderliness in their environment. Several teachers noted that students' character development becomes visible after a few months of living in the dormitory. Students who previously relied heavily on their parents begin to show independence in managing their activities, completing assignments without coercion, and leading small groups.

#### **2. Impact on Academic Achievement and Competence**

The Merdeka Curriculum is competency- and project-oriented, encouraging students to be more active in the learning process. Meanwhile, the KMI curriculum relies on textual study or lecture-based methods with a teacher-centered approach and memorization, strengthening students' memory and perseverance in understanding knowledge. In several general subjects such

as Indonesian, Science, and Social Studies, students show improvement in reading comprehension, essay writing, and discussion skills.

Documentation findings also show that most students have strong non-academic achievements. In terms of academic performance, students display improvement, especially when compared to other local Islamic boarding schools. By combining the pesantren's evaluation system: *syafahi* (oral exams) and *tahriri* (written essays) with national assessments based on formative evaluation, students become accustomed to various types of examinations. This training cultivates cognitive stability and the ability to analyze knowledge in different contexts.

### 3. Impact on Students Independence and Leadership

The boarding school learning system operate 24 hours a day, requiring students to independently manage their daily activities from studying and organizing events to carrying out social duties in the dormitory. Students are given responsibilities such as dormitory leader, language committee member, extracurricular committee member, or event organizer. Through these experiences, they learn to manage time, make decisions, and lead groups. The integration with the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes project-based and collaborative learning, further strengthens these abilities. In several activities, such as pesantren social projects, students work together to identify problems within their environment and formulate solutions through logical approaches grounded in Islamic values.

Despite the positive outcomes, the study also reveals several negative impacts of integrating the national curriculum with the pesantren curriculum. These include:

1. Overly packed schedule, students follow a rigorous schedule from 07:00 to 15:15, followed by dormitory activities until evening. This structure increases discipline but also results in fatigue and the potential for burnout. Observations show that some students appear sleepy or fall asleep in class during midday sessions. Theoretically, this aligns with the concept of *curriculum overload*, in which excessive learning loads reduce the effectiveness of material internalization and increase the risk of disengagement.
2. Academic gaps between Religious and General Subjects, although students excel in Arabic, leadership, discipline, and worship, their performance in subjects like science and numeracy is less optimal. This issue is linked to the dominance of religious subjects and limited time for practical science learning. The schedule documents show a 60% allocation for religious subjects and 40% for national subjects, meaning the effective time for science and mathematics is quantitatively reduced compared to regular schools. The lack of practice hours and repetition reduces opportunities for students to develop numeracy skills that require consistent training. Additionally, the pesantren's assessment system emphasizes *tahriri* (essay) and *syafahi* (oral) exams for religious and Arabic subjects, which promote memorization and textual explanation skills. While national assessments (multiple choice + essays) are still implemented, the teaching emphasis leans toward oral/essay-based evaluations of religious texts. As a result, numerical reasoning and science application skills are less stimulated in daily learning.

This study demonstrates that curriculum integration produces both positive and negative impacts. The findings contribute to the development of pesantren curriculum management theory by showing that integration requires management not only at the level of documents and scheduling but also in terms of learning culture and balancing study loads.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study on the integration of the KMI Gontor Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug Indramayu, it can be concluded that the integration process has produced meaningful impacts on the development of education within the pesantren context. The integration encompasses two major dimensions: structural curriculum management and the implementation of instructional practices within both classroom and dormitory settings.

First, in terms of curriculum structure, the institution has successfully combined the core elements of the KMI Gontor Curriculum which emphasizes moral values, language mastery, and character-based learning with the Merdeka Curriculum, which focuses on creativity, independent thinking, and contextual learning. This integration is reflected in the lesson scheduling, the design of integrative modules, and the implementation of project- and character-based learning activities.

Second, in the implementation of learning, teachers act as mediators between two differing curriculum philosophies. Teachers with pesantren backgrounds strengthen character building, role modeling, and mastery of Arabic, while general subject teachers promote active learning methods and modern assessment systems. Nevertheless, the practices of the Merdeka Curriculum still need optimization to ensure they are not overshadowed by the more structured and teacher-centered learning culture characteristic of the KMI model.

Third, regarding the impact on students, the integrated curriculum fosters a balance between spiritual, academic, and social competencies. Students show development in character, discipline, leadership, and language literacy. However, the study also indicates that numeracy and science achievement remain relatively weak. This is influenced by the dominant time allocation for pesantren subjects and teaching methods that have not fully supported scientific thinking skills.

Lastly, from a managerial perspective, the institution still faces challenges such as a dense student workload, variations in teacher competency, and limited digital facilities. These challenges may hinder the full implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly in areas requiring project-based learning, the use of technology, and more exploratory activities.

In conclusion, the integration of the KMI and Merdeka Curricula at SMA Islam Al-Ishlah Tajug contributes positively to the strengthening of students' character and social development. However, certain academic aspects particularly scientific literacy and numeracy, require special attention to ensure that curriculum integration remains relevant and aligned with the needs of modern education.

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