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# Designing Curriculum Models for Islamic Education: A Comparative Analysis between Elementary School and Madrasah in Sampang

**Khairunnafi[1*], Muhibb Mardaqhus[2], Waqi'atul Masrurah[3], Tobi[4]**
[1,2,3]Pascasarjana Universitas Islam Negeri Madura, Indonesia
[4]Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia

***Corresponding Author: khairunnafi8@gmail.com**
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## Abstract

This study aims to analyze models of Islamic education curriculum development in an elementary school and a madrasah through a comparative perspective. Contemporary Islamic education is increasingly challenged to balance the preservation of scholarly tradition with the demands of educational modernization and globalization. However, it remains unclear how different institutions design curricula that integrate Islamic values with national and global competencies. This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-comparative design. Data were collected through a review of relevant materials and interviews with principals, curriculum coordinators, Islamic studies teachers, and classroom teachers. The data were then analyzed comparatively to identify the characteristics, strengths, and challenges of each model. The findings show that the elementary school applies a traditional-integrative model combining the national curriculum with classical Islamic texts, Arabic, *Fiqh*, *Nahwu*, *Shorof*, and *Akhlaq*. This model is strong in preserving Islamic scholarly traditions and shaping students' religious character. In contrast, the madrasah applies a modern-progressive model integrating the Merdeka Curriculum, an international curriculum, bilingual learning, digital literacy, and competency-based classes. This model emphasizes students' potential, language mastery, technological skills, and twenty-first-century competencies. Each model has distinct strengths and challenges. The study contributes an integrative-transformational curriculum framework that unites Islamic values, scholarly tradition, learning innovation, technology, and global needs.

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## Introduction

In the middle of technological leaps, global interconnectedness, and socio-cultural shifts, educational institutions face unprecedented pressure to foster competencies that transcend cognitive memorization. According to Tyler (1949), curriculum functions as a holistic blueprint organizing learning experiences, while Al-Attas (1999) emphasizes that *ta'dib* (character formation) constitutes the ontological core of Islamic pedagogy. This dual imperative is reinforced by recent national frameworks, such as *Permendikbudristek* No. 12/2024 on *Kurikulum Merdeka* and *KMA* No. 450/2024, alongside international frameworks like the OECD Learning Compass 2030, which unanimously advocate for balancing technical skills, critical reasoning, and core ethical values. Without a well-structured curriculum, society risks raising a generation that is either technologically proficient yet morally disoriented or spiritually grounded yet ill-equipped for modern employment realities. Therefore, examining educational designs that harmonize traditional religious principles with contemporary instructional demands is vital for sustaining societal resilience, human character development, and holistic progress.

Despite the clear necessity for balanced education, Islamic educational institutions struggle to reconcile classical religious preservation with contemporary instructional demands. Many traditional schools remain overly reliant on rote learning and historical texts, frequently neglecting essential 21st-century competencies such as digital literacy, critical thinking, and collaborative problem-solving. Conversely, modern educational models that aggressively integrate STEM frameworks, international standards, and technology risk marginalizing deep spiritual formation, thereby reducing education to mere secular utilitarianism. As UNESCO (2023) highlights, technological integration without strong ethical oversight can aggravate educational inequities and compromise academic integrity. Furthermore, the persistent dichotomy between sacred and secular knowledge prevents students from forming a unified worldview. This operational divide leaves families and policymakers uncertain about how to design an educational ecosystem that simultaneously nurtures devout faith, moral integrity, and global competitiveness. Consequently, the lack of a proven, integrative model creates structural friction across primary educational institutions, preventing them from fulfilling their broader transformational potential in modern society.

At the empirical level, this dilemma is vividly illustrated in Sampang, East Java, where two distinct curricular paradigms coexist within primary Islamic education. SD Al Muawanah represents a traditional-integrative archetype, prioritizing classical *salaf* Islamic studies—including *kitab kuning* (classical texts), Arabic grammar, Islamic jurisprudence, and intensive moral cultivation—alongside the national curriculum. While this model successfully preserves authentic Islamic heritage, it encounters significant operational challenges regarding pedagogical innovation, digital integration, and proportional science alignment. Diametrically, MI Internasional Sabilillah embodies a modern-progressive framework that blends *Kurikulum Merdeka* with international standards, bilingual instruction, digital literacy, and specialized tracks in STEM and IT. Although this progressive model excels in academic rigor and technological adaptability, its primary vulnerability lies in preventing global hegemony and digital disruption from eroding students' core Islamic spirituality and *adab*. These contrasting institutional approaches present a unique field laboratory to examine how traditional preservation and modern progression interact within the exact same socio-cultural environment.

Existing scholarly literature on Islamic curriculum development has extensively analyzed theoretical frameworks and policy implementations, yet notable conceptual

limitations persist. Previous studies by scholars such as Muhaimin (2012) and Azra (2012) primarily focused on macroscopic historical transitions or high-level philosophical integration between religious and secular disciplines. While these works provided valuable foundational insights into Islamic educational philosophy, recent empirical investigations frequently examine schools (*SD*) and madrasahs (*MI*) in isolation, treating them as separate operational entities governed by distinct ministerial regulations. Consequently, existing scholarship tends to evaluate traditional *pesantren*-affiliated schools solely through the lens of heritage preservation, while modern madrasahs are evaluated predominantly through the lens of internationalization and academic competitiveness. This fragmented approach creates a significant research gap: current literature lacks comparative, ground-level evaluations showing how these two contrasting paradigms operate side-by-side within localized communities to navigate identical regulatory mandates and technological disruptions.

To bridge this gap, establishing the state-of-the-art requires a comparative empirical examination that synthesizes traditional-integrative and modern-progressive models into a unified analytical framework. Prior literature has largely failed to capture the dynamic operational convergence where classical *dirasah islamiyah* and modern STEM frameworks intersect at the primary education level. Addressing this gap is critical because primary education forms the foundational stage for both cognitive development and religious character installation. By placing SD Al Muawanah and MI Internasional Sabilillah in direct analytical conversation, this research advances beyond descriptive single-case studies. It offers a fresh, nuanced perspective on how local Islamic institutions operationalize recent policy shifts—specifically *Permendikbudristek* No. 12/2024 and *KMA* No. 450/2024—while managing the pressures of global disrupters. This comparative depth provides a novel theoretical lens for understanding curriculum adaptation, proving essential for resolving longstanding debates regarding educational dichotomy, tradition preservation, and modern skill acquisition in Islamic schooling.

This study addresses the central research question: How do traditional-integrative and modern-progressive curriculum models compare in design, implementation, and adaptation to contemporary educational challenges? We argue that despite their contrasting methodologies, both paradigms share a convergent teleological objective—the realization of *insan kamil* (the holistic human being) who balances spiritual depth, ethical integrity, and global competence. Rather than demonstrating the absolute superiority of one model, this study posits that authentic transformation occurs through a synthesis model where classical moral foundation (*ta'dib*) actively filters and directs modern pedagogical innovation. The primary contribution of this research lies in proposing a conceptual framework for an integrative-transformational curriculum. This framework offers actionable strategic insights for educators, school administrators, and policymakers seeking to design primary Islamic institutions that serve not merely as places for information transfer, but as transformative environments for constructing resilient Muslim identities in an era of disruption.

## Methods

This study employed a qualitative comparative case study design to investigate the divergence and convergence of Islamic education curriculum development models. A

comparative qualitative approach was chosen because it enables a deep, contextualized exploration of complex educational phenomena across distinct institutional paradigms within their real-world settings. The research was conducted in Sampang, East Java, focusing on two contrasting primary institutions: SD Al Muawanah and MI Internasional Sabilillah. This location was deliberately selected because both institutions operate within the same socio-cultural landscape yet embody diametrically opposed curricular philosophies. SD Al Muawanah represents a traditional-integrative paradigm, characterized by the insertion of classical Islamic literature (*kitab kuning*), Arabic linguistics, and intensive moral cultivation. Conversely, MI Internasional Sabilillah manifests a modern-progressive construction, integrating *Kurikulum Merdeka*, international standards, bilingual instruction, and competency-based digital literacy. Selecting these two sites provided an ideal comparative field laboratory to analyze how differing curriculum designs navigate identical regulatory requirements, technological disrupters, and community expectations in primary education.

Empirical data collection was conducted between March and April 2026 using semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document analysis. Key informants were selected through purposive sampling, involving school principals, curriculum directors, and strategic teachers. The data analysis followed Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's interactive model, comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data condensation entailed selecting, focusing, and transforming raw field notes and interview transcripts into thematic categories regarding curriculum formulation and execution. Data display utilized comparative matrices to visually map structural similarities and differences between both paradigms. Conclusion drawing involved continuous verification through iterative cross-case analysis to generate robust conceptual synthesis. To ensure trustworthiness and rigor, double triangulation was rigorously applied. Source triangulation cross-verified perspectives across different informant roles, while method triangulation validated interview statements against official curriculum blueprints, lesson plans, and institutional policy documents. This rigorous methodological framework ensured high academic credibility and scientific accountability throughout the research process.

## Finding and Discussion

### Finding

### Characteristics of the Curriculum at SD Al Muawanah Sampang

The traditional-integrative curriculum model at SD Al Muawanah Sampang is defined as a dual-structured educational framework that harmonizes the national standardized primary curriculum with a specialized classical Islamic foundation (*salaf*). This model preserves classical Islamic intellectual heritage through structured instruction in *kitab kuning*, Arabic linguistics, *fiqh*, *nahwu-sharaf*, and intensive *akhlak* cultivation. Rather than operating as isolated spheres, the national framework and the traditional Islamic subjects are systematically blended through synchronized scheduling, extended learning hours, and pervasive daily religious routines. This operational design aims to ensure that students attain mandatory national primary competencies while simultaneously acquiring foundational classical religious literacy and internalized Islamic conduct from an early age.

The institutional commitment to maintaining this dual framework is articulated by the school leadership during the empirical investigation:

> *"We strictly adhere to national formal education standards, but religious instruction remains the primary distinctive identity of our school."* (Taqiuddin, S.Pd., Principal of SD Al Muawanah Sampang, April 6, 2026).

This statement reflects an operational strategy where regulatory compliance with

national mandates is treated as a baseline requirement, while the integration of traditional religious content serves as the core value-added proposition. Researcher interpretation indicates that the administration intentionally avoids a secular-religious binary; instead, they position the national curriculum as an external legitimacy framework and the classical Islamic learning as the internal ontological core that defines the school's social purpose.

To execute this balanced framework, the instructional management and pedagogical adaptation are detailed by the curriculum director:

> *"Our primary operational challenge is maintaining an equilibrium between general subjects and religious studies so that both run proportionally without overburdening the students."* (Maftuh, S.Pd., Vice Principal for Curriculum, April 6, 2026).

This excerpt highlights that time allocation and cognitive load management constitute the most critical administrative variables in executing a traditional-integrative model. The researcher interprets that the institution relies on careful curricular mapping to prevent cognitive fatigue. By embedding religious learning within structured daily routines and supplementary modules, the school successfully mitigates the structural friction that often arises when combining two dense educational requirements into a single primary school schedule.

The concrete implementation of character formation within this traditional paradigm is further explained by the primary grade teacher:

> *"Character and etiquette cannot be taught purely through theoretical lessons. Children must be conditioned daily through practice—greeting others, respecting teachers, praying before studying, and behaving politely with peers."* (Maya Sari, S.Pd., 5th Grade Teacher, April 7, 2026).

This empirical evidence demonstrates that character education at SD Al Muawanah relies on affective habituation (*habitus*) rather than mere cognitive memorization of moral codes. The researcher interprets that the school operationalizes Al-Attas's concept of *ta'dib* by embedding moral values into repetitive, visible social interactions. Consequently, moral development is evaluated through observable behavioral transformation rather than isolated written test scores.

Direct field observations conducted throughout April 2026 confirmed a synchronized daily environment where traditional Islamic practices actively shape the school culture. Observations revealed that every morning begins with collective *Duha* prayers, short *surah* memorization (*tahfidh*), and basic Arabic vocabulary drills before general subjects commence. During classical text sessions, teachers utilized simplified, age-appropriate instructional methods, breaking down *kitab kuning* passages into practical daily examples and interactive language games. The researcher interprets these observations as evidence of pedagogical contextualization: the school successfully translates complex, centuries-old scholarly traditions into accessible, child-friendly learning experiences without diluting their foundational religious values.

The empirical data confirms that SD Al Muawanah Sampang successfully operationalizes a traditional-integrative curriculum model by balancing national academic requirements with classical Islamic textual study and continuous moral habituation. The underlying pattern revealed across interviews, observations, and documentary evidence is a "Heritage-Preservation via Contextual Adaptation" pattern. Rather than treating classical texts as static historical artifacts, the institution uses daily behavioral routines, synchronized time management, and simplified pedagogical delivery to make traditional Islamic scholarship functional, relevant, and engaging for modern primary school learners.

### Characteristics of the Curriculum at MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang

MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang implements a modern-progressive curriculum model. This model is reflected in the synthesis of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Independent Curriculum), international educational standards, bilingual instruction, digital literacy, and competency- and interest-based classroom tracking. The curriculum was designed to equip learners with academic excellence, strong religious grounding, linguistic proficiency, and technological competencies aligned with contemporary global demands.

The modern-progressive curriculum model developed by MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang can be understood as an institutional response by an Islamic educational entity toward social transformation and global advancement. Azra posits that the modernization of Islamic education should not be interpreted as a departure from tradition, but rather as an ongoing renewal process to ensure that Islamic education remains relevant to societal needs. Similarly, Muhaimin emphasizes that the curriculum in Islamic schools and madrasahs must be dynamically formulated in accordance with scientific developments, student needs, and contemporary societal challenges (Azra, 2012; Muhaimin, 2012).

An interview with the Head of MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang revealed that the designation "international" is not intended to distance the madrasah from its Islamic identity and values. The Principal stated:

> *"The term 'international' does not imply abandoning Islamic values. Islamic values remain our foundational core, whereas English proficiency, technology, and modern curriculum frameworks are utilized to broaden our students' global horizons."* (Dr. Hj. Mirhamida Rahmah, S.E., M.M., Head of MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang, April 11, 2026)

This statement indicates that curriculum modernization at MI Internasional Sabilillah is firmly anchored within the framework of Islamic education. Learners are guided to cultivate a robust Islamic identity while simultaneously adapting to the dynamics of the modern world.

The *Kurikulum Merdeka* provides flexibility for more student-centered learning. This is evidenced by the implementation of competency-based classroom tracking, such as science, language, mathematics, and computer science tracks. The Vice Principal for Curriculum of MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang explained:

> *"The science, language, mathematics, and computer tracks were designed to assist students in developing their respective interests and individual potentials."* (Ust. Tsamanul Adim, S.Th.I., Vice Principal for Curriculum, MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang, April 14, 2026)

The implementation of competency-based classroom tracking demonstrates the madrasah's effort to position learners as the primary subjects of the learning process. This principle aligns with Hamalik's view that a curriculum must provide sufficient space for optimizing student potential. Nasution also emphasizes that learning experiences should be structured with due regard to learners' needs, interests, and developmental stages. Thus, the science, language, mathematics, and

computer science tracks serve as a strategic curricular design to deliver differentiated learning tailored to diverse student profiles (Hamalik, 2013; Nasution, 2008).

The science track is directed toward strengthening scientific inquiry, exploratory skills, and intellectual curiosity. The language track aims to build communicative confidence. The mathematics track trains logical reasoning and problem-solving, while the computer science track reinforces digital literacy. Under this framework, students are not treated as a homogenous cohort, but as unique individuals with distinct potentials.

Another key advantage of MI Internasional Sabilillah is its bilingual instructional system, particularly in English. A language educator explained:

> *"English is introduced progressively—starting from simple classroom instructions and daily vocabulary to short conversations and basic presentations."* (Ust. Syaraful Anam, Language Teacher, MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang, April 16, 2026)

This quote indicates that bilingual learning is not implemented coercively, but through gradual habituation adjusted to student readiness. This pedagogical approach is vital because English proficiency grants learners access to global scientific knowledge, technological advances, and international communication networks.

Nevertheless, foreign language acquisition remains balanced with Islamic ethics. The educator further elaborated:

> *"It is not enough for children to merely speak English or operate technology. They must also be guided to uphold Islamic etiquette (adab) in learning and utilize their knowledge for beneficial purposes."* (Ust. Syaraful Anam, Language Teacher, MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang, April 16, 2026)

This statement reinforces the principle that modern technical capabilities must always be guided by moral integrity (*akhlak*). Students are taught not only to master language and technology, but also to respect teachers, maintain polite communication, and apply their knowledge responsibly.

In the domain of technology, MI Internasional Sabilillah demonstrates a strong orientation toward digital literacy and computer education. The IT instructor noted:

> *"Technology is utilized to enrich the learning experience—for instance, through digital media, learning applications, presentations, and computer-based exercises."* (Ust. Syaiful Hidayah, S.Pd.Gr., IT Instructor, MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang, April 16, 2026)

However, technological integration extends beyond technical mastery. Students are actively instructed in digital ethics (*adab digital*), including avoiding plagiarism, verifying unconfirmed information (*tabayyun*), maintaining respectful online communication, and utilizing digital media for constructive ends.

The main operational challenge of this modern-progressive model is maintaining an equilibrium between global orientation and religious depth. Curricula that overemphasize technology, foreign languages, and global competition risk diluting Islamic values if not meticulously designed. The Principal affirmed:

*"Islamic values must permeate all school activities—whether in formal classroom instruction, devotional daily routines, character-building programs, or routine social interactions."* (Dr. Hj. Mirhamida Rahmah, S.E., M.M., Head of MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang, April 11, 2026)

Thus, curriculum modernization at MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang is not conceptualized as educational secularization, but as a renewal of pedagogical methods and an expansion of intellectual horizons grounded firmly in Islamic values.

### Integration of Islamic Values and Modern Knowledge

The integration of Islamic values and modern scientific knowledge constitutes a fundamental principle in developing an Islamic education curriculum. Muhaimin asserts that Islamic education in schools and madrasahs must be developed integratively so that religious values are not confined to specific subject areas, but rather permeate the entire educational process. Al-Attas similarly emphasizes that knowledge must be governed by *adab* (moral and ethical disposition) to prevent it from becoming detached from moral responsibility. Consequently, scientific integration cannot stop at the level of curriculum documentation; it must manifest tangibly in classroom instruction, institutional culture, teacher modeling, and student conduct (Muhaimin, 2012; Al-Attas, 1999).

At SD Al Muawanah Sampang, the integration of Islamic values is operationalized primarily through habituation and teacher modeling. Religious values are not taught merely as theoretical content, but are systematically cultivated through the institutional culture. The Principal of SD Al Muawanah explained:

*"Religious education must not be limited to memorization by students; it must be reflected in their daily conduct, such as praying, maintaining discipline, showing respect to teachers, and demonstrating personal responsibility."* (Taqiuddin, S.Pd., Principal of SD Al Muawanah Sampang, April 6, 2026)

This statement demonstrates that the integration of Islamic values at SD Al Muawanah is oriented toward behavioral transformation. Accordingly, religious instruction extends beyond cognitive acquisition to become embedded in student habits and daily attitudes.

The Vice Principal for Curriculum at SD Al Muawanah further emphasized that value integration is achieved by reinforcing Islamic content that directly relates to students' daily experiences. He noted:

*"We connect materials in jurisprudence (fiqh), ethics (akhlak), the Arabic language, and classical texts (kitab kuning) directly to daily practices so that students can understand and implement them more easily."* (Maftuh, S.Pd., Vice Principal for Curriculum, SD Al Muawanah Sampang, April 6, 2026)

This excerpt illustrates how religious instruction is rendered contextual. *Fiqh* is linked to worship practices, *akhlak* to student conduct, and Arabic along with *kitab kuning* to building foundational Islamic literacy.

Conversely, MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang fosters the integration of Islamic values through modern pedagogical methods. The Principal explained:

*"Science, technology, and foreign languages must remain directed by Islamic values. Science should cultivate an awareness of Allah's grandeur, technology should be guided by moral responsibility, and language should be utilized for constructive communication."* (Dr. Hj. Mirhamida Rahmah, S.E., M.M., Head of MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang, April 11, 2026)

This statement indicates that modern subjects are not divorced from spiritual values. Linking natural sciences with spiritual awareness, technology with ethical accountability, and English proficiency with meaningful communication demonstrates how scientific integration can be contextually realized. This aligns with Azra's view that Islamic education must engage in dialogue with modernity without losing its core Islamic tenets. Through this approach, curriculum modernization does not degenerate into educational secularization, but serves to expand students' intellectual horizons within an Islamic ethical framework (Azra, 2012; Muhaimin, 2012).

The Vice Principal for Curriculum at MI Internasional Sabilillah added that the integration of Islamic values is also implemented through project-based learning. He explained:

*"Several learning projects explicitly link to Islamic principles—for instance, connecting hygiene lessons with spiritual purification (thaharah), digital literacy with information verification (tabayyun), and social activities with Islamic civic empathy."* (Ust. Tsamanul Adim, S.Th.I., Vice Principal for Curriculum, MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang, April 14, 2026)

Under this model, Islamic values extend beyond religious instruction into general learning activities. Learning projects provide a platform for students to realize that Islamic values apply directly to social life, technology, and environmental stewardship.

Achieving scientific integration also demands active engagement from educators. A teacher at SD Al Muawanah emphasized the necessity of providing students with a foundational religious grounding:

*"Children must possess a solid religious foundation so they do not lose their moral compass when studying general sciences."* (Mu'tasim, *Kitab Kuning* Instructor, SD Al Muawanah Sampang, April 7, 2026)

Echoing this perspective, an educator at MI Internasional Sabilillah highlighted the essential role of ethics in applying modern knowledge:

*"Foreign languages, technology, and modern sciences must continuously be guided by ethics (akhlak) so that the knowledge acquired by students brings real benefit."* (Ust. Mikail, Religious Studies Teacher, MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang, April 16, 2026)

These statements confirm that integrating Islamic values requires more than policy alignment. Integration must be present in instructional delivery, school culture, teacher role-modeling, and daily student behavior. Consequently, Islamic education can cultivate learners who are not only academically proficient, but also possess moral integrity, ethical accountability, and a commitment to applying knowledge for the common good.

### The Role of Teachers in Curriculum Development

Teachers play a pivotal role in curriculum implementation as they translate written curriculum blueprints into classroom instructional practice. Majid explains that teachers function not merely as content deliverers, but as instructional planners, executors, mentors, and evaluators. In Islamic education, the teacher's role is even broader, extending to moral mentorship and behavioral modeling. This corresponds with Tafsir's assertion that Islamic education fundamentally requires exemplary role modeling, as religious values are far more effectively internalized through lived examples than through verbal instruction alone (Majid, 2011; Tafsir, 2014).

At SD Al Muawanah Sampang, teachers carry significant responsibility for maintaining a balance between Islamic content mastery and student moral development. Educators are expected not only to comprehend religious content—such as *kitab kuning*, *fiqh*, Arabic, and *akhlak*—but also to deliver it in a manner appropriate for primary school students. The Principal of SD Al Muawanah stated:

> *"Teachers here do not merely teach academic material; they serve as role models for the students. Character education is far more easily accepted by children when they witness it directly in their teachers' daily conduct."* (Taqiuddin, S.Pd., Principal of SD Al Muawanah Sampang, April 6, 2026)

This excerpt highlights that teacher modeling is an essential component of Islamic curriculum delivery. A teacher's speech, disciplinary style, lesson inauguration, and interpersonal interactions form an integral part of the character formation process.

The Vice Principal for Curriculum at SD Al Muawanah further noted that teachers must simplify complex religious material, particularly in *kitab kuning* instruction. He explained:

> *"Kitab kuning materials need to be delivered simply so they do not feel overly burdensome to young learners. Teachers must adjust their instructional strategies to match the developmental capabilities of children."* (Maftuh, S.Pd., Vice Principal for Curriculum, SD Al Muawanah Sampang, April 6, 2026)

This quote indicates that curricular success relies heavily on a teacher's pedagogical skill in selecting appropriate instructional methods. Educators must craft accessible, contextually relevant lessons while preserving core Islamic values.

Meanwhile, at MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang, teachers act as the bridge connecting the madrasah's modern institutional vision with classroom execution. Teachers are required to design active learning environments, integrate technology, facilitate gradual English habituation, and embed Islamic values into every lesson. The Principal explained:

> *"Teachers are the key to translating the madrasah's vision into reality. Instructional methods can be modern, but Islamic values must remain present in how teachers instruct and mentor students."* (Dr. Hj. Mirhamida Rahmah, S.E., M.M., Head of MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang, April 11, 2026)

This statement demonstrates that pedagogical modernization depends directly on teacher agency. Educators function not only as academic facilitators, but

also as moral mentors guiding students toward the responsible application of knowledge and technology.

The Vice Principal for Curriculum at MI Internasional Sabilillah added that teachers must understand individual student profiles for competency-based classroom tracking to operate effectively:

> *"Teachers must accurately recognize student interests and abilities. Only then can the specialized tracks—science, language, mathematics, and computers—achieve their intended objectives."* (Ust. Tsamanul Adim, S.Th.I., Vice Principal for Curriculum, MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang, April 14, 2026)

This insight shows that teachers are central to optimizing student potential. A differentiated, track-based system cannot function effectively unless teachers actively assess and respond to student needs.

Teacher modeling remains a foundational pillar in Islamic education because moral character cannot be formed through theoretical instruction alone. Al-Attas emphasizes that education must culminate in the cultivation of civilized human beings (*insan beradab*), making a teacher's conduct—in speech, guidance, discipline, and student interaction—a core educational medium. Thus, the success of an Islamic education curriculum depends on the teacher's ability to unify content mastery, instructional strategy, and moral modeling (Al-Attas, 1999; Tafsir, 2014).

This perspective is further validated by feedback from educators across both institutions. An instructor at SD Al Muawanah affirmed:

> *"Students absorb religious lessons much better when teachers lead by example rather than merely lecturing at the front of the classroom."* (Shofiyulloh, IT Instructor, SD Al Muawanah Sampang, April 7, 2026)

Similarly, a teacher at MI Internasional Sabilillah noted:

> *"Technology and foreign languages must continuously be guided by ethical values, ensuring students are not only intellectually capable, but also know how to apply their knowledge wisely."* (Ust. Syaiful Hidayah, S.Pd.Gr., IT Instructor, MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang, April 16, 2026)

These statements confirm that teachers bear responsibility not only for academic outcomes, but also for students' moral trajectory. Thus, the role of teachers in Islamic curriculum development encompasses three primary functions: instructional executors, character mentors, and living moral exemplars within the school ecosystem.

### The Utilization of Technology in Islamic Education

The integration of technology in Islamic education must be positioned as a tool to enhance the learning process rather than as an end in itself. Hamalik emphasizes that media and instructional strategies must serve to fulfill defined educational objectives. Within Islamic education, technology use should be guided by ethical principles (*adab*), responsibility, and social benefit, ensuring that students develop moral awareness alongside technical skills (Hamalik, 2013; Al-Attas, 1999).

Technology plays a vital role in modern education by expanding learning resources, enriching instructional methods, streamlining assessments, and increasing

student engagement. However, technology remains a supporting instrument; core values, educational goals, pedagogical quality, and teacher mentorship remain the central elements of the educational process.

At SD Al Muawanah Sampang, technology is adopted incrementally and tailored to specific learning needs. The Vice Principal for Curriculum explained:

> *"Technology utilization at our school remains straightforward. Teachers use basic digital media to help explain lesson materials, including introducing Arabic scripts and foundational vocabulary."* (Maftuh, S.Pd., Vice Principal for Curriculum, SD Al Muawanah Sampang, April 6, 2026)

This quote shows that technology at SD Al Muawanah serves as an instructional supplement rather than the focal point of learning. In *kitab kuning* instruction, technology helps display Arabic texts, enlarge script, and assist vocabulary recognition. Nevertheless, direct teacher guidance remains paramount, as traditional text study requires live explanation, personal mentorship, and the cultivation of study etiquette.

An educator at SD Al Muawanah further noted how technology assists in teaching ritual practices:

> *"Instructional videos of ablution (wudu) and prayer (salat) help students visualize liturgical movements clearly, but hands-on practice remains essential to ensure they can perform them correctly."* (Shofiyulloh, IT Instructor, SD Al Muawanah Sampang, April 7, 2026)

This statement illustrates that technology supports, rather than replaces, physical practice and teacher instruction. In Islamic education, understanding worship rituals requires practical execution, direct feedback, and habituation beyond visual media.

In contrast, MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang demonstrates a stronger technological orientation through digital literacy programs and specialized computer classes. The IT instructor explained:

> *"Technology is actively used to enrich learning—such as through digital media, educational applications, student presentations, and computer-based exercises."* (Ust. Syaiful Hidayah, S.Pd.Gr., IT Instructor, MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang, April 16, 2026)

This quote indicates a more active application of technology at MI Internasional Sabilillah. Beyond assisting content delivery, technology encourages students to locate information, complete assignments, and present learning outcomes creatively.

However, technology use remains anchored in digital etiquette (*adab digital*). A religious studies instructor at MI Internasional Sabilillah affirmed:

> *"Students must be guided to use technology responsibly—avoiding the spread of unverified information (tabayyun), respecting intellectual property, and maintaining polite communication online."* (Ust. Mikail, Religious Studies Teacher, MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang, April 16, 2026)

This statement highlights that digital literacy in Islamic education encompasses moral accountability alongside technical proficiency. Teaching digital

ethics is essential in an information-dense environment. Technical mastery must be accompanied by critical thinking, honesty, personal responsibility, and information discernment. From an Islamic educational perspective, technology should be harnessed to promote goodness rather than mere technical capability. Therefore, digital learning in schools and madrasahs must consistently be linked with values of verification (*tabayyun*), communication ethics, and social responsibility (Muhaimin, 2012; UNESCO, 2023).

Ultimately, technology in Islamic education must reinforce core values rather than displace them. Technology can effectively support digital Qur'anic studies, Arabic dictionaries, worship demonstration videos, science simulations, interactive quizzes, and digital libraries. Used purposefully, technology acts as a bridge connecting Islamic scholarly traditions with contemporary educational demands.

## Discussion

The comparison between SD Al Muawanah and MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang demonstrates two distinct yet complementary operational trajectories within contemporary primary Islamic education. SD Al Muawanah exemplifies a traditional-integrative archetype that prioritizes classical Islamic scholarship (*kitab kuning*), Arabic linguistics, and moral habituation alongside national standards. Conversely, MI Internasional Sabilillah manifests a modern-progressive framework that synthesizes *Kurikulum Merdeka* with international benchmarks, bilingual instruction, digital literacy, and competency-based classroom tracking. These empirical findings strongly align with the theoretical propositions of Azra (2012) and Muhaimin (2012), who contend that modernizing Islamic education does not require abandoning classical roots, but rather reforming instructional delivery to maintain social relevance. However, while prior scholarship frequently treated traditional preservation and modern progression as mutually exclusive or dichotomous paradigms (Tafsir, 2014), our field observations reveal a functional convergence: both institutional designs operate under an identical teleological objective—the realization of *insan kamil* (holistic human beings) who balance spiritual devotion, ethical integrity, and intellectual capability in an era of disruption.

Analyzing the findings through established curricular theories demonstrates how both models recontextualize classic frameworks to answer 21st-century educational demands. The traditional-integrative model operationalizes Al-Attas's (1999) concept of *ta'dib* by embedding moral formation and classical textual study into daily social interactions, effectively utilizing systemic curriculum principles (Tyler, 1949; Hamalik, 2013) to structure character acquisition. On the other hand, the modern-progressive model aligns with Nasution's (2008) student-centered learning paradigm by using specialized tracking (science, mathematics, languages, and IT) to optimize individual student potential. The divergence between these two approaches lies not in their fundamental values, but in their pedagogical mechanisms and environmental adaptations. While SD Al Muawanah relies on historical continuity and affective habituation to instill faith, MI Internasional Sