

# Realizing Quality Education: The Role of Foundations in The Integration of The Cambridge Curriculum, Independent Curriculum, and Aswaja Teachings at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** Quality education is the main goal in the management of educational institutions, including madrasah. This study aims to analyze the foundation's role in integrating the Cambridge Curriculum, Merdeka Curriculum, and Aswaja teachings at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo to improve the quality of education. This research uses descriptive qualitative. **Method:** with data collection techniques through interviews, observations, and documentation studies. **Results:** The results showed that the foundation has a strategic role in curriculum development through an integrative-adaptive approach that adapts to national and international standards, while still emphasizing Aswaja-based Islamic values. In addition, the foundation also plays a role in human resource management by screening and improving the competence of teaching staff through various trainings. The foundation's support in providing infrastructure, scholarships, and curriculum management also strengthens the implementation of curriculum integration in madrasah. **Novelty:** The novelty of this research lies in the curriculum integration model that not only accommodates international and national academic standards, but also strengthens Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah-based Islamic characters in learning. Thus, this research contributes to the development of foundation-based education policies in realizing quality education and global competitiveness.

## INTRODUCTION

Quality education is the main goal in managing educational institutions, especially in madrasahs that seek to integrate various curricula to achieve high academic standards and strong Islamic values. In this context, the foundation's role as the holder of educational policy is crucial in ensuring the success of curriculum integration implemented at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo. The foundation has the responsibility to design, manage, and evaluate the education system in order to produce students who excel academically, have character, and are based on the teachings of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah.

Curriculum integration at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo includes the Cambridge Curriculum, the Ministry of Education and Culture Curriculum, and the teachings of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah, each of which has different objectives and approaches. The Cambridge Curriculum emphasizes critical thinking and research-based skills with international standards, while the MoEC Curriculum provides flexibility in learning and strengthening basic competencies. On the other hand, the teachings of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah play a role in shaping the character of students so that they have a strong religious foundation and are oriented towards national values. Therefore, the foundation's role is decisive in harmonizing these three aspects so that they can be implemented effectively and sustainably.

In the context of education, the integration of various curricula is both a challenge and an opportunity to improve the quality of learning. MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo, with full support from the foundation, seeks to combine the Cambridge Curriculum, Merdeka Curriculum, and Aswaja teachings to create an education system that is not only oriented towards national and international academic standards but also maintains Islamic values based on Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah. However, this integration process certainly has its own dynamics that need to be studied more deeply. This study aims to analyze the foundation's role in facilitating the integration of the three curricula and to understand how the foundation's policies and support contribute to aligning the three curricula. In addition, this research also seeks to identify the challenges faced in the integration process, both in terms of curriculum preparation, educators' readiness, and students' acceptance of a more complex learning system. Furthermore, this research also aims to explore the impact of curriculum integration on students' learning outcomes as well as their character development, particularly in the cognitive, social, and Islamic values aspects of madrasah identity.

Based on these objectives, this research focused on several main questions: (1) How does the foundation facilitate the integration of the Cambridge Curriculum, Merdeka Curriculum, and Aswaja teachings at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo? (2) What challenges are faced in integrating the three curricula? (3) What strategies does the foundation use to overcome the challenges that arise? By answering these questions, the research is expected to provide greater insight into the practice of curriculum integration in madrasas and provide strategic recommendations for foundations and other educational institutions in implementing an education system that is more adaptive and oriented towards improving the quality of students.

Along with efforts to integrate the Cambridge curriculum, Merdeka Curriculum, and Aswaja teachings at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo, the foundation's role is not only limited to curriculum development and improving the quality of teaching staff, but also includes aspects of curriculum management. One of the theories that forms the basis for curriculum management is Curriculum Administration Theory proposed by Daniel Tanner and Laurel Tanner (1980). This theory emphasizes that the curriculum must be managed systematically through three main principles: planning, implementation, and evaluation. Tanner & Tanner (1980) state: "Curriculum administration is a systematic process of planning, implementing, and evaluating the curriculum to ensure its effectiveness in achieving educational objectives and meeting societal needs" (p. 287). This theory underlines that curriculum management is not just about developing a syllabus or teaching materials, but must also involve comprehensive strategies to ensure that the curriculum can be adapted, implemented and evaluated on an ongoing basis in accordance with the changing needs of learners and educational demands. In the planning aspect of the curriculum, this theory emphasizes the need for the involvement of various stakeholders, including the government, schools, teachers and communities in designing a relevant curriculum. At the implementation stage, curriculum administration must pay attention to educators' readiness, learning methods, and educational resources to carry out the curriculum effectively. Meanwhile, the curriculum evaluation stage is

carried out continuously to identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement in the implementation of the curriculum (Tanner & Tanner, 1980). By using Curriculum Administration Theory, this study can examine in more depth how the curriculum administration process in the school that is the object of research is managed, including how the challenges in the integration of the three curricula are overcome through effective planning, implementation and evaluation strategies.

Ralph W. Tyler, in his book *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (1949), developed the Tyler Rationale, which emphasizes that the curriculum must be systematically designed based on educational objectives. He proposed four main principles in curriculum development and evaluation, In this study. The Tyler Rationale can be used to analyze how the Cambridge University Curriculum, the Ministry of Education and Culture Curriculum, and the teachings of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah are systematically integrated, namely: 1.) *Defining Educational Objectives* Define educational objectives based on the needs of learners and society. Schools should define educational objectives that incorporate international academic standards (Cambridge), national competencies (MoEC) and Islamic values (Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah); 2.) *Selecting Learning Experiences* Selecting relevant learning experiences to achieve the educational objectives Learning experiences should reflect the integration of the three curricula, such as Cambridge's use of active methods, the Ministry of Education's competency-based approach, and Islamic-based character education; 3.) *Organizing Learning Experiences* Arranging learning experiences systematically to have maximum impact on learners. The curriculum structure should be organized to avoid overlaps or gaps in learning; 4.) *Evaluating the Attainment of Objectives* Evaluating the extent to which educational objectives have been achieved through appropriate assessment instruments. Evaluation should cover academic aspects, social competencies, as well as understanding of Islamic values to ensure successful integration of the curriculum. Tyler (1949) states: "Educational objectives should be derived from an analysis of both learners' needs and societal expectations, ensuring a curriculum that is meaningful and effective" (p.3).

George Counts in his book *Dare the School Build a New Social Order* (1932) argued that the curriculum should be designed to shape a better society by incorporating social, cultural and religious values in education. He criticized the overly neutral approach to education and emphasized that schools have an active role in building a more just and moral social order, Counts (1932) stated: "The school must be a driving force for social change, incorporating cultural, ethical, and religious values into the curriculum to create a more just and equitable society" (p. 26). According to him, education should not only be oriented towards academic achievement, but should also be a tool for social transformation by teaching values that can shape the character of learners to have social awareness and moral responsibility. An effective curriculum should incorporate cultural and religious elements relevant to people's lives to ensure that education is not detached from social reality.

The foundation is responsible for managing the planning, implementation and evaluation of the curriculum so that it remains relevant to the needs of students and

global educational developments. Through effective curriculum management, the foundation can ensure that the balance between international academic standards, the national curriculum, and Islamic values is maintained in lesing practices at the school.

Curriculum management also plays a role in determining curriculum adaptation strategies, including in aspects of teaching flexibility, adjusting teaching materials, and providing resources that support optimal curriculum integration. Thus, the foundation's role in curriculum management is an integral part of efforts to realize quality education at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo.

In the context of this research, George Counts thoughts are very relevant in understanding how the foundation's role in shaping an education system that not only emphasizes academic aspects, but also social and religious values. Counts emphasizes that the curriculum should be designed to create individuals who have social awareness, a strong personality, and a deep understanding of religion, Curriculum integration at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo is in line with this principle, where students are not only equipped with intellectual skills, but also with an understanding of ethics, morals and culture that reflects their identity as part of society.

The integration of various curricula in Islamic education has become a focus of research in an effort to improve the quality of holistic learning. Previous studies have explored various approaches to integrating Islamic values into the education system. Ikhwan (2014) research discusses the importance of incorporating Islamic values in the learning process to prevent the dichotomy between religious and general sciences. The study emphasizes that such integration should be done thoroughly in every aspect of education. Meanwhile, the study by Alinata et al. (2024) examines various kinds of science integration in building and developing the scientific foundation of Islam, highlighting the importance of a holistic approach in Islamic education.

In the article "The Role and Function of Foundations in Madrasah Education Management" by Sumarni, foundations have a vital role in improving the quality of education, especially in mostly private madrasahs. This research highlights the role and function of foundations in improving the quality of education in madrasahs, focusing on the Darul Irfan Foundation in Sawangan, Depok, in achieving the National Education Standards (SNP). Sumarni's article asserts that foundations have an important role in improving the quality of madrasah education through curriculum management and educator development. This is in line with research on MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo, where the foundation plays a role in integrating the Cambridge, Merdeka and Kemenag Curricula without ignoring Aswaja teachings. In addition, the foundation is also responsible for screening and improving the competence of educators to implement the curriculum effectively. The challenge of maintaining Islamic values while following the development of modern education is a major concern in both studies, so the role of the foundation is key in creating quality and character education. In another article entitled "Analysis of Cambridge Curriculum Implementation in One of the International Schools in Jakarta" by Adilah et al. (2023) explored the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum in an international school in Jakarta. The study highlighted that the Cambridge Curriculum offers international education standards that emphasize the

development of students' critical thinking skills, creativity and analytical abilities. The implementation of this curriculum in the school involved adapting learning materials, A training teachers and adjusting evaluation methods to ensure compliance with local needs and global standards.

Although various studies have been conducted, there is still a gap in the literature regarding the specific role of education foundations in facilitating the integration of international, national and local curricula in the context of Islamic education. In particular, not many studies have deeply analyzed how foundations contribute to aligning the Cambridge Curriculum, Merdeka Curriculum, and Aswaja teachings in Islamic educational institutions. This study aims to fill the gap by exploring the foundation's role in the curriculum integration process at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo, as well as its impact on the quality of education and students' character development.

Theoretically, studies on the integration of various curricula in Islamic educational institutions are still limited. Most studies focus on the implementation of one curriculum separately, such as the effectiveness of the Cambridge Curriculum in improving students' critical thinking skills, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in providing flexibility for schools, and the MoRA Curriculum strengthening Islamic religious education. However, research that specifically discusses how these three elements can be integrated harmoniously in one educational institution is still very minimal. In addition, studies on how the foundation's role in facilitating curriculum integration and shaping a learning environment that continues to emphasize Aswaja values have also not been found in the academic literature. Therefore, this research seeks to fill this gap by exploring how foundations can play a role as the main driver in ensuring an effectively integrated curriculum. Thus, this study aims to analyze how the foundation's role in managing and integrating the Cambridge Curriculum, the MOEC Curriculum, and the teachings of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah in order to realize quality education. Through effective planning, implementation, and evaluation strategies, the foundation is expected to create an education system that is harmonious, adaptive, and able to produce graduates who excel both in the academic realm and Islamic values.

This research brings novelty to the study of curriculum integration in Islamic educational institutions by highlighting the foundation's role in facilitating the integration of the Cambridge Curriculum, Merdeka Curriculum, and Aswaja teachings at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo. Unlike previous studies that focused more on the implementation of the curriculum separately or the integration of Islamic values in education, this study emphasizes how the foundation as a policy holder has a strategic role in developing, aligning, and ensuring the effectiveness of the integration of the three curricula. In addition, this study also examines the challenges faced in the integration process and its impact on learning outcomes and student character development, an aspect that has not been widely discussed in previous research.

The importance of this research lies in its relevance to the needs of modern Islamic education which is not only required to have global competitiveness through an international curriculum approach, but also to maintain its identity and Islamic values

based on Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah. With the growing challenges in the world of education, both in terms of globalization, digitalization, and diversity of learning methods, a curriculum management model is needed that can produce graduates who not only excel in academic aspects but also have a strong religious understanding and good character. In addition, the results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for other educational foundations in designing more effective policies in harmonizing national, international, and Islamic values curricula. Thus, this research makes an important contribution to developing a more adaptive, innovative and quality Islamic education.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to deeply understand the foundation's role in integrating the Cambridge Curriculum, Merdeka Curriculum, and Aswaja teachings at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo. The research location was chosen based on the characteristics of the madrasah, which applies an integrative curriculum approach with full support from the foundation in its management and development. Research subjects include foundation administrators, madrasah heads, teachers, and education personnel who have direct involvement in curriculum implementation and management at this institution.

This study involved 5 participants, consisting of the foundation board, the head of the madrasa in the curriculum field, and 3 teachers at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo. The participants were selected using purposive sampling technique, where subjects were selected based on their involvement and understanding in the integration of the Cambridge Curriculum, Merdeka Curriculum, and Aswaja teachings. The criteria for selecting participants are based on their strategic position in the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating the curriculum in the madrasah. In this case, the foundation as a policy holder has an important role in facilitating curriculum integration, so foundation administrators and madrasah principals were selected to gain perspectives on the policies and strategies implemented. Meanwhile, teachers and the deputy head of the madrasah for curriculum were chosen as the main subjects for in-depth interviews, as they have a more detailed understanding of the implementation of the curriculum in the classroom, the challenges faced and the learning strategies applied. This purposive sample selection was done to ensure that the data obtained is truly relevant and able to provide a comprehensive picture of the foundation's role in integrating the three curricula. By involving various stakeholders who have different roles in curriculum management, this research can explore more in-depth and accurate information related to the effectiveness of curriculum integration and its impact on the quality of education in madrasah.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews and field observations to obtain more comprehensive information on the foundation's role in improving the quality of education. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with foundation administrators to understand their policies and strategies in supporting the madrasahs, as well as with madrasah principals and teachers to gain perspectives on curriculum implementation

and the challenges faced in the learning process. Some of the questions asked in the interviews include: How does the foundation facilitate the integration of the three curriculums? What challenges were faced in the integration process? How does the implementation of the curriculum affect learning outcomes and student character development? In addition, the interviews also explored the foundation's support for improving the quality of teaching staff as well as the strategies used by the madrasah in harmonizing academic aspects and Islamic values. In addition to interviews, this study also used the observation method to obtain direct data on implementing curriculum integration in the classroom. Observations were made by paying attention to several key aspects, such as the interaction between teachers and students, which reflects the extent to which the curriculum integration-based learning approach is implemented. In addition, observations also highlight the teaching strategies used by teachers, including the methods applied in delivering Cambridge Curriculum, Merdeka Curriculum, and Aswaja teachings simultaneously. observations are made to see firsthand how the curriculum is integrated into daily learning, including the teaching strategies used by teachers, the application of Aswaja values in teaching materials, and how the learning environment in madrasah is facilitated by the foundation to create a conducive educational atmosphere.

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The data obtained were analyzed using thematic analysis method, where interview and observation data were reduced, categorized into main themes such as curriculum policy, foundation support in improving the quality of teaching staff, and the impact of curriculum integration on learning effectiveness. The data that has been classified is then presented in the form of narrative descriptions to provide a clearer picture of the dynamics of curriculum management in this madrasah. From the results of the analysis, conclusions were drawn to assess the extent of the foundation's role in building a quality education system, both from an academic aspect and in strengthening character based on Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah. To enhance the credibility of the findings, techniques such as triangulation (using multiple data sources), member checking (validating the findings with participants), and peer discussion (consultation with colleagues) will be applied. These strategies will help ensure the research findings are trustworthy and reflect the real experiences at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo.

With this approach, the research is expected to contribute to understanding how foundations can play an active role in developing curriculum integration-based

education that is not only aligned with national and international standards, but also remains rooted in Islamic values that become the madrasah's identity.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **Integration of Cambridge Curriculum, Independent Curriculum, and Aswaja Teachings at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo**

Curriculum integration at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo is a systematic effort made to combine the Cambridge Curriculum, the Ministry of Education and Culture's Merdeka Curriculum, and Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah (Aswaja) values in a unified learning system. The Cambridge Curriculum, which is oriented towards international education standards, is used as an approach in developing critical thinking skills, global literacy, and analysis-based problem solving. Previous research confirms that the integration of Islamic values into the national curriculum is an important step to shape students' religious attitudes, especially in the face of foreign cultural influences in the era of globalization. (Liriwati & Al-Shreifeen, 2024). This approach is applied in certain subjects, especially in science, math, and English learning. Meanwhile, the Merdeka Curriculum developed by MoEC focuses on flexibility in learning by adjusting teaching methods based on students' needs and characteristics. The principles of projectbased learning and differentiated approaches are applied to ensure that students can learn more meaningfully and according to their potential. On the other hand, Aswaja teachings as an Islamic foundation that becomes the identity of MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo are integrated in various aspects of the curriculum. Aswaja values are applied in character education, religious extracurricular activities, and in learning methods that prioritize moderation, tolerance and love for the country. Subjects such as Akidah Akhlak, Jurisprudence, Al-Qur'an Hadis, and Islamic Cultural History (SKI) are the main instruments in maintaining and strengthening the Islamic identity of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah in the school environment.

The integration of Cambridge Curriculum, Merdeka Curriculum, and Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah (Aswaja) teachings at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo is a strategic effort to improve the quality of education by combining international, national standards and Islamic values. Previous research has explored the effectiveness of each of these curricula, providing insights relevant to the integrative implementation in this madrasah. According to research conducted by Sekolah Pelita Harapan (SPH), implementing the Cambridge Curriculum is proven to improve students' critical thinking skills and conceptual understanding, especially in science and math subjects. "The Cambridge Curriculum enables students to develop a deep understanding of academic concepts through research-based approaches and interactive exploration." (SPH, 2022) Other research also shows that the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum in several primary schools in Indonesia, such as SD Internasional Al-Abidin Surakarta and SD Integral Walisongo Sragen, is going well through careful planning, interactive implementation, and effective evaluation, although challenges such as limited understanding of story-based questions in English are still found. (Nafisah, 2018) Its relevance to this study lies in how MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo can adopt this

approach in their academic subjects while still maintaining Islamic values through the integration of Aswaja teachings

In Qurniawati's research, D. R. (2023) published by Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya, it was found that the Merdeka Curriculum provides high flexibility in learning and reduces learning loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic. "The Merdeka Curriculum allows students to learn according to their interests and abilities, providing learning experiences that are more meaningful and relevant to their lives." (Wahyuni, 2022) This is in line with the objectives of MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo in providing a flexible, personalized learning experience, but still in line with the principles of Islamic education. In addition, research from the Ministry of Religion's Technical Training Center also highlights the challenges faced in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasah. "The main obstacle in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasah is the limited resources and readiness of educators to adapt a more flexible learning approach." (Akhmadi, 2023) This finding is an important input for MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo in optimizing training for educators to make curriculum implementation more effective.

The integration of Aswaja teachings and curriculum in NU Online East Java highlights the importance of strengthening Aswaja values in education in the madrasah environment so that students not only excel academically but also have a moderate Islamic character. "The Aswajabased curriculum must not only be able to shape moderate religious understanding but also be flexible and contextual to the times." (Savhira, 2023) The relevance of this research is how MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo can integrate Aswaja values holistically in their curriculum, without reducing the effectiveness of the Cambridge Curriculum and Merdeka Curriculum.

The teachings of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah (Aswaja) have three main characteristics inherited by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, namely at-tawasuth (moderate attitude), tawazun (balanced attitude between aqli and naqli arguments), and al-i'tidal (maintaining justice and harmony). In addition, Aswaja also teaches tasamuh, which is an attitude of tolerance and respect for differences in worldview. (Abdusshomad, 2023). Previous research showed that the innovative Aswaja module based on competitive learning was proven to significantly improve students' understanding, encourage critical thinking, and enable the living of Aswaja values in daily life through integrating technology, such as barcode learning. (Amanulloh et al., 2024) Research on the internalization strategy of Aswaja-based character values at SDUT Jepara shows the importance of micro and macro approaches in instilling the values of tasamuh, tawazun, ta'adul, and tawasuth through daily activities, integration in learning, and collaboration between schools, parents, and communities. (Widiyono, 2022) This finding is in line with the efforts to integrate Aswaja teachings at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo, where the foundation also emphasizes the importance of instilling Aswaja values not only through the curriculum, but also through routine activities, family support, and partnerships with the surrounding environment to strengthen student character.

So that the integration of these three curricula is not carried out separately, but in harmony, so that each curriculum complements the other. For example, in science learning, the Cambridge Curriculum approach is used to improve conceptual

understanding and analysis, Merdeka Curriculum provides freedom for students to explore topics more independently, while Aswaja values are applied in the context of scientific ethics and responsibility for science. Another study on strengthening the Aswaja An-Nahdliyah curriculum in preventing radicalism in elementary schools shows the importance of redesigning the curriculum from the aspects of goals, materials, methods, to evaluation, as well as emphasizing the principles of fikrah, aqidah, harakah, and amaliyah (Ibda et al., 2024) Another study on the implementation of character education strategies in RA Diponegoro 153 Ajibarang shows that the success of student character building is closely related to the consistency of the implementation of habituation activities that are relevant to the vision, mission, and curriculum of the institution, especially under the auspices of LP Ma'arif NU (Wiyani, 2020) These findings strengthen the importance of curriculum integration and Aswaja values in basic education at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo, where the integration of policies, school management, and learning is the key to instilling moderate character in students.

The results of this study indicate that the integration of the Cambridge Curriculum, Merdeka Curriculum, and Aswaja teachings at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo is carried out through an adaptive approach while maintaining the identity of Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah-based Islamic education. This finding is in line with the reviewed literature, where the Cambridge Curriculum is applied in several schools in Indonesia to improve international academic standards (SPH, 2022), the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes flexible competency-based learning (Qurniawati, 2023), and Aswaja teachings provide a strong religious foundation for madrasah students (Savhira, 2023). In practice, MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo adopts an integrated curriculum management approach by adjusting the content and teaching methods to remain relevant to the needs of students. Compared with previous research on integrated curriculum management in Islamic schools, this study shows harmony in the aspects of flexibility and adaptation of the curriculum to the local context. However, it also reveals unique challenges in aligning three different curricula, particularly in the aspects of learning methodology and assessment, which are not widely discussed in previous studies. Thus, the results of this study provide a new perspective on how an Islamic education foundation can play an active role in facilitating curriculum integration to improve the quality of holistic learning.

### **The Foundation's Role in Realizing Quality Education through Curriculum Integration**

The results of this study indicate that the foundation has a strategic role in ensuring the success of curriculum integration in MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo. This role includes education policy, management of teaching staff, and provision of facilities and infrastructure that support the effectiveness of learning. In the aspect of education policy, the foundation acts as the main facilitator in designing and setting the direction of education in accordance with the vision and mission of the institution. The foundation ensures that the policies implemented are not only oriented towards students' academic achievement, but also strengthen the Islamic values that characterize the madrasah. With the support of the foundation, the school has the freedom to adapt the curriculum

according to local needs, without ignoring national and international standards. As in previous research showing that character education in elementary schools is influenced by internal factors such as teachers and principals, as well as external factors such as parents (Kanji et al., 2020), the MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo foundation also takes an active role in bridging the synergy between these parties. This effort is made to ensure that Aswaja values can be instilled consistently, both in the school environment and at home. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia aims to improve the quality of education by providing flexibility to schools in adapting the curriculum according to local needs and developing student competencies (Cahyono et al., 2024). Although still faced with challenges such as limited teacher competence and suboptimal technology integration, this approach reinforces the importance of meaningful learning and character development. This finding supports the Merdeka Curriculum integration efforts at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo as part of the strategy to realize quality education based on student needs and global development.

In addition, the foundation plays an important role in the management of human resources (HR), particularly in recruiting and improving the competence of teaching staff. The foundation sets strict standards in teacher selection, ensuring that they have academic and pedagogical competence as well as a strong understanding of Aswaja values. Recruited teachers must not only be able to teach with innovative methods, but must also have a commitment to integrating all three curricula in the learning process. To support this, the foundation regularly organizes training and workshops to improve the professionalism of educators in implementing the integrated curriculum.

In terms of providing facilities, the foundation also plays an active role in supporting the facilities and infrastructure needed to support curriculum integration. The availability of science laboratories, libraries with international references, and classrooms designed according to active learning principles are part of the foundation's efforts to improve the quality of learning. The foundation also invests in educational technology to ensure that students have a more interactive and relevant learning experience.

In the world of education, foundations have an important role in ensuring that the curriculum implemented in their schools is able to meet the standards of quality education. At MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo, the foundation not only carries out administrative functions, but also plays an active role in developing and implementing curriculum that integrates various aspects, both from the national curriculum, international, and local religious values. 1.) Curriculum Development The Foundation plays a role in formulating and developing a curriculum that combines the Cambridge International Curriculum with the national curriculum from the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This integration is done to improve the quality of learning in key areas such as Math, English and Science. With this approach, students not only acquire international academic standards but also still understand the local context and Islamic values in their learning (Solichati & Musfiqon, 2021); 2.) Teacher Training In order for the developed curriculum to be implemented optimally, the foundation also facilitates training for educators. This training program aims to improve teachers' competence in applying innovative learning methods and ensure they can teach the material more effectively. With this training, teachers are better

prepared to face the challenges of modern education and are able to adapt various teaching strategies according to student needs (Widayanti, 2024); 3.) Scholarship Grant As a form of support for education equity, the foundation also provides a scholarship program for students who excel but have economic limitations. With this scholarship program, more students can access quality education without worrying about financial constraints. This program is one of the foundation's strategies in creating equal learning opportunities for all students (Ariyani & Noviyanti, 2021); 4) Facilities and Infrastructure Development A comfortable and conducive learning environment greatly influences learning effectiveness. Therefore, the foundation also contributes to developing school facilities and infrastructure. Adequate facilities, such as comfortable classrooms, well-equipped laboratories, and an adequate library, support students in developing their academic potential and character to the fullest (Widayanti, 2024).

The foundation's role in supporting curriculum implementation is not only limited to providing facilities, but also includes strategic collaboration with school principals to improve curriculum management quality and strengthen teacher competencies. As described in the study (Zahro et al., 2022), the foundation helps to overcome curriculum problems through training and coaching support for teachers to be able to understand and implement the applicable curriculum optimally. In addition, the foundation also facilitates teachers in dealing with the dynamics of curriculum changes and ensures that the learning process runs according to established educational standards. This is in line with MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo's efforts to integrate three curricula at once-Cambridge, Merdeka and Aswaja-where the foundation's role is crucial in providing direction, structural support and strengthening the capacity of human resources in the institution. In other research Research on the internalization of national awareness in early childhood Islamic education institutions through the spirit of Aswaja an-Nahdliyah shows the importance of contextual and sustainable cultivation of basic values from an early age. Although early childhood is not yet able to think abstractly, through daily activities that are full of Aswaja and nationalism values, they can form a strong character foundation for the next level of education. (Istiyani & Wibowo, 2020) This finding has strong relevance to the practice at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo, where Aswaja values that have been instilled since RA are continued and strengthened at the madrasah ibtidaiyah level. The foundation plays an important role in ensuring the continuity of these values so that they remain the main basis in the integration of the national and international curriculum, so that students are formed who are not only academically superior, but also have strong national and Islamic characters.

In realizing Aswaja value-based quality education, the foundation's role is not only limited to preparing and supervising curriculum implementation, but also actively involved in shaping school culture and external collaboration. Research at SDI Imamah Semarang shows that Aswaja-based character education can be effectively internalized through the design of a religious school environment, integration of Aswaja values into learning, and close collaboration between schools, parents and communities (Widiyono, 2022). This is in line with the role of the Muslimat NU Foundation in encouraging MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo to create an educational ecosystem that not only supports academic aspects, but also character building. The foundation facilitates various religious

activities, strengthens moderate culture, and builds communication with student guardians to ensure that Aswaja values are not only learned, but also lived in the daily lives of students.

Through these efforts, the foundation at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo has played a key role in realizing quality education. Integrating the Cambridge curriculum, Merdeka Curriculum, and Aswaja teachings enables students to receive an education that is balanced between academics, global skills, and Islamic values. In addition, the foundation's support in teacher training, scholarships, and providing adequate educational facilities further strengthens the quality of learning. With this approach, it is expected that students who graduate from MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo will not only excel in academics, but also have a strong character and be able to adapt in the era of globalization.

### **Challenges and Resolution Strategies**

Although curriculum integration is well established, there are some challenges faced in its implementation. One of the main challenges is ensuring a balance between the three curricula that have different approaches. Some teachers had difficulty in adjusting their teaching methods to accommodate all three approaches simultaneously. To overcome this challenge, the foundation and the school organized workshops and mentoring sessions for educators to improve their skills in designing integrative learning.

The transformation of education in the digital era 5.0 requires educational institutions to not only keep up with technological developments, but also maintain the core values that are the foundation of students' character. In this context, the integration of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah (Aswaja) values with digital technology is an important strategy in making Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning more relevant and attractive to the millennial generation. As stated in a study by Annisa Rezki Eka P et al. (2024), Islamic Education learning that combines digitalization and Aswaja values is able to introduce important concepts such as moderation, tolerance, and balance more effectively. The role of teachers is crucial in ensuring that education remains meaningful and builds religious and digital literacy in a balanced way. This is in line with the approach applied at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo, where the integration of the Cambridge curriculum, Merdeka Curriculum, and Aswaja teachings is carried out not only in the content domain, but also through learning methods that are adaptive to the times, including the use of interactive and contextual digital media.

To address this challenge, the school and the foundation have organized workshops and mentoring sessions for educators. These activities aim to improve teachers' skills in designing integrative and effective learning. In addition, the school also encourages collaboration among teachers to share experiences and best strategies in implementing a diverse curriculum. As a concrete step, the foundation has developed a training module for teachers that focuses on integrated curriculum planning so that they have practical guidance in developing teaching materials. In addition, the school has also implemented parent engagement strategies through seminars and regular meetings that provide them with insights on how to support children's learning at home. Not only that, adaptive teaching methodologies have been implemented to make teachers more flexible in

managing the various demands of the curriculum, allowing students to adapt to diverse learning approaches more easily. With these efforts, curriculum integration at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo can run more optimally, provide better learning outcomes, and shape student character in accordance with Aswaja values.

Another challenge is related to students' readiness to deal with more varied learning methods. Some students who are used to conventional learning models have difficulty adapting to the Cambridge Curriculum's more exploratory and analysis-based approach. To address this, the foundation supports the development of guidance and mentoring programs that help students gradually adapt to more dynamic learning patterns.

In addition, the sustainability of the curriculum integration program also depends on the support of parents and the community. Integrating the Cambridge curriculum, Merdeka Curriculum, and Aswaja an-Nahdliyah values carried out at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo is certainly not without challenges. For the foundation, this effort requires a mature strategy to harmoniously align global and local visions. One of the main challenges is maintaining the continuity of Islamic and national values from RA to MI, as shown in the practice at Madania High School in Bogor, which uses a descending approach in designing the curriculum. (Isnawati et al., 2022) Foundations are also faced with the challenge of increasing the capacity of teachers to understand and implement the three curriculum approaches simultaneously. On the other hand, the need for learning media by the characteristics of students and the development of digital technology also requires the active role of the foundation in providing relevant facilities without losing the essence of Aswaja teachings. Therefore, the involvement of the foundation not only as an administrative manager, but also as a guardian of the spirit of value-based education becomes very crucial (Fajarini et al., 2023). In an effort to realize quality education, the foundation also encourages the optimization of the role of parents as part of the strategy to solve challenges. In line with the findings of previous research which states that parental participation can be increased through interesting programs, direct involvement in planning to evaluation, and intensive and transparent communication between schools and parents (Sumarsono et al., 2019), the MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo foundation also encourages schools to establish collaborative relationships with committees and parent associations. The aim is to create a climate conducive to character education and successfully integrating the Aswaja-based curriculum.

Therefore, the foundation is active in building communication with student guardians through discussion forums and socialization of the benefits of curriculum integration for students' academic and character development. With parental involvement, the learning process at school can be strengthened with ongoing support in the home environment.

## CONCLUSION

**Fundamental Finding:** This study aims to understand how the foundation facilitates the integration of the Cambridge Curriculum, Merdeka Curriculum and Aswaja teachings at MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo, as well as identifying the challenges faced and the strategies implemented to overcome them. The results show that the foundation plays a central role in ensuring the synchronization of the three curricula by creating flexible

academic policies, providing teacher training programs and developing teaching materials that accommodate international standards, innovative learning approaches and Islamic values. The foundation also provides ongoing mentoring for educators to effectively manage curriculum integration. In this integration process, there are some key challenges faced. One of them is the difficulty of teachers in balancing three curricula that have different approaches and standards. In addition, students' adaptation to variations in learning methods is also a challenge, especially in connecting Cambridge-based academic concepts with the flexibility of Merdeka Curriculum and Aswaja teaching values. Limited resources, such as the lack of textbooks that specifically combine the three curricula, are also an obstacle to optimal implementation. To overcome these challenges, the foundation has implemented various resolution strategies. One of the steps taken is organizing regular workshops and mentoring sessions for teachers, which focus on developing skills in designing integrative learning. In addition, the foundation also initiated specialized training modules for teachers in designing an integrated curriculum, as well as encouraging parental involvement in the learning process to strengthen home-based education. The application of adaptive teaching methodologies, which allow teachers to customize approaches according to students' needs, is also part of the strategies implemented. **Implication:** In terms of implications, this study shows that the integration of the three curricula not only enables students to obtain a global standards-based education, but also continues to build character based on Islamic values. The findings confirm that the foundation's support is crucial to the success of curriculum integration, both in terms of policy formulation, educator development and implementation of learning methods. **Limitation:** However, this study has some limitations. This study is limited to one school, so it cannot represent the conditions in other schools that also implement a similar model. In addition, this study focuses more on the role of the foundation and educators, while the aspects of student acceptance and adaptation to curriculum integration still need more in-depth study. **Future Research:** For future research, further exploration of the effectiveness of curriculum integration on students' academic achievement and character development in the long term is recommended. In addition, a study that addresses the perspectives of parents, students and other education policy makers in supporting the success of the integrative curriculum would also provide more comprehensive insights. In conclusion, this study shows that with the full support of the foundation, a systematic implementation strategy, and the active involvement of educators and parents, MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo has succeeded in presenting an innovative, globally competitive education model that remains rooted in Islamic values. The results of this study are expected to be a reference for other Islamic educational institutions in developing an integration-based curriculum that is able to answer the challenges of education in the modern era.

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