

## AN EXAMINATION OF INTEGRATIVE ISLAMIC EDUCATION AT SMP INTEGRAL HIDAYATULLAH KENDARI

Hasan Basri<sup>1</sup>, Herman DM<sup>2</sup>, Ilham<sup>3</sup>, Muhammad Saleh<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kendari, Indonesia.

<sup>3</sup>Institut Agama Islam Muhammadiyah Bima, Indonesia.

<sup>4</sup>Hartford International University for Religion and Peace, United States of America;

<sup>1,2</sup>Jl. Sultan Qaimuddin No. 17 Kota Kendari, Indonesia, <sup>3</sup>Jl. Anggrek No. 16 Ranggo Na'e, Bima, Indonesia, <sup>4</sup>Sherman Street 77, Hartford, CT 06105-2260, USA.

E-mail: [hasanbasri@iainkendari.ac.id](mailto:hasanbasri@iainkendari.ac.id)<sup>1</sup>, [herman33333@yahoo.com](mailto:herman33333@yahoo.com)<sup>2</sup>, [ilhamham903@mail.com](mailto:ilhamham903@mail.com)<sup>3</sup>, [muhhammad.saleh@stu.hartfordinternational.edu](mailto:muhhammad.saleh@stu.hartfordinternational.edu)<sup>4</sup>

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### Abstract:

The integrative curriculum plays a crucial role in fostering a holistic learning experience by amalgamating general knowledge with religious values. This research constitutes a case study of the integrative curriculum framework at Hidayatullah Kendari Integral Junior High School, aiming to elucidate the curriculum content, presentation methodologies, and pedagogical strategies employed by teachers to incorporate religious elements into educational materials and activities. Data were collected through document analysis, observations, and interviews with school administrators and teachers. The data analysis procedure involved verifying and categorizing the data, presenting it in accordance with the research questions, conducting a comprehensive analysis using curriculum integration theory and prior research findings, and drawing conclusions. The findings reveal that the school's curriculum, grounded in Qur'anic principles, continues to incorporate the government curriculum as its core, augmented by local content and religious development. The integration of religion into the educational process employs a connected model, utilizing pedagogical methods that align with Islamic educational principles, thereby enabling students to contextualize the acquired knowledge within a religious framework. The implications of this study suggest that teachers must enhance their religious knowledge in tandem with their subject matter expertise. Furthermore, religious educators provide additional religious instruction beyond regular school hours, necessitating students' residency in the school dormitory.

### Abstrak:

Kurikulum integratif memainkan peran penting dalam menciptakan pengalaman belajar yang holistik dengan menggabungkan ilmu pengetahuan umum dan nilai-nilai keagamaan. Penelitian ini merupakan studi kasus terhadap format kurikulum integratif di SMP Integral Hidayatullah Kendari, dengan tujuan mendeskripsikan format muatan kurikulum, metode penyajian, dan teknik yang digunakan oleh guru dalam mengintegrasikan agama ke dalam materi dan kegiatan pembelajaran. Data dikumpulkan melalui analisis dokumen, observasi, dan wawancara dengan kepala sekolah dan guru. Proses analisis data melibatkan verifikasi dan sortir data, penyajian data sesuai dengan pertanyaan penelitian, pendalaman menggunakan teori integrasi kurikulum serta temuan penelitian sebelumnya, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa format kurikulum di sekolah ini berbasis pada al-Qur'an dengan tetap mengadopsi kurikulum pemerintah sebagai

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kurikulum inti, yang dilengkapi dengan muatan lokal dan pengembangan keagamaan. Integrasi agama dalam pembelajaran menggunakan model connected, di mana metode-metode pengajaran diintegrasikan dengan metode-metode pendidikan dalam Islam. Dengan demikian, kegiatan pembelajaran membantu siswa memahami pengetahuan yang diajarkan secara kontekstual berdasarkan ajaran agama. Implikasinya, guru harus meningkatkan pengetahuan keagamaan mereka seiring dengan peningkatan pengetahuan terhadap mata pelajaran. Guru agama juga memberikan pelajaran tambahan di luar jam sekolah, yang mengharuskan siswa untuk tinggal di asrama sekolah.

**Keywords:**

Curriculum Integration, Islamic Education, Integral Hidayatullah Junior High School

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## INTRODUCTION

The integration of Islamic education within Indonesia has become a significant topic of discourse among educational experts in the early 21st century. This discourse was notably initiated by the establishment of five pioneering Integrated Islamic Schools (Sekolah Islam Terpadu or SIT) during the 1990s. These institutions include Nurul Fikri Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) in Depok, Al-Hikmah Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) in South Jakarta, Iqro Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) in Bekasi, Ummul Quro Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) in Bogor, and Al-Khayrot Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) in East Jakarta (Lubis, 2018). These schools have garnered considerable interest, particularly among the Muslim middle class (Suyatno, 2015). The phenomenon has been the subject of extensive scholarly research. Suprpto (2013), investigating one of the initial SITs, Nurul Fikri Integrated Islamic Elementary School in Depok, posits that the primary motivation behind the establishment of SITs is to bridge the educational divide between pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) and madrasah (Islamic schools), which often neglect scientific disciplines, and conventional schools, which may underemphasize religious education. Wibawa & Hardiansyah (2022) further elucidate that the emergence of Integrated Islamic Schools constitutes a form of critique against the Indonesian education system, which is perceived as inherently dichotomous and dualistic.

