



Integration of Pesantren and Islamic School Curricula: Enhancing Quran Memorization Quality

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Abstract

This study investigates the management and impact of curriculum integration between pesantren and Islamic schools, focusing on its influence on students' Quran memorization quality and the challenges encountered in implementation. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving school principals, curriculum coordinators, pesantren leaders, *ustadz* tahfidz, and nine student participants. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, encompassing data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing, with validity ensured through source and method triangulation. The findings reveal that curriculum collaboration is systematically organized through integrated planning, synchronized implementation between tahfidz schedules and formal learning, and periodic evaluation based on academic and tahfidz assessments. This integration demonstrably improves students' fluency, accuracy, and consistency in Quran memorization. However, key challenges include limited time management, heterogeneous student motivation and ability, and adaptation to evolving national curriculum policies. The study highlights that integrated curriculum design offers an effective Islamic education model that strengthens both Quran memorization and academic achievement.

INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia consists of various models and systems, one of which is pesantren education, which has become an integral part of the history of Islamic education in the archipelago. Pesantren are known as Islamic-based educational institutions that emphasize character building, spirituality, and mastery of religious sciences, including the memorization of the Quran as a central component (Saifuddin, 2016). On the other hand, the national education system employs a national curriculum that places greater emphasis on the comprehensive development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in accordance with government standards (Kemdikbud, 2022).

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As traditional Islamic educational institutions, pesantren have made significant contributions to preserving Islamic teachings, particularly through the cultivation of Quranic memorization. As times have changed, many pesantren no longer operate independently but have integrated their systems with formal education. This integrative model aims to produce a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also spiritually strong (Hamzah & Iqbal, 2023).

The duality of the curriculum between Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and formal schools often presents its own challenges. Students are required to meet the academic targets of formal schools while maintaining the quality of their memorization within the pesantren system. A lack of synergy between the two can lead to exhaustion, poor memorization outcomes, and a decline in motivation to learn (Aimah, 2021). Therefore, a form of curriculum collaboration is needed that can integrate the strengths of each system without interfering with one another.

Curriculum collaboration is an approach that differs from mere integration. Curriculum integration emphasizes the unification of the structure and substance of learning into a single integrated system, whereas curriculum collaboration emphasizes planned cooperation between two systems that retain their respective characteristics (Kurniawan et al., 2024; Maskur, 2019; Shaleh et al., 2024; Zhang, 2013). This conceptual distinction is important because integration without effective collaboration has the potential to lead to overlapping content and an imbalance in the learning load.

Curriculum collaboration. According to Gray (Zhang, 2013), collaboration is a dynamic process of interaction among two or more interdependent parties to create shared value through the exchange of knowledge and resources. In the context of education, Johnson and Smith Pieters et al., (2019) emphasize that curriculum collaboration enables teachers, students, and stakeholders to work together in designing, implementing, and evaluating learning, thereby creating positive synergy.

The pesantren curriculum. Pesantren are the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia and play a significant role in shaping the Islamic character of society (Dhofier, 2011). The pesantren curriculum is characterized by mastery of classical Islamic literature in Arabic, in-depth study of Arabic grammar, and scholarly legitimacy through a clear chain of transmission (*sanad*) (Nihwan & Paisun, 2019). Aimah, (2021) emphasizes that modern pesantren emphasize an integrated curriculum in which religious studies and general studies are not separated dichotomously.

Previous studies have generally addressed the integration or collaboration between pesantren and general school curricula (Hamzah & Iqbal, 2023; Karim, 2022) however, few have specifically examined how this collaborative process directly impacts the quality of students' Quran memorization in terms of accuracy, fluency, and consistency. This study differs from previous research in that it focuses its analysis on the relationship between curriculum collaboration management and measurable tahfidz outcomes, while also identifying implementation challenges within the context of relatively newly established integrated Islamic schools. The novelty of this study lies in the presentation of a three-stage model for managing curriculum collaboration (planning, implementation, and evaluation) that is specifically linked to improving the quality of the Quran memorization and fostering disciplined character among student aspects that have not been extensively explored in previous research.

