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COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM INTEGRATION AT SMP AL-ISTIQOMAH AND CHARIYATHAMSUKSA SCHOOL

Mustika Dewi[1], Siti Khusniyati Sururiyah[2], Siti Wulan Asih[3]
[1,2] STAINU Purworejo, Indonesia
[3]Chariyathamsuksa School, Thailand
Email kontributor: dewiemde12@gmail.com

Abstrak

Studi ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan dan membandingkan model integrasi kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) yang diterapkan di SMP Unggulan Al-Istiqomah (Indonesia) dan Chariyathamsuksa Foundation School (Thailand) dari perspektif konseptual, praktis, dan sosial-budaya. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif komparatif dengan desain deskriptif-analitik, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan analisis dokumen. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa SMP Unggulan Al-Istiqomah menerapkan model integrasi tematik-holistik, menggabungkan Kurikulum Merdeka dengan sistem berbasis pesantren. Nilai-nilai Islam ditanamkan di seluruh mata pelajaran melalui pendekatan *Contextual Teaching and Learning* (CTL) dan kegiatan pembinaan karakter seperti rutinitas ibadah, hafalan Al-Qur'an, dan refleksi spiritual. Sebaliknya, Chariyathamsuksa Foundation School mengadopsi model struktural-adaptif dengan sisstem kurikulum ganda yang mengintegrasikan kurikulum nasional Thailand dengan pendidikan Diniyyah Islam. Model ini menekankan adaptasi kontekstual dalam masyarakat majemuk melalui pembelajaran bilingual dan integrasi lintas mata pelajaran. Perbedaan utama terletak pada konteks sosial: latar mayoritas Muslim di Indonesia memungkinkan internalisasi penuh nilai-nilai Islam, sementara konteks minoritas Muslim di Thailand memerlukan strategi adaptif di bawah kerangka pendidikan sekuler. Meskipun terdapat perbedaan ini, kedua model berbagi visi yang sama, yaitu untuk memelihara siswa dengan karakter religius, kompetensi intelektual, dan integrasi iman serta pengetahuan yang seimbang. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa integrasi kurikulum Islam harus dikembangkan secara kontekstual, responsif, dan selaras dengan tatanan sosial-budaya masing-masing negara.

Kata kunci: Integrasi Kurikulum, Pendidikan Agama Islam, Studi Komparatif, Sekolah Islam

Abstract

This study aims to describe and compare the models of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum integration implemented at SMP Unggulan Al-Istiqomah (Indonesia) and Chariyathamsuksa Foundation School (Thailand) from conceptual, practical, and socio-cultural perspectives. Employing a comparative qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytic design, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The findings indicate that SMP Unggulan Al-Istiqomah applies a thematic-holistic

integration model that combines the Kurikulum Merdeka with a pesantren-based system. Islamic values are embedded across subjects through the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach and character-building activities such as worship routines, Qur'an memorisation, and spiritual reflection. In contrast, Chariyathamsuksa Foundation School adopts a structural-adaptive model with a dual curriculum system that integrates the Thai national curriculum with Islamic Diniyyah education. This model emphasises contextual adaptation within a plural society through bilingual learning and cross-subject integration. The main difference lies in the social context: Indonesia's Muslim-majority setting enables complete internalisation of Islamic values, while Thailand's Muslim-minority context requires adaptive strategies under a secular education framework. Despite these differences, both models share the same vision of nurturing students with religious character, intellectual competence, and a balanced integration of faith and knowledge. The study concludes that Islamic curriculum integration should be developed contextually, responsively, and in harmony with each nation's socio-cultural setting.

Keywords: Curriculum Integration, Islamic Religious Education, Comparative Study, Islamic School

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A. INTRODUCTION

The acceleration of globalisation, driven by technological advancement, knowledge mobility, and interconnected digital communication, has transformed the objectives and orientation of contemporary education systems. Schools are increasingly expected not only to foster academic excellence but also to cultivate ethical consciousness and spiritual resilience among learners (Misbah & Zamsiswaya, 2020). Within this framework, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) becomes essential in strengthening students' moral compass and religious identity, especially in contexts where social change, digital culture, and global influences intersect (Azizah & Rohanita, 2023). Islamic education emphasises the unity of knowledge and faith, as reflected in the Qur'anic command that elevates believers and seekers of knowledge (QS. Al-Mujadilah [58]:11) and reinforced by the Prophet's encouragement for Muslims to learn and teach the Qur'an (HR al-Bukhari, no. 5027). These texts collectively highlight that Islamic education cannot be reduced to cognitive achievement alone, but must integrate spiritual, moral, and intellectual dimensions.

Historically, Islamic intellectual tradition positions knowledge ('ilm) as inseparable from ethical and metaphysical foundations, a principle rooted in the concept of *tawhid*. Contemporary Islamic educational thinkers argue that the crisis of modern education, particularly in Muslim societies, stems from the dichotomy between religious and secular sciences, producing fragmented understanding and weakened internalisation of values (Al-Attas, 1980). The movement for the Islamization of knowledge, introduced in the late 20th century, underscores the need to reintegrate all branches of knowledge under divine guidance so that education nurtures holistic human development rather than merely technical competence (Al-Faruqi, 1982). In schools, this philosophical foundation is operationalised through

curriculum integration, in which religious principles inform learning content, pedagogy, and the educational ethos across disciplines.

Globally, integrated curriculum approaches have been widely recognised as a means of supporting meaningful, connected, and context-relevant learning (Fadillah, 2021). In Islamic education, integration involves harmonising general knowledge with religious principles so that students are guided to understand science as part of their divine responsibility. This approach also aligns with regional educational frameworks. The ASEAN Education Plan 2021–2030 promotes value-based, inclusive, and culturally grounded education, encouraging member states to contextualise global competencies within local cultural and spiritual identities (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021). Thus, Islamic curriculum integration becomes a pedagogical necessity and a strategic response to societal demands in Southeast Asia.

In Indonesia, efforts to implement integrative curriculum models continue to face structural and technical constraints. According to the 2024 Annual Report of the Directorate General of Islamic Education (Dirjen Pendis Kemenag), only 2.85% of Islamic education institutions have successfully implemented competency-based, integrative curricula that align with national standards and Islamic values (Kemenag RI, 2024). Key barriers include limited teacher expertise, inadequate technological infrastructure, and insufficient institutional support for integrative curriculum development (Ramdhoni,2023). This finding indicates that although national policies such as *Kurikulum Merdeka* provide space for the integration of contextual values, the practical implementation often remains superficial.

A parallel challenge exists in Thailand, where Islamic schools operate within a predominantly Buddhist and secular education system. Data from the Office of the Private Education Commission (OPEC) in 2023 shows that there are 218 private Islamic schools serving more than 176,000 Muslim students, particularly in the southern provinces (Efendi & Rahmawati, 2025). These schools adopt a dual curriculum system combining the Thai national curriculum with Diniyyah subjects. While this model helps preserve Islamic identity, integration outcomes vary depending on government policy flexibility, institutional autonomy, and socio-cultural pressures (Yusof & Mansor, 2025). Unlike Indonesia, which has a strong national Islamic education governance system under Kemenag, Islamic schools in Thailand have more limited structural support, requiring adaptive, context-sensitive strategies for curriculum integration.

Digital transformation further complicates integration efforts in both countries. International assessments show that only 8–15% of Islamic education institutions in developing regions have adequate ICT infrastructure to support integrative digital learning (Wulandari, 2023). As a result, curriculum models must not only integrate values and knowledge but also respond to technological inequality and rapid pedagogical change.

Although previous studies in Indonesia and Thailand have examined curriculum integration within Islamic education (Basri, 2024), their focus remains largely single-country and single-institution oriented. Few studies offer cross-national comparative analyses that systematically examine how different socio-religious contexts influence conceptual, structural, and practical dimensions of curriculum integration. This represents a significant research gap, as comparative perspectives can enrich understanding of how curriculum models evolve within

majority-Muslim and minority-Muslim societies, offering broader implications for Islamic education policy in Southeast Asia.

Based on this gap, the present study aims to analyse and compare the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum integration models implemented in SMP Al-Istiqomah (Indonesia) and Chariyathamsuksa School (Thailand). The study examines three dimensions: (1) conceptual foundations of integration, (2) implementation within classroom and institutional contexts, and (3) socio-cultural factors influencing curriculum adaptation. The findings are expected to contribute to the theoretical discourse on Islamic curriculum integration and provide practical insights for Islamic education institutions seeking to harmonise religious identity with national educational frameworks and global competency demands.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a comparative qualitative research approach with a descriptive-analytic design. This approach was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of the social, cultural, and educational policy contexts underlying the implementation of the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum integration model in two schools from different countries, SMP Unggulan Al-Istiqomah (Indonesia) and Chariyathamsuksa Foundation School (Thailand). The research focused on describing and comparing the conceptual framework, learning implementation, and evaluation strategies of the IRE curriculum integration models at both schools.

Data for this study were collected using three complementary qualitative techniques to ensure depth and triangulation. First, in-depth interviews with school principals, IRE teachers, and students explored their perceptions and experiences of integrating Islamic values into the school curriculum. These interviews examined how religious principles are embedded in daily learning and the broader educational culture. Second, direct observations during IRE classroom sessions and extracurricular activities, such as Qur'an memorisation, mentoring, and social preaching, enabled the researcher to examine the practical application of Islamic values and teacher-student interactions in fostering spiritual and moral development. Third, document analysis of school documents, including syllabi, annual teaching programs, lesson plans, and institutional policies, helped identify the formal structure and policy frameworks supporting the integration of Islamic teachings.

Collectively, these methods provided a holistic understanding of how Islamic education is conceptualised, implemented, and experienced in SMP Al-Istiqomah, Indonesia, and Chariyathamsuksa School, Thailand.

To ensure data validity and credibility, this study employed source and method triangulation, member checks, and audit trails, as recommended by Lincoln & Guba (1985).

The collected data were analysed using a thematic–comparative technique that combined thematic coding with cross-case comparison. The analysis followed the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification as outlined by Miles et al. (2018). Through this procedure, key themes related to curriculum integration were identified, organised, and compared across both institutions to reveal their points of convergence and divergence in implementing IRE curriculum integration.

C. RESULTS

1. IRE Curriculum Integration Model at SMP Unggulan Al-Istiqomah (Indonesia)

SMP Unggulan Al-Istiqomah in Indonesia is a concrete example of an educational institution that systematically develops a curriculum integration model. This school combines the national curriculum of the Ministry of Education with a curriculum based on Islamic values. Its flagship programs include Tahfidz al-Qur'an (Qur'an memorisation), daily worship routines, Islamic mentoring, and religious literacy activities (Sutrisno, 2022). Shows that this kind of thematic integration can improve students' spiritual literacy and critical awareness of Islamic values in the context of modern life (Ariyanti et al., 2024).

Conversely, Chariyathamsuksa Foundation School in Thailand operates an education system with a dual curriculum model that integrates the Thai national curriculum with a madrasah-based Islamic curriculum (Rahim, 2020). This model is structural-functional, in which the religious and general curricula run in parallel but complement each other. This school plays an important role as an agent for preserving the Muslim minority identity in southern Thailand (Yusuf, 2019). Recent research findings by Rahman & Sari (2024) found that Islamic schools in Thailand successfully created a balance between compliance with national regulations and the maintenance of Islamic values through community-based curriculum adaptation strategies (Rahman & Sari, 2024).

A comparative study in Islamic education is important for understanding variations in curriculum integration approaches across countries and for identifying effective adaptation strategies in diverse social contexts. Affirms that comparative study is not only about comparing formal education structures but also examining the ideological, social, and cultural factors that underpin them. In the ASEAN context, this approach is relevant for strengthening cross-country collaboration in developing a moderate, contextual, and globally competitive Islamic curriculum (Bray et al., 2014).

The integration of Islamic Education (IRE) into the curriculum of SMP Al-Istiqomah Indonesia is a comprehensive, deeply embedded institutional practice that spans planning, pedagogy, school culture, and teacher development, as evidenced by interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The *2024 School Unit Curriculum* explicitly articulates the school's vision of "forming a religious generation that is knowledgeable, well-mannered, independent, skilled, and noble in character," and this vision functions not merely as a symbolic statement but as a guiding framework that permeates curricular and extracurricular arrangements. In interviews, the IRE teacher (P1) emphasised that the institution treats IRE as the core identity of the school's pedagogy, stating that *"IRE is not an isolated subject; it is the foundation. So when we prepare lesson plans, we always include which Islamic values must be achieved, even in subjects like Math or Science."*

This approach is reflected in structured lesson plans where Islamic values are clearly outlined in the "learning objective" and "refleksi nilai" sections. Non-IRE teachers also participate in this system, even though some still require guidance. For instance, the Mathematics teacher (G2) described a conscious link between mathematical integrity and Islamic ethics: *"I always remind students that accuracy and honesty in data reflect our moral responsibility. Manipulating data, even for practice, is not part of a Muslim's character."* Classroom observations confirmed this claim as the teacher repeatedly emphasised *amanah* and

sidq while guiding students through statistical calculations. The Science teacher (G3) also demonstrated the school's spiritual-naturalistic integration model, stating that *"every biological or physical process is a sign of Allah's creation. When we discuss oxygen or the solar system, I ask students: what does this teach us about gratitude?"* Observations documented how Science lessons began with Qur'anic verses or reflective prompts, such as contemplating the perfection of human anatomy, before transitioning to core scientific content.

Document analysis further reveals that integration is not incidental but structurally planned. Student worksheets (LKS) embed religious indicators at the bottom of each task, requiring students to articulate connections between academic content and Islamic values. The curriculum coordinator (KS1) explained that these features were intentionally adopted to ensure alignment with the Merdeka Curriculum while preserving the school's pesantren-based identity, noting that *"we redesigned our LKS so that students develop cognitive skills alongside moral reflection; this is our way of making IRE the spirit of every learning activity."* In addition, teachers develop project-based learning (PjBL) assignments that merge scientific inquiry with ethical themes, such as environmental stewardship (*hifz al-bi'ah*) and social responsibility (*mas'uliyyah ijtima'iyyah*).

Beyond the classroom, the school culture strongly mirrors pesantren traditions, reinforcing the integrative model through daily practices. Observational data documented morning *tadarus* sessions where students read the Qur'an collectively before lessons began. According to students, this ritual significantly shapes their mindset for the day. One student (S3) shared, *"At first, I joined tadarus because it was required, but over time it became something I looked forward to. It makes my heart feel settled before studying."* Teachers supervise the daily congregational Dhuhr prayer, and on Fridays, the day is dedicated to reciting Asmaul Husna, short Islamic lectures, and communal reflection. During the month of Ramadan, the school implements a structured *Pesantren Ramadhan Short Course,* which includes Qur'an memorisation sessions, thematic religious discussions, and charity projects. Observations recorded that students participated actively and that teachers rotated responsibilities to maintain consistency and discipline throughout the program.

However, despite the school's strong commitment, several challenges hinder the complete optimisation of curriculum integration. Interviews with non-IRE teachers reveal uncertainties in applying Islamic values in subjects perceived as secular. An English teacher (G4) expressed this difficulty: *"We want to integrate Islamic values, but sometimes we struggle to find examples that fit naturally with language topics without sounding forced or artificial."* Another challenge is measuring spiritual and moral development. The principal (KS1) acknowledged the complexity of the issue, noting that *"character is not like test scores. You cannot measure sincerity or piety with numbers, so we are still developing better rubrics."* While the school has introduced qualitative descriptors and behavioural indicators, teachers continue to debate how to ensure fairness and consistency. In response to these challenges, the school regularly conducts professional development programs, including internal *Kelompok Kerja Guru* (KKG) sessions, collaborative lesson-planning sessions, workshops on value-based pedagogy, and peer mentoring. Teachers noted that these forums help them share strategies, refine lesson designs, and explore more meaningful ways to embed Islamic perspectives within secular subjects.

Taken together, the findings show that curriculum integration at SMP Al-Istiqomah is not limited to superficial value insertion but represents a holistic model that merges academic, spiritual, and cultural dimensions. Through structured planning, teacher collaboration, pesantren-inspired practices, and continuous professional development, the school operationalises an integrated Islamic curriculum that shapes students' religious identity while supporting their academic growth. This multilayered integration, supported by explicit institutional commitment and visible daily practices, demonstrates the school's effort to harmonise national curriculum requirements with Islamic educational philosophy.

2. IRE Curriculum Integration Model at Chariyathamsuksa Foundation School (Thailand)

Field findings from Chariyathamsuksa Foundation School (โรงเรียนจริยธรรมศึกษา) in Songkhla reveal a curriculum integration model that is simultaneously structural, cultural, and value-driven, shaped by its position as a private Islamic school operating within a predominantly Buddhist national education framework. Document analysis of the school's *Philosophy and Vision Statement* shows its explicit goal of producing *"students with good morals, knowledge, and Islamic values suitable for a global society,"* which mirrors the institution's attempt to balance Thai state requirements with the religious identity of its largely Patani-Malay Muslim community. Interviews with the vice principal (T1) clarify this commitment: *"We follow the 60–40 structure because it is required, but we do not treat Diniyyah as secondary; it is the heart of our mission."* This dual structure, 60% Thai national curriculum and 40% Diniyyah studies, was consistently observed in lesson plans, class schedules, and teacher workbooks. The integration pattern is evident in classroom practices, particularly in how teachers embed Islamic values in secular subjects. During a Science class, the teacher (G5) linked ecological sustainability to Qur'anic ethics by stating, *"Protecting the forest is part of our amanah as Muslims. Allah tells us not to spread corruption on earth."* Students responded by discussing examples of environmental damage in their village, demonstrating that integration operates not only conceptually but also contextually. Similarly, in a Mathematics class on measurement, the teacher (G6) emphasised *'adl* (justice) when explaining accuracy in numbers, stating, *"When we measure honestly, we practice fairness. This is what Islam teaches us."* Observations confirm that such value-linking is a routine strategy across subjects rather than an occasional practice.

The school's multilingual environment reinforces Chariyathamsuksa's integrative approach. Bilingual instruction in Thai and Arabic, and occasionally in English, is not merely a pedagogical choice but an ideological stance aimed at producing globally competent yet religiously grounded students. As explained by the Arabic teacher (A1): *"Arabic keeps our identity, Thai connects us to the nation, and English prepares students for the world."* Classroom observations show that Arabic is predominantly used in Diniyyah subjects such as Aqidah, Fiqh, and Tafsir. In contrast, English is incorporated into Islamic English Camp activities, where students deliver short Islamic speeches, memorise the Qur'an, and tell stories. These practices demonstrate that language itself becomes a medium of integration linking Islamic knowledge with communicative competence required in modern education.

Another important dimension of integration is the school's emphasis on character building through co-curricular programs. Observations during the Ramadhan Charity Project documented students organising food packages for low-income families in Songkhla. One student leader (S4) explained, *"We learn about zakat in class, but here we practice it."* Teachers note that these applied activities strengthen students' understanding of Islamic ethics in real-life contexts. In interviews, the head of student affairs (T2) highlighted the moral framework guiding school programs: *"Every activity must reflect al-tawazun, al-musawah, and al-'adalah. These are the values we follow."* These principles, balance, equality, and justice, were often referenced by teachers when explaining behavioural expectations in both religious and secular lessons.

Despite these strengths, the school faces notable challenges, particularly regarding human resources and regulatory constraints. Several teachers expressed concern about the limited staff trained in both Islamic sciences and modern pedagogical methods. One senior teacher (G7) admitted, *"Some of us are strong in Diniyyah, but not confident teaching science with integrated values, and the reverse also happens."* Additionally, because the school must comply with Thai national standards, it often negotiates between Islamic identity and state regulations. The vice principal (T1) noted, *"We must submit to national assessments. This sometimes pushes Islamic content aside, so we work harder to keep the balance."* To mitigate these limitations, Chariyathamsuksa collaborates with the Islamic Education Promotion Centre of Songkhla, an initiative confirmed through documents and interviews. Through this collaboration, the school receives guidance on curriculum, teacher training, and evaluation support to strengthen Islamic integration within the state-mandated formal structure.

Overall, field data reveal that curriculum integration at Chariyathamsuksa Foundation School operates through a hybrid model that blends structural adaptation, cultural continuity, and explicit value inculcation. Integration is not superficial but appears in lesson dialogue, task design, multilingual instruction, and moral-oriented school programs. While institutional challenges persist, particularly in professional capacity and regulatory flexibility, the school demonstrates a consistent effort to maintain Islamic identity while ensuring alignment with national curriculum standards. This underscores a unique integrative model shaped by minority Muslim identity within a secular-majority educational landscape.

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3. Comparative Results

It is with great enthusiasm that the author begins this discussion, aiming to provide a clear understanding and meaningful insights into the topic at hand. By exploring its key aspects, we can establish a foundation that will guide us through the points that follow:

Table 1. Comparative Aspects of Islamic Education Curriculum Integration

Comparison Aspect	SMP Unggulan Al-Istiqomah (Indonesia)	Chariyathamsuksa Foundation School (Thailand)
Social Context	Muslim majority, strong community support	Muslim minority, high social plurality

Integration Model	Thematic-holistic integrative	Structural-adaptive (dual curriculum)
Philosophical Basis	Humanistic, religious, holistic education	Contextual adaptation for social harmony
Curriculum	Combination of *Kurikulum Merdeka* and *Pesantren*	A combination of the national curriculum and *Diniyyah*
Learning Approach	CTL and Active Learning	Bilingual Learning and Cross-subject Integration
Teacher's Role	*Murabbi* (spiritual mentor)	Cultural mediator
Evaluation	Cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects	Academic and moral-social aspects
Advantage	Strong internalisation of Islamic values	Adaptive in secular–plural contexts
Challenge	Need for teacher competency enhancement	Limited qualified teachers; centralistic policy

D. DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis of SMP Unggulan Al-Istiqomah in Indonesia and Chariyathamsuksa Foundation School in Thailand reveals two distinct yet complementary models of Islamic curriculum integration that emerge from their socio-cultural, philosophical, and political environments. Rather than simply juxtaposing two school systems, this study shows how Islamic education, when situated within different national and cultural ecosystems, produces unique patterns of integration that reflect broader epistemological commitments in the Muslim world. What becomes evident is that Al-Istiqomah embodies an internalisation-driven thematic-holistic model. At the same time, Chariyathamsuksa represents a structural-adaptive model that reconciles Islamic values with the demands of a secular national system. The novelty of the comparison lies in demonstrating that integration is not a monolithic concept: it can be enacted as spiritual internalisation anchored in pesantren traditions, or as structural negotiation within minority Muslim contexts, each yielding different forms of holistic Islamic education.

In the case of SMP Unggulan Al-Istiqomah, integration is grounded in tarbiyah and the philosophical orientation of insan kamil, reflecting Al-Attas' (1980) conception of ta'dib, which posits that the essence of education is the cultivation of adab and the harmonisation of knowledge, faith, and conduct. Observational data confirm this philosophy in practice. During a classroom visit, a Mathematics teacher paused mid-lesson to remind students, "Kejujuran itu bagian dari iman; angka tidak boleh dimanipulasi." This brief moment, while subtle, illustrates how Islamic values are woven into cognitive instruction without disrupting academic rigour. Similarly, in a Science class on the water cycle, the teacher added, "Perhatikan bagaimana Allah mengatur alam dengan seimbang; tugas kita menjaga ciptaan-Nya." Such statements show that integration functions as value internalisation, a process through which teachers act as murabbi who shape not only intellectual competence but also spiritual consciousness. This practice aligns closely with Beane's and Fogarty's model of holistic integration, wherein disciplinary

content is connected through overarching moral and epistemic themes rather than discrete competencies.

In contrast, Chariyathamsuksa Foundation School navigates a different educational ecology. Operating within Thailand's secular and highly centralised educational governance, the school must align Islamic instruction with national policy constraints. Here, integration is enacted structurally: 60% of the curriculum follows national standards, while 40% covers Diniyyah subjects. Interviews with teachers reveal this dual logic. One teacher explained, "Kami harus patuh pada kurikulum nasional, tetapi kami selipkan nilai Islam di setiap mata pelajaran. Tidak bisa langsung seperti sekolah Muslim di Indonesia, tapi bisa kami adaptasi pelan-pelan." Another teacher added, "Anak-anak harus siap hidup di Thailand yang plural; integrasi itu bukan hanya agama, tapi bagaimana menjadi Muslim yang bisa diterima." These statements highlight a model shaped by contextual adaptation, echoing Manzon's (2011) view that comparative education involves dynamic negotiation between global, national, and religious forces. The use of bilingual instruction (Thai-Arabic-English) further reflects what Utari & Abidin (2025) call Islamic bilingualism, in which language becomes a tool for integrating Islamic epistemology with global knowledge systems. In a Science lesson on environmental stewardship, for example, a teacher connected ecological concepts to Qur'anic verses on khalifah fil-ardh, demonstrating how Islamic values can be embedded even within state-regulated content.

Across both schools, teachers emerge as the central agents of integration, functioning as moral mediators whose practice embodies the Qur'anic ideal of uswah hasanah. This role aligns with Al-Ghazali's assertion that a true educator must purify the soul (tazkiyat al-nafs) while nurturing the intellect, an clerical alignment evident in teacher-student interactions. At Al-Istiqomah, teachers consistently frame learning with spiritual intention, reinforcing a pesantren-based ethos of sincerity and discipline. At Chariyathamsuksa, teachers in minority-Muslim communities assume a dual role: they safeguard Islamic identity while also preparing students to navigate a plural and sometimes restrictive socio-political environment. Through these practices, teachers effectively translate divine values into everyday learning encounters, making them the living curriculum through which integration becomes meaningful and embodied.

The school culture in both cases also forms a robust hidden curriculum that reinforces formal instruction. At Al-Istiqomah, daily tadarus, congregational prayers, tahfidz activities, and pesantren-style discipline create a learning atmosphere saturated with Islamic moral cues, supporting Hubbi's (2020) assertion that school rituals shape identity more deeply than formal syllabi. Meanwhile, at Chariyathamsuksa, morning du'a, Islamic English Camp, community service programs, and Ramadhan charity events subtly reinforce a sense of religious belonging, even within a national context where Islamic visibility must be carefully managed. These cultural practices signal that Islamic curriculum integration is not merely a cognitive or pedagogical strategy but a moral ecology produced through daily routines, interpersonal relationships, and institutional ethos.

Taken together, the comparative findings demonstrate that SMP Unggulan Al-Istiqomah achieves integration through internalisation, infusing Islamic values into every subject and activity. In contrast, Chariyathamsuksa achieves it through adaptation, embedding

Islamic principles within the structures of a secular national curriculum. Both models ultimately serve the same goal: the formation of insan kamil (Fadillah, 2021), an individual who embodies balanced faith, knowledge, morality, and social responsibility. The key insight from this comparison is that Islamic curriculum integration is inherently context-responsive: it flourishes either as a spiritually grounded, holistic model supported by community and pesantren culture, or as an adaptive strategy that harmonises religious identity with national educational imperatives. This demonstrates that Islamic pedagogy is not rigid but flexible, capable of transforming or being transformed by its sociopolitical environment while retaining its core spiritual objectives.

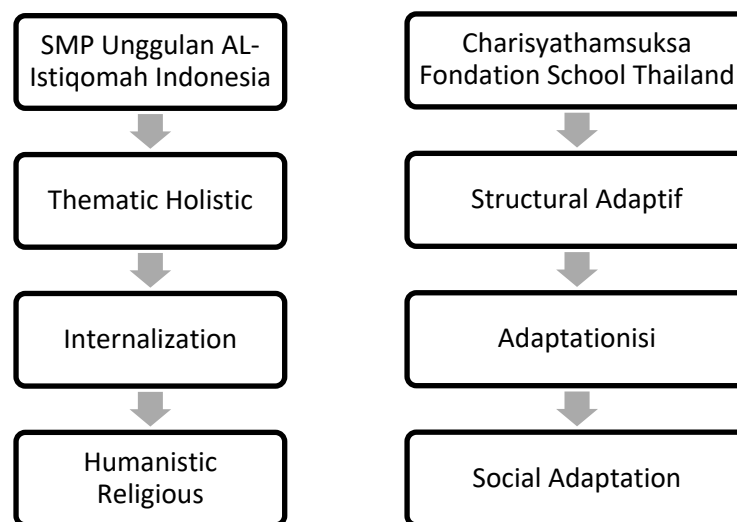| SMP Unggulan AL-Istiqomah Indonesia	Charisyathamsuksa Fondation School Thailand
Thematic Holistic	Structural Adaptif
Internalization	Adaptationisi
Humanistic Religious	Social Adaptation

Figure 1. Islamic Curriculum Integration Models

Moreover, this study contributes to the discourse on comparative Islamic education by emphasising that integration is a dynamic process that bridges theology, pedagogy, and policy. The Indonesian and Thai experiences highlight that sustainable curriculum innovation depends on three key pillars: teacher professionalism grounded in Islamic pedagogy, institutional autonomy that allows contextual adaptation, and community participation that ensures continuity of values beyond the classroom. Thus, curriculum integration should not only be viewed as an academic framework but as a holistic movement for renewing Islamic civilisation in the modern era.

The main difference lies in the mechanism of integration: Al-Istiqomah achieves it through internalisation and holistic value fusion, while Chariyathamsuksa achieves it through structural adaptation and functional balance between the two curricula. Both models, however, share the vision of producing students with a balanced character, combining knowledge and faith.

This research implies that an effective Islamic curriculum must be contextual and responsive. For a majority Muslim context like Indonesia, the holistic internalisation model is optimal. For a minority Muslim context like Thailand, the structural-adaptive model is more effective in maintaining identity while adapting to national demands. The success of integration

in both countries hinges on the central role of teachers as moral and spiritual *murabbi,* and on a consistent religious school culture that serves as the *hidden curriculum.*

E. CONCLUSION

This comparative study concludes that the model of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum integration implemented at SMP Unggulan Al-Istiqomah, Indonesia, and Chariyathamsuksa Foundation School, Thailand, exhibits distinct strategies, significantly influenced by the socio-cultural and national policy contexts of each country.

SMP Unggulan Al-Istiqomah employs a thematic-holistic, integrative model that integrates the Kurikulum Merdeka with the pesantren-based system. This model emphasizes the comprehensive internalization of Islamic values into all subjects and daily routines, supported by a Muslim-majority environment and a robust pesantren culture. This strategy effectively cultivates religious character, intellectual proficiency, and noble morality (akhlaqul karimah). Conversely, Chariyathamsuksa Foundation School implements a structural-adaptive model through a dual curriculum system that harmonizes the Thai national curriculum with the Islamic Diniyyah curriculum. This model represents a creative adaptation in a Muslim-minority context, prioritizing social harmony and contextual relevance amidst secular national policies.

A comparative analysis of these two schools reveals that the integration of Islamic curriculum cannot be approached through a single universal model but must be contextualized to the socio-religious realities of each institution. Both institutions exemplify that effective Islamic education necessitates harmony between the epistemological foundations of Tawhid and the pragmatic demands of national education policies. SMP Unggulan Al-Istiqomah demonstrates how the internalization of Islamic values can strengthen the coherence between knowledge, worship, and character formation in a Muslim-majority context. Conversely, Chariyathamsuksa Foundation School reflects the resilience of Islamic education in a plural society, where adaptation and negotiation with state frameworks become essential strategies for sustaining religious identity. This finding reinforces the notion that the success of Islamic education lies not in uniformity of structure but in fidelity to its ultimate purpose, the cultivation of morally guided intellect (*'aql al-salim*) and spiritually aware human beings (*insan kamil*).

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