In scholarly discourse, a dichotomous education system is characterized by the separation of scientific and religious domains, leading to the marginalization of religious knowledge in the face of modernity and the divergence of scientific progress from

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spiritual values (Sappe, 2020). On the other hand, a dualistic education system refers to the coexistence of two distinct and often conflicting educational paradigms (Embong, 2018). The educational paradigm of Integrated Islamic Schools (Sekolah Islam Terpadu or SIT) presents a comprehensive alternative designed to address these dichotomous and dualistic challenges in education. Research by Hamami & Nuryana (2022), focusing on Muhammadiyah schools, demonstrates how the SIT model aims to integrate Islamic education into a broader educational framework. This approach not only responds to perceived limitations and fragmentation within the Indonesian education system but also seeks to harmonize religious knowledge with modern scientific principles and promote spiritual values through a holistic and integrated educational approach.

Furthermore, scholarly research on the integration of religious education in Integrated Islamic Schools (Sekolah Islam Terpadu or SIT) reveals several key emphases. Suyatno (2015) explores the foundational concept of integrated education in SITs, underscoring their significant appeal. His subsequent studies Suyatno (2016) delve into the paradigm of integration within SITs as an endeavor to overcome educational dichotomies and examine the positioning of SITs within the national education system. Further, Fathil, Saam, Sukendi, & Nizar (2015) and Muhlisin & Syaifuddin (2020) highlight in their respective studies that integrating religious education into subjects, particularly in science and technology, can enrich students' comprehension, faith, and application of religious teachings. Fausi (2020) presents findings from Islamic Global School in Malang City, emphasizing the implementation of educational integration with a focus on cultivating multicultural values through religious teachings. Fuadi & Suyatno (2020) discuss their research on the integration of religious education at an SIT in Yogyakarta, stressing the amalgamation of national and religious values in student education. The implications drawn from these studies suggest that SITs represent not merely an educational alternative but also a model capable of integrating diverse educational elements within a more holistic and unified framework.

Despite the considerable body of research on integrative education in Integrated Islamic Schools (Sekolah Islam Terpadu or SIT), there remains a distinct lack of comprehensive studies that thoroughly delineate the format of curriculum content and the nuanced pedagogical strategies employed by teachers to integrate religious teachings into instructional materials. Sultani, Putri Silalahi, & Ali (2021) have contributed to this area by focusing on teachers' methodologies in incorporating religious content throughout the educational process, encompassing annual and semester planning, syllabus design, lesson planning, and assessment strategies. Their research underscores instructional methods such as talk stick and snowballing as pivotal in fostering effective integration. Then, Ilmi & Rofiah (2017) previously examined how teachers integrate spiritual values into Islamic religious education, utilizing brochures as educational tools. Suwardi, Akhyar, Siswandari, & Asrowi (2023) conducted a specific inquiry into the content of integrated thematic textbooks, highlighting their rigorous validation and potential to elevate student learning outcomes. Nurhayati (2022) delved into pedagogical approaches employed by educators to integrate religious education, including mechanisms like reward and punishment systems, storytelling, role modeling, and the

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rigorous teaching methods of tahsin and tahfiz. Additionally, integration is enriched through extracurricular activities such as congregational prayers (salat berjamaah), communal meals, counseling sessions, scouting initiatives, outdoor excursions, overnight stays (mabit), camps (muhayyam), and gardening programs. These studies collectively provide scholarly insights into the diverse and nuanced methodologies utilized within SITs to effectively integrate religious education, thereby enriching students' holistic educational experiences.

Therefore, this research aims to build upon existing studies on integrated education, particularly within Islamic Junior High Schools, by focusing on the analysis of curriculum integration formats and the pedagogical methods employed by teachers in both classroom and extracurricular settings. The study seeks to investigate the curriculum formats adopted by schools that blend government curriculum with local school curriculum, and the instructional methods used to integrate subjects, especially science, with religious teachings from the Qur'an and Hadith. Additionally, it aims to explore how lessons are aligned with students' religious duties.

Furthermore, the study intends to uncover the methodologies and approaches teachers use to deliver education both inside and outside the classroom. To guide this research, the following specific research questions are proposed: (1) what are the formats of Islamic education integration within the curriculum? (2) How do teachers incorporate these formats into educational activities, both within and outside the classroom? (3) What methods are employed to integrate these formats into the educational process, both within and outside the classroom? These questions are designed to provide clarity and direction to the investigation, aiming to contribute insights into effective practices of integrating Islamic education within the broader educational framework of Junior High Schools.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research presents a case study conducted at Hidayatullah Integral Junior High Schools (hereafter referred to as SMPiH) in Kendari, aiming to examine the curriculum structure and instructional practices through a blend of teaching and educational methods. Primary data was gathered from curriculum documents and relevant materials to elucidate the integration framework. Observations were conducted to capture teacher activities during both classroom sessions and extracurricular educational moments. To ensure clarity and precision in data collection, detailed semi-structured interviews were conducted with the school principal and willing teachers. The selection of interviewees was based on the relevance of their roles and the data they could provide. Key informants included the school principal and the educational coordinator of Hidayatullah, providing insights into curriculum policies and their implementation. Additionally, science and mathematics teachers were selected to discuss the integration of religious teachings into their respective subjects. Religious studies teachers were interviewed to explore religious instruction both in and outside the classroom. Interviews with homeroom teachers provided perspectives on student

learning outcomes and the homeroom teacher's role in student development. Interviews were conducted subsequent to the analysis of curriculum documents and observations of teacher activities inside and outside the classroom. The initials of the informants interviewed are listed in the accompanying table for reference:

**Table 1:** Reseach Informants

No	Nama	Gender	Position
1.	Masro	Male	Coordinator of Education Affairs
2.	Darso	Male	Headmaster
3.	Zain	Female	Qur'anic Teacher
4.	Mahis	Female	7 <sup>th</sup> Class Homeroom Teacher
5.	Dw Indo	Female	8 <sup>th</sup> Class Homeroom Teacher
6.	Abdul	Female	PAI Teacher
7.	Hamdi	Male	Mathematic Teacher
8.	Arif	Male	Science Teacher

The data analysis adheres to a structured methodology as articulated by Sidiq & Choiri (2019) encompassing the following procedural steps: (1) verification and systematic categorization of collected data; (2) presentation of findings derived from document studies and observations, complemented by insights gathered from interviews, organized in accordance with the research inquiries; (3) in-depth exploration of the integrated curriculum format and its implementation, drawing upon pertinent literature and previous scholarly investigations; (4) formulation of conclusive interpretations based on the synthesized research outcomes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Aligned with the research objectives, the primary focus of this section revolves around the integration of Islamic education within the curriculum. This encompasses an examination of curriculum integration formats, the incorporation of religious education into learning materials, and the utilization of educational methodologies within the teaching process.

### The Integration of Curriculum Content

Curriculum content refers to the substantive material presented in the learning process, organized according to planned schedules and sequences (Chi, 2009). Integrating religion into curriculum content involves incorporating religious themes within the curriculum framework, including designated time for religious education. This encompasses both formal subject matter and extracurricular lessons and activities. This approach is consistent with the definition of religious education, which denotes education aimed at imparting knowledge and shaping attitudes, personalities, and skills related to practicing one's faith. Such education is typically integrated across various educational paths, levels, and types of institutions.

The analysis of the curriculum documents of SMPIH reveals that the curriculum comprises core subjects, local content subjects, and self-development activities. Core subjects are those mandated by the government as part of the compulsory curriculum for junior high schools, as stipulated by Permendikbud No. 35 Tahun 2018. These core subjects include Islamic Religious Education (PAI), Pancasila and Civic Education, Bahasa Indonesia, Mathematics, Science (IPA), Social Studies (IPS), English, Art and Culture, and Craft.

Local content subjects are those which schools are authorized to incorporate into their curriculum. Conversely, self-development lessons or activities are designed to highlight the unique characteristics of the school, thereby distinguishing it from other institutions. Detailed information on core, local, and self-development content is provided in the following table:

**Table 2:** The Curriculum Content of SMPIH Kendari

Component	Class and Time Allocation		
	VII	VIII	IX
<b>A. Subjects</b>			
1. Islamic Religious Education (PAI)	3	3	3
2. Civic Education (PKn)	3	3	3
3. Bahasa Indonesia	6	6	6
4. Mathematics	5	5	5
5. Natural Sciences (IPA)	5	5	5
6. Social Sciences (IPS)	4	4	4
7. English	4	4	4
8. Crafts	2	2	3
9. Arabic	4	4	4
<b>B. Local Content</b>			
1. Memorization the al-Qur'an	Every day		
2. Memorization the al-Hadith	Every day		
3. Tauhid	Once in a week		
4. Fiqh	Twice in a week		
5. Sirah	Once in a week		
6. Arabic (Nahwu and Sharaf)	Every day		
7. Tahsin	Every day flexibly		

From the table above, it is evident that all subjects taught in the school are adopted from the government curriculum, with the addition of Arabic language subjects. School activities take place from 07:25 to 12:00, Monday through Thursday, and from 07:25 to 11:20 WITA on Fridays. In addition to formal religious education provided during school hours, PAI teachers also offer supplementary religious lessons outside of school each day, specifically after the Maghrib prayer and the Fajr prayer. These religious lessons include Tawheed, Fiqh, Sirah, Arabic (Nahwu and Sharaf), and Tahsin for those who require

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additional instruction in reading the al-Qur'an. Memorization of the al-Qur'an is conducted outside of school hours, except during study time at school and the periods following the Maghrib and Fajr prayers. These activities are overseen by PAI teachers, caregivers, and some school teachers who also serve as caregivers (Abdul, Interview, 2023).

Regarding the technical implementation of Qur'anic learning, the memorization of the al-Qur'an is managed by teachers known as *halqah al-Qur'an* teachers. The Coordinator of Hidayatullah Education Affairs provided the following explanation:

The Qur'anic memorization (*Tahfiz*) is handled by Qur'anic teacher, a special teacher regarding memorization in *halqah al-Qur'an* activities. For the memorization test, assistance is provided by each homeroom teacher or the other teacher. The memorization target of student is 5 juz until the end of school. Those who choose to specialize in memorizing are targeted at a minimum of 10 juz (Masro, Interview, 2023).

In the school, memorizing the holy al-Qur'an is highly emphasized not only as an obligation but also because it provides significant benefits to students in their learning activities. This importance is underscored by the following statement from a Qur'anic teacher:

Memorization is important here, because according to our experience, student who memorize the al-Qur'an can learn to concentrate and focus more on each lesson. So it can be seen that they who memorize a lot also perform well in lessons (Zain, Interview, 2023).

The emphasis on Qur'anic instruction is evident in the integration of daily Tahsin and Tahfiz activities, as well as in the incorporation of Qur'anic verses into various teaching activities. For example, during a science lesson on the environment, a teacher may reference a verse from the Qur'an that prohibits environmental destruction. The interview findings with the teachers elaborate on this approach:

The lessons are connected to verses/hadiths, the power of Allah, and religious obligations, so that every student develops a strong faith (*iman/aqidah*) in Allah. The hope is that, by the grace of Allah, they will develop a fear of Allah and fulfill what has been commanded by Allah, while avoiding His prohibitions (Arif, Interview, 2023).

Teachers' perceptions regarding the significance of Qur'anic lessons for educational achievement are well-established in academic literature. Numerous studies have consistently shown that the practice of memorizing the al-Qur'an positively influences learning outcomes. Cultivating a habit of memorization is considered pivotal for achieving success in both academic pursuits and life more broadly. Moreover, regular memorization exercises help students develop focused attention, a skill that can be effectively transferred to other areas of learning (Berglund & Gent, 2018). Additionally, the beneficial impact of al-Qur'an memorization on children's personality development, including the cultivation of qualities such as religiosity, discipline, patience, and perseverance, has been observed in early childhood education, as documented by

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Najiburrahman, Azizah, Jazilurrahman, Azizah, & Jannah (2022) in their study conducted at TK Masyithoh. From a psychological perspective, research indicates that the practice of al-Qur'an memorization enhances verbal and visual memory, attentional processes, and lexical and semantic fluency in individuals (Sirin, Metin, & Tarhan, 2021).

The practice of Duha prayer not only reinforces discipline in following the Prophet's traditions but also shows a positive correlation with students' proficiency in al-Qur'an memorization (Daswara, Purnamanita, & Sanusi, 2022). Engaging in collective Duha prayer fosters the inculcation of religious values, which translates into favorable attitudes, behaviors, and personal attributes such as discipline and obedience to Allah, as evidenced by adherence to school regulations (Fajeri, Husin, & Khadijah, 2022).

### **Integration of Religion in Learning**

The comprehensive analysis of the school curriculum presented earlier reveals a notable allocation of time dedicated to religious education, indicating a deliberate effort to seamlessly integrate religious teachings into the academic framework. This strategic integration is further underscored by insights from the headmaster, as articulated in the interview:

All subjects taught are always linked to religious content within them. Regarding how the integration of religious teachings into lesson materials is done, it depends on the abilities of each subject teacher. However, it is clear that teachers link lessons with evidence from the Qur'anic verses or the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (Darso, Interview, 2023).

The teachers similarly elaborate on this point, as evidenced in the interview results:

High-quality students is supported by the foundation of faith and knowledge of science and technology. The way is to link any subject and material to the Creator, associating the existence of the Creator with the students themselves, so that they understand their functions and responsibilities. For example, when teaching about reproduction (both human and animal) in class IX, I explained how Almighty Allah created his creatures step by step in the mothers' womb (Arif, Interview, 2023).

Every teacher endeavors to make their students understand their religion. So, we connect lessons with religious teachings in general, for example by providing motivation for students to practice religious teachings so that they have good character. Teachers also encourage them to observe the universe, aligning their observations with the teachings of the al-Qur'an and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (Mahis, Interview, 2023).

Moreover, the implications arising from the integration of religion into learning, as elucidated by the teacher in the interview, are as follows:

Religion should be integrated into every subject so that students know and understand that everything they learn is within the teachings of Islam and regulated by Islam. Teachers, while explaining theories or concepts, also present facts/realities that align with those theories/concepts, For example,



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when teaching Pythagoras, I took the example that this knowledge could be used in building mosques (Hamdi, Interview, 2023).

From the excerpt of the interview, it is evident that the role of teachers in integrating religion into education is pivotal. According to Hariandi, Butar-butur, Juliana, Wulandari, & Karyati (2020), teachers are instrumental in imparting religious values within the educational framework of SMPiH, focusing on aspects of faith (aqidah), worship, and the fulfillment of daily religious obligations. This integration seeks to present religious teachings as solutions to societal challenges and to cultivate a profound engagement with the al-Qur'an.

The aspect of aqidah is prominently emphasized in the pedagogical approach at SMPiH. Teachers actively strive to fortify students' conviction in the existence of Allah as the Creator of the universe and all its components. This educational emphasis is substantiated through references drawn from both the al-Qur'an and al-Hadith. An effective method involves integrating scientific curriculum content with theological concepts of Allah's role as the Creator. Fathil, Saam, & Sukendi (2015) posit that incorporating teachings on science and environmental studies within the framework of Allah's creative agency can significantly bolster students' faith. Moreover, Purwati, Zubaidah, Corebima, & Mahanal (2018) and Fahyuni, Wasis, Bandono, & Arifin (2020) corroborate this approach in their respective studies on integrating Islamic values into science education. Students exposed to this religiously oriented pedagogy demonstrate heightened religious devotion, manifesting in their diligent observance of worship rituals, including evening prayers. This illustrates how religious education at SMPiH cultivates a profound spiritual engagement among its student body.

According to Sunhaji (2016), an effective approach to linking the existence of Allah as the Creator with educational lessons is through "tafakkur" (contemplation) and "tadabbur" (reflection). This method is particularly suitable because during childhood and adolescence, intellectual capacities for recognizing God begin to develop. This developmental phase is characterized by frequent questions about the existence of God, providing teachers with an opportune moment to introduce students to Allah as the Creator.

Strengthening students' faith is a primary concern for teachers, as robust faith encourages them to engage in worship and adhere to Allah's commandments in their daily lives. Teaching that integrates each subject with aspects of religious teachings is seen as an effective method to enhance the faith and piety of learners. This pedagogical approach has been longstanding in Islamic education, recognized as a tradition among educators (Taşkın, 2014).

The presentation of such learning is situated within an integrative learning model informed by meaningful learning theory. According to meaningful learning theory, students must achieve understanding of all concepts learned, grasp the interrelationships among these concepts, and discern their practical applications in real-world scenarios (Rusman, 2016). This theoretical framework is grounded in constructivist philosophy, originating from Gestalt psychology and the work of Jean Piaget. Piaget's constructivist

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view posits that children possess cognitive structures known as schemas, which develop and mature through experiential learning (Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun, 2000). In the context of integrating Islamic education, this approach entails leveraging students' existing cognitive and spiritual schemas. By integrating Islamic teachings across various subjects, educators aim to enrich and refine these schemas, fostering a deeper and more contextual comprehension and internalization of religious knowledge and values. Constructivist principles further assert that students actively construct knowledge when engaged in activities such as collaborative questioning, explanation of phenomena, critical analysis of complex issues, and problem-solving (Masgumelar & Mustafa, 2021).

In Islamic education, the application of this theory serves as an approach to foster learning and cultivate students' independent learning abilities. By engaging students in discovery-based learning, they are encouraged to observe, pose questions, and explore the lessons provided. This learning practice involves presenting students with problems or scenarios related to religious teachings, prompting them to discuss and articulate their perspectives. The teacher's role in this approach is to facilitate and guide students in understanding religious teachings, discerning their relevance to daily life, and applying them practically. Subsequently, the teacher encourages students to reflect critically on their learning experiences, evaluating and refining their initial understandings. This reflective process aims to solidify concepts and deepen comprehension. The learning process can be illustrated as follows:

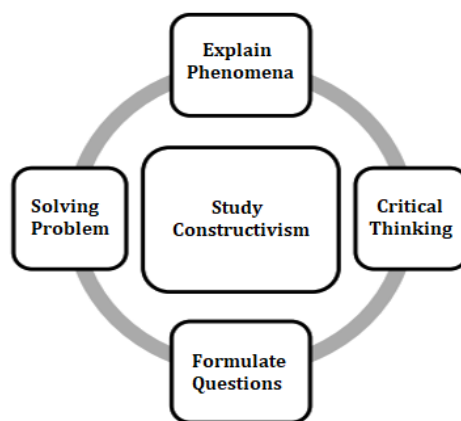


Figure 1: Illustration of Constructivism Learning Theory

From the framework of meaningful learning theory emerges the strategy of contextual learning, also known as Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL). CTL underscores student engagement in discovering and applying learning, making connections between acquired knowledge and real-life applications (Sanjaya, 2013). One implementation of CTL is through integrated learning. The integrative model, as conceptualized by Fogarty & Pete (2009), emphasizes connecting diverse subject matter under the premise that learning content is interrelated across disciplines. The visual representation of the integrative model of learning can be illustrated as follows:

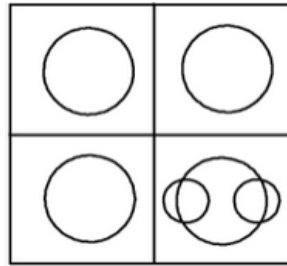


Figure 2: Integration of the Connected Model by Robin Fogarty

According to Trianto (2014), this model entails integrating a specific concept or skill across multiple topics that are interconnected within a unified field of study. In practice, each subject is taught discretely, yet their content is interwoven with connections to one another. When focusing on religious education as the central theme for integration, each subject is approached with deliberate references to various aspects of religious teachings.

In the context of SMPIH, the connected model is implemented by placing religion at the core, foundation, or focal point of learning. Consequently, all forms of learning are inherently linked to concepts derived from religious teachings. Specifically, the aspects of religious teachings covered in religious education classes at the school are integrated into the broader learning framework.

To facilitate the implementation, Muhaimin (2006) adapts the connected model with the following visualization:

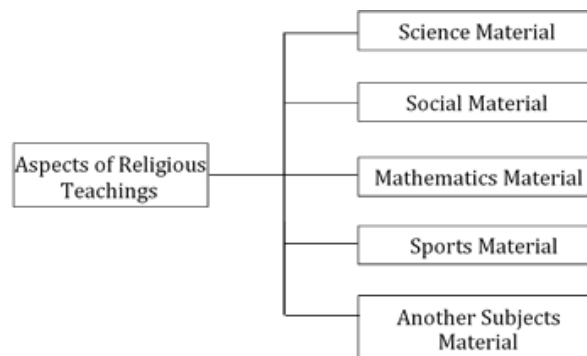


Figure 3: Integration of Islamic Religious Education into Subjects

Figure 3 above illustrates the segregation of subjects such as Science (IPA), Social Studies (IPS), Mathematics, and others, each addressed discretely. However, these subjects' content intersects with considerations of religious education within the discourse context. Thus, this pedagogical approach effectively employs contextual teaching and learning (CTL) strategies. Nevertheless, due to inconsistent implementation, it may be more accurately characterized as an instructional approach rather than a seamlessly integrated practice.

CTL involves activating student engagement through the integration of subjects, connecting lessons to real-life contexts, and promoting practical application in daily life. According to Wina Sanjaya (2013: 255), CTL emphasizes students' active participation in discovering and directly experiencing lessons, encouraging them to relate academic

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content to real-world scenarios and apply their learning in practical contexts. This approach offers genuine learning opportunities that deepen students' comprehension of empirical facts related to religion. Consequently, students internalize religious values, as observed by Hidayat & Syahidin (2019), which is manifested in their adherence to religious duties such as worship, obedience to divine commandments, and avoidance of proscriptions stipulated by religious teachings. Such manifestations of obedience are influenced by cultivated practices, including congregational Dhuha and Dhuhr prayers, as well as communal Quranic recitations (Achadah, Wahidmurni, & Yasin, 2022).

In educational settings, enhancing meaningful and contextual learning outcomes necessitates linking lessons to theological arguments supported by evidence from the al-Qur'an and al-Hadith (Nursyamsiyah, Komaryanti, & Halid, 2022). The meaningfulness of lessons in schools is gauged by students' comprehension of the subject matter and their ability to apply it in practical life situations. Additionally, lessons are deemed meaningful if they provide direct or indirect benefits to students or others. Contextual relevance implies that lessons are pertinent to current situations and conditions, particularly in students' lives. For instance, mathematics lessons in school become meaningful and contextual for students when they participate in activities such as contributing to mosque construction or school building projects.

Therefore, the frequency of students' engagement with the al-Qur'an plays a crucial role in supporting their learning. By reading, memorizing, and contemplating the meanings of its verses, students are encouraged to internalize these teachings in their daily lives. The impact of regular interaction with the al-Qur'an has been shown to enhance the spiritual atmosphere, nurturing individuals characterized by obedience, patience, and steadfastness (Saputra, Dylan, & Carmelo, 2023). This influence can begin early in childhood, as observed in the Masyithah Probolinggo Kindergarten, where young children accustomed to reading and memorizing the al-Qur'an exhibit these traits (Najiburrahman, Azizah, & Jazilurrahman, 2022). Similarly, in school environments, one direct impact of memorization habits is improved academic performance among students. As students memorize more verses from the al-Qur'an, their ability to absorb lessons from teachers also improves. This correlation can be attributed to the enhancement of students' focus and concentration through the practice of memorization.

The discussion underscores the implementation of an Islamic education paradigm within schools, wherein religious principles are integrated into subjects like Science to deepen understanding, reinforce beliefs, and promote adherence to religious teachings (Muhlisin & Syaifuddin, 2020). This approach advocates for the study of religion through scientific evidence, positing it as a means to enhance the comprehensive learning experience (Sahabuddin, Ahmad, & Alam, 2023). This educational framework bears resemblance to integrated thematic learning, albeit with distinct nuances in curriculum design and presentation. Integrated thematic learning organizes educational content around a central theme, incorporating sub-themes derived from diverse subjects that are interlinked with elements of religious teachings (Faisol & Raharjo, 2022).

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A model integrating religion in this manner is perceived to bridge gaps observed in religious education, which often emphasizes cognitive aspects at the expense of practical application in daily life Suhayib & Ansyari (2023). Nurdin (2020) asserts that this approach represents an endeavor to establish a holistic Islamic education paradigm, ensuring Islam's integration into all facets of life, including the educational process within schools.

### **Integration Process**

The learning process involves the systematic activities of planning, implementing, and evaluating education, as mandated by national education standards (Permedikbudristek No. 16 Tahun 2022, Article 2, Paragraph 2). However, in educational contexts, the integration of the learning process specifically pertains to the application of teaching methods. This integration focuses on how educators blend various instructional approaches both within and beyond traditional classroom settings. This amalgamation of diverse teaching methods is classified as blended learning, as defined by Alammery, Sheard, & Carbone (2014). Here, blended learning does not refer to the combination of face-to-face and online learning modalities but rather denotes the fusion of multiple instructional techniques with broader educational methodologies. According to Hrastinski (2019), blended learning involves the integration of two or more teaching methods. In this discussion, teaching methods are synonymous with educational methods, with the distinction intended to underscore the broader scope of educational methods. These methodologies aim to effect behavioral changes observable in religious practices and ethical behavior. When combined, these elements form an educational approach that guides teachers in their instructional practices. For example, in teaching a topic such as human reproduction in science, a teacher might utilize a lecture method or other instructional strategies. Additionally, by advising students to demonstrate filial piety towards their mothers, the teacher employs advice as an educational approach within the broader instructional framework.

To further emphasize this point, my observation of teachers' instructional methods commonly reveals the use of techniques such as lecturing, question-and-answer sessions, assignments, and group work. This observation is supported by interview findings from teachers, as outlined below:

The methods used, namely lectures, discussions, question and answer sessions, are teaching methods that have been used since ancient times until now. These methods are employed when delivering material or conducting lessons (Dw Indo, *Interview*, 2023).

Based on empirical observations and interviews with teachers, several significant observations emerge. Firstly, teachers predominantly utilize traditional teaching methods such as lectures, question-and-answer sessions, discussions, assignments, exercises, and group work within the classroom setting. Despite the theoretical absence of explicit mention of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) in their instructional strategies, practical observations and teacher interviews indicate its implicit integration,

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albeit not always methodically or consistently applied. This integration is notably observed in cross-disciplinary learning activities that intertwine subjects with religious education, fostering students' analytical and problem-solving abilities. Moreover, collaborative learning among students and coordination between teachers and caregivers outside the classroom are observed practices. Additionally, teachers often establish amicable relationships with students, particularly in informal settings beyond the school environment.

Secondly, teachers often employ educational methods beyond traditional classroom settings. These methods encompass imparting advice, narrating stories from Sirah or Islamic history, demonstrating exemplary behavior, and enforcing discipline. Moreover, teachers integrate these educational methods with instructional techniques during classroom activities.

The predominant teaching methods utilized by teachers include lecturing, question-and-answer sessions, discussions, group work, assignments, and exercises. This observation aligns with findings by Achruh, Rasyid, Nursalam, & Shabir (2021), which assert that theoretically, several commonly used instructional methods in schools, such as the lecture method, discussion method, demonstration method, insertion method, and wrap-up method, are deemed effective.

Lecturing emerges as the predominant instructional method, both independently and in combination with other methods. However, excessive reliance on lectures can potentially diminish student engagement. For elementary students, methods that incorporate playfulness and friendship often hold greater appeal. Group work is highlighted as particularly effective in capturing students' interest and fostering positive social attitudes (Sudarmika, Santyasa, & Divayana, 2020). Sociodrama and role-playing games are also viewed as engaging tools, particularly beneficial for enhancing students' communication and teamwork abilities. These activities are expected to cultivate students' social competence (Lorenzetti & Kruger, 2020). Furthermore, Sultani, Putri Silalahi, & Ali (2021) suggest employing methods like the talking stick and snowballing to stimulate Islamic thinking and active participation among students. Additionally, integrating quantum teaching methods can enhance collaborative thinking skills in Islamic Religious Education (Nahar, Suhendri, Zailani, & Hardivizon, 2022).

To maximize effectiveness, teachers should employ a combination of instructional methods. Ramayulis (2015) outlines several recommended combinations, such as combining lecture with question-and-answer sessions and assignments, or integrating lecture with discussion and assignments. Other effective combinations include incorporating lecture with problem-solving activities, demonstrations, experiments, sociodrama, exercises, and various forms of interactive sessions like discussions, assignments, and question-and-answer sessions. These combined approaches aim to foster engagement, critical thinking, and practical application among students, enriching the learning experience across different subjects, including Islamic Religious Education.

Educational methods encompass a variety of approaches, including advice, storytelling, exemplary behavior, and discipline. Advice serves to motivate students and

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caution them against undesirable behaviors while encouraging virtuous conduct. Typically, teachers offer advice both at the beginning and conclusion of lessons. Prior to commencing class, teachers impart motivational messages to stimulate students' learning drive, such as reminding them of their duty to attend school as entrusted by their parents. Advice also accompanies disciplinary actions, where reprimands function as both a form of punishment and guidance. The impact of advice is enhanced when reinforced with examples drawn from the stories of Prophets, companions, and righteous individuals, making it more resonant and relatable for students.

Exemplary behavior encompasses all actions and attitudes displayed by teachers as examples for students to emulate. Meanwhile, discipline serves as a method to regulate students' attitudes and behaviors within the framework of Islamic teachings. These educational methods are applied consistently outside of classroom learning situations and can also be integrated with methods used inside the classroom. Their primary objective, as articulated in the following interview, is to cultivate good manners and habits among students:

Habitual discipline in arriving and leaving school, discipline in performing religious practices, especially congregational prayers in the mosque, particularly for males, and the cultivation of manners in interactions, courtesy towards teachers and adults, manners in playing with peers, manners in speaking with others, manners in socializing with the opposite gender, and manners in dressing for Muslim boys and girls (Darso, Interview, 2023).

Educational methods play a crucial role in integrating the content of religious education, encompassing aspects such as creed (akidah), worship (ibadah), morals (akhlak), Islamic cultural history (tarikh), and the meanings of the al-Qur'an (Aripin & Nurdiansyah, 2022). Several schools have demonstrated the effectiveness of these methods in practice. Biantoro (2019) emphasizes the significant role of character development among students through methods including setting examples, habituation, advice, punishment, and rewards. Similarly, narratives, particularly those featuring the Prophets and companions, are instrumental in shaping students' character development, inspiring them to embody prophetic qualities (Sari, Solihati, & Fatayan, 2022). These methods collectively contribute to fostering a holistic educational environment that nurtures both religious understanding and ethical conduct among students.

The use of the exemplary method underscores teachers' roles as behavioral role models for students. Drawing from behavioristic psychology, which posits that human behavior is significantly influenced by stimuli triggering responses, as articulated in Pavlov's theory, and further elaborated by Skinner's emphasis on environmental influences driving stimulus-response dynamics (Nahar, 2016), it becomes evident that behavioral responses are reinforced by the social environment, particularly through examples set by teachers. By observing teachers' conduct, students encounter practical demonstrations of what they learn, facilitating the implementation of acquired knowledge. Through systematic training provided by teachers, students develop positive behaviors that eventually shape their personalities. Thus, the exemplary method not only

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fosters learning but also molds students' character through consistent modeling of desired behaviors in a conducive social environment.

In elementary education, both at the elementary and junior levels, exemplary behavior focuses primarily on personal morality, encompassing virtues such as honesty, discipline, enthusiasm for worship, trustworthiness, and responsibility (Indawati, Kartiko, & Suyitno, 2022). Similarly, teachers exemplify social morality, including social concern, through their interactions with students at school. Exemplification is pivotal to a teacher's effectiveness in education, as exemplary behavior can leave a lasting impact on students, particularly when teachers establish closeness with them. Building closeness involves fostering open communication between teachers and students, creating an environment conducive to mutual understanding (Hussin & Tamuri, 2019). In this context, teachers embody the curriculum and educational methods through their "hidden" selves, where educational goals and content are personified (Lukman et al., 2021). These goals and content become tangible and meaningful when demonstrated as exemplary behavior for students to emulate. Thus, teachers' personal embodiment of educational values and practices plays a crucial role in shaping students' moral and social development during their formative years.

Additionally, teachers also implement the method of imposing sanctions, commonly referred to as punishments. The types of sanctions typically administered by teachers are elucidated in the following interview:

I always give advice, role models in teaching. However, there are students who have low morals and often violate them. So usually they are punished, for example locked up so that they realize their mistakes and immediately correct them (Arif, Interview, 2023).

In education, sanctions are integral to other educational methods and are employed to discipline students in adopting personal and social moral habits. However, the implementation of sanctions must be balanced with the administration of rewards. Sanctions serve the purpose of maintaining discipline, while rewards are intended to motivate and encourage students Safitri, Mustadi, & Retnawati (2021). Together, these methods form a balanced approach to behavioral management in educational settings, aiming to foster positive character development and academic engagement among students.

Regarding the integration of these methods, Ramayulis (2015) describes it as an integrated approach in which teachers employ multiple teaching methods simultaneously. In the implementation of this method integration, the central role is directly attributed to the teacher. This emphasis is further highlighted by educators, as evidenced in the following excerpt from an interview:

Since teachers are the vanguard in the world of education. Therefore, teachers must have and master knowledge and understanding of religion so that they not only teach but also apply it in life and emphasize moral aspects more (Masro, Interview, 2023).



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The assertions made by the teacher regarding the two key competencies essential for all educators are as follows: 1) material competence, which necessitates a profound mastery of the subject matter being taught, and 2) methodological competence, which involves the adept use of various effective instructional strategies (PP Nomor 74 Tahun 2008, Pasal 3 ayat 7). These competencies are foundational to an educator's professional skill set, enabling them to deliver content comprehensively and facilitate meaningful learning experiences for students.

The capability of knowledge extends beyond subject expertise to encompass religious knowledge, facilitating the integration of religion into learning materials. Similarly, the ability to employ teaching methods involves not only the skill of application but also the capacity to integrate and innovate them to enhance engagement. Employing compelling, communicative, and enjoyable methods can render lessons captivating and readily embraced by learners, even when the content is inherently challenging (Achruh, Rasyid, Nursalam, & Usman, 2021). This capability, honed through education, training, and experience, underscores the significance of exploring how educators in schools can enhance their teaching prowess through continuous practice and application of their experiences.

## **CONCLUSION**

The curriculum structure of SMPIH (Islamic Junior High School) is centered around the al-Qur'an, with the government curriculum serving as its core and supplemented by local content and religious development. The integration of religious aspects into learning materials follows the connected integration model developed by Robin Fogarty and adapted by Muhaimin. This approach involves linking lessons to fundamental religious concepts: demonstrating the existence of Allah as the Creator, emphasizing Allah's omnipotence to inspire reverence and encourage fulfillment of duties, integrating teachings from the al-Qur'an and al-Hadith, and connecting religious teachings with real-life relevance. In the learning process, a variety of teaching methods are employed including lectures, Q&A sessions, group work, assignments, discussions, and sociodrama. These methods are complemented by educational strategies that emphasize role modeling, habituation, counseling, storytelling, and the enforcement of disciplinary measures. This comprehensive approach aims to foster both academic understanding and moral development among students, grounded in Islamic principles and educational best practices.

The combined impact of the curriculum format, integration model, and the diverse teaching and educational methods employed in classrooms is reflected in increased study time for students beyond regular school hours, necessitating residence in dormitories. Teachers are expected to possess extensive knowledge of religious teachings beyond their subject-specific insights. Additionally, religion teachers supplement classroom instruction with comprehensive lessons on various religious aspects such as aqidah (theology), fiqh (jurisprudence), sirah (prophetic biography), Arabic language, and

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Tahsin (Qur'anic recitation and pronunciation). This holistic approach aims to enrich students' understanding of religious principles and practices, fostering a deeper engagement with Islamic education both inside and outside the classroom.

This investigation delves into the structural format of curriculum content, the methodologies educators use to integrate religious elements into instructional materials, and the pedagogical approaches employed in lesson delivery. However, the study abstains from conducting a thorough analysis of teacher competencies and institutional culture, which are presumed to significantly impact the integration of religious content into the learning process. Therefore, further research focusing on these aspects is necessary to enhance the findings of the current study.

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