Based on this description, this study aims to answer how the process of managing curriculum collaboration between Islamic boarding schools and schools is carried out, what impact this collaboration has on the quality of students' Quran memorization, and what challenges are faced in implementing the integrated curriculum.

A study conducted [Karim, \(2022\)](#) at the Ad-Diin Quran Memorization Elementary School showed that well-organized synergy between general education and Quran memorization can improve discipline and memorization outcomes. Meanwhile, [Maulana et al., \(2019\)](#); [Nisa & Muhamad, \(2023\)](#) identified various obstacles in the implementation at the Mahasina Islamic Boarding School, including scheduling conflicts, a lack of synergy among teachers, and limited resources. Both studies highlight the importance of robust system management in curriculum collaboration.

Ar-Rahman Perak Jombang Islamic Junior High School is an Islamic junior high school that implements an integrated curriculum model by combining the Merdeka Curriculum with a pesantren-specific curriculum. Although it was only established in the 2021–2022 school year, the school has formed a strategic partnership with the Roudhotu Tahfidzil Quran Islamic Boarding School (PPRTQ) in Perak, Jombang. This collaboration makes Ar-Rahman Islamic Junior High School a highly relevant research site for examining how boarding school and school curricula can effectively work together.

Based on this background, the research focuses on three research questions: i) how is the collaboration between the pesantren and school curricula managed in Islamic junior high schools; ii) what is the impact of this collaboration on the quality of students' Quran memorization; and iii) what challenges are encountered in implementing the integrated curriculum. This study is expected to make theoretical and practical contributions to the development of an integrated Islamic education model based on tahfidz.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design. This approach was chosen because the researcher sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of curriculum collaboration occurring in a real-world context ([Anidar et al., 2026](#); [Crewell & Porth, 2018](#); [Efendi et al., 2026](#); [Engkizar et al., 2025](#); [2026](#); [Htay et al., 2025](#); [Saminu et al., 2025](#); [Wahyuni et al., 2025](#)). The research was conducted at Ar-Rahman Islamic Junior High School and the Roudhotu Tahfidzil Quran Perak Islamic Boarding School, Perak Subdistrict, Jombang Regency, East Java Province.

Data sources in this study included primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with informants selected through purposive sampling, including: the Principal of Ar-Rahman Islamic Junior High School, the Vice Principal for Curriculum, the Vice Principal for Student Affairs, the Head of the PPRTQ Islamic Boarding School, two tahfidz instructors, and four students who had participated in the program for at least one academic year. Secondary data were obtained from curriculum documents, activity schedules, memorization achievement reports, and evaluation records.

Data collection methods included participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and a review of documentation. Observations were conducted directly during learning activities, the morning tahfidz program, and memorization assessments. Interviews were recorded and transcribed to ensure data accuracy. Documentation involved collecting curriculum records, photographs of activities, and reports on students' memorization progress.

Data analysis was conducted using the three-stage model proposed by Miles and Huberman: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Eltoukhi et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2024; 2025; Oktavia et al., 2020; Putri et al., 2025; Sugiyono, 2019). Data validity was checked through extended observation, continuous observation, and triangulation of sources and methods specifically, by comparing interview results across informants and confirming them with documentary data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Process of Managing Curriculum Collaboration

Research findings indicate that the management of curriculum collaboration at Ar-Rahman Islamic Junior High School is carried out through three main, interconnected stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation.

First, collaborative planning. The planning stage is carried out through a formal coordination forum at the beginning of the school year, involving the principal, the vice principal for curriculum, boarding school administrators, and tahfidz instructors. This coordination aims to develop a curriculum structure that balances the needs of formal learning with tahfidz instruction. The vice principal for curriculum stated:

“At the beginning of every year, there is a meeting between teaching staff from the school and teaching staff from the boarding school to discuss how the two are interconnected specifically, which components are covered at the boarding school and which are covered at the school. So, the tahfidz class hours are divided equally between the two institutions; for example, muraja’ah takes place at the boarding school, while ziyadah takes place at the school, and so on.” (Informant 1)

Planning also includes the development of an integrated academic calendar and the synchronization of learning objectives between schools and Islamic boarding schools to prevent overlap in course material. The head of the boarding school emphasized the importance of this alignment so that students do not face obstacles in memorizing the Quran. This finding is consistent with (Sukmadinata, 2020), who asserts that good curriculum planning must be able to accommodate students’ needs, account for their academic workload, and take resource constraints into consideration. This well-thought-out and participatory collaborative approach is also consistent with the concept of collaboration as outlined by Gray in Zhang (Zhang, 2013).

Second, integrated implementation. The implementation of curriculum collaboration is realized through an integrated schedule of student activities. The tahfidz program is conducted in the morning before formal instruction, specifically from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. for ziyadah and murajaah activities. Students’ activities follow a structured rhythm: morning tahfidz, formal instruction at school, and then a return to boarding school activities in the afternoon and evening.

Students are grouped into three classes based on their initial proficiency in memorization: beginners (focusing on volumes and memorizing required surahs), *binadhor* (focusing on reading each verse), and tahfidz (focusing on review and additional memorization). This grouping implements the principle of differentiated instruction, as emphasized by (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018). In addition, each student’s progress in memorization is recorded in a monitoring log jointly managed by school teachers and pesantren instructors, making this collaboration a professional practice oriented toward quality improvement (Pieters et al., 2019).

Tahfidz instruction is not treated as an extracurricular activity but rather as a core component of the school’s educational system. This reinforces the

institutional identity of Ar-Rahman Islamic Junior High School as an integrated Islamic school, while also aligning with the perspective (Aimah, 2021) that the curriculum of a modern pesantren must be able to integrate religious and general knowledge in a balanced manner.

Third, Periodic Evaluation. Evaluations are conducted periodically by schools and Islamic boarding schools to assess the overall achievement of program objectives. The vice principal for student affairs explained:

“Evaluations are conducted through a testing or assessment system divided into two parts: assessments from the Islamic boarding school and assessments from the school. Both serve the same purpose. There are tahsin activities, and there are assessments in the form of tasmi’ to check fluency, the articulation of letters, and other aspects.” (informant 3)

The evaluation model implemented aligns with Deming’s (2018) PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle: setting memorization targets (plan), conducting recitation and review sessions (do), evaluation through assessments (check), and follow-up guidance (act). Furthermore, the principles of TQM in education, as outlined by (Verma, 2025), are evident in the involvement of all institutional elements in the evaluation process, ensuring that evaluation serves not only as a measurement tool but also as an instrument for continuous quality control.

The Impact of Curriculum Collaboration on the Quality of Quran Memorization.

First, the impact on the accuracy and fluency of memorization. Curriculum collaboration has been shown to have a positive impact on improving the accuracy and fluency of the students’ Quran memorization. The head of the boarding school stated:

“The most striking positive change is in the speed or fluency of the students’ recitation. At the boarding school, there’s been an increase of a certain amount, and at school there’s been an increase as well, so they’re not stuck at just that level.” (informant 2)

The Vice Principal for Student Affairs added that approximately 40% of students have experienced direct benefits from the collaboration between the boarding school and the school, both in terms of the smoothness and speed of memorization. From the perspective of behaviorist learning theory, Skinner (as cited in Violeta & Prastowo, 2024) emphasizes that repetition and reinforcement are key factors in the formation of learning habits (Violeta & Prastowo, 2024). The integrated tahfidz program provides intensive and structured repetition, thereby gradually strengthening the students’ memorization responses. From a cognitive perspective, the continuity between ziyadah and murajaah allows students to link new verses with previously memorized material, strengthening long-term memory retention (Hamida et al., 2022). This reinforces the argument that curriculum collaboration directly contributes to the cognitive quality of memorization.

The school’s memorization target of 15 juz over three years serves as a motivator for students to maintain the quality of their memorization over the long term. The quality of memorization is not only understood as a technical and academic ability but also as a form of the students’ spiritual closeness to the Quran, as emphasized by KH. Ahmad Masduqi Abdurrahman Al-Hafidz based on a hadith narrated by At-Tirmidzi regarding the virtue of those who are occupied with the Quran.

Second, the impact on discipline and responsibility. In addition to cognitive effects, the integrated curriculum also contributes to the character development of the students. A structured schedule of activities encourages students to manage their study time more effectively. One student remarked:

"I've really felt the benefits since the curriculum was integrated. I've become more disciplined, I don't complain as easily, and I've gotten used to taking responsibility."
(informant 4)

Al-Abrasyi (as cited in Ramli, 2021) emphasizes that Islamic education aims to shape individuals who maintain a balance between intellectual intelligence, spiritual strength, and moral maturity (Ramli, 2022). Discipline in maintaining memorization is not merely compliance with rules but a manifestation of moral and spiritual responsibility toward the trust of knowledge. A strong habituation system through daily tahfidz routines has been proven to shape the character of students, making them steadfast and responsible. This finding reinforces (Sukmadinata, 2020)'s assertion that the quality of education is not only measured by cognitive aspects but also by the development of students' attitudes and values (Sukmadinata, 2020).

Challenges in Implementing the Integrated Curriculum

First, time management and activity load. The main challenge identified is the heavy activity load on students due to the integration of academic activities, the tahfidz program, and boarding school activities. The head of the boarding school noted that many school activities such as homework, competitions, and student council activities often disrupt students' consistency in reciting memorized verses and reviewing them. Sofiah et al., (2024) explain that cross-institutional program collaboration often faces obstacles due to time constraints and students' heavy workloads. Nevertheless, these challenges have actually prompted schools and Islamic boarding schools to adopt more student-centered schedule adjustments, in line with the view Mulyasa, (2022) that curriculum management must be dynamic and responsive.

Second, differences in students' motivation and abilities. Not all students have the same background in memorization ability, so their levels of achievement vary. The vice principal in charge of the curriculum acknowledges the difficulty of finding students who strike a balance between academic achievement and the quality of their memorization. Sanjaya, (2015) emphasizes that students with high intrinsic motivation tend to demonstrate greater resilience in the face of difficulties. This situation calls for a differentiated approach and personalized guidance so that each student can develop to their full potential.

Third, changes in national curriculum policy. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum requires adjustments to the curriculum structure, assessment system, and learning approaches. The vice principal for student affairs explained that curriculum changes mandated by the education department have an impact whether small or large on the identity-based curricula already established by schools and Islamic boarding schools. Ornstein & Hunkins, (2018) emphasize that the curriculum is a dynamic system that must be responsive to social and policy changes. In this context, curriculum collaboration actually becomes an adaptive strength because it allows for flexibility and innovation in aligning national policies with the characteristics of Islamic boarding schools.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that collaboration between the pesantren and school curricula managed in a planned manner through three stages of integrated planning, implementation involving the integration of the tahfidz schedule and formal learning, and periodic evaluation based on academic and tahfidz assessments has a measurable impact on improving the accuracy, fluency, and consistency of students' Quran

memorization, while also fostering discipline and a sense of responsibility a connection that has not been explicitly explored in similar models of integrated Islamic education. The researchers recommend that Islamic educational institutions implementing memorization programs strengthen inter-institutional coordination, develop differentiated learning strategies, and establish an integrated evaluation system. For future researchers, the study could be expanded using a mixed-methods approach and involving more research sites to obtain more comprehensive and generalizable findings.

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Author contribution

Ahmad Yukha Dalhari: data curation, writing-original draft preparation and editing, conceptualization, methodology, **Emi Lilawati:** validation, visualization, supervision, software.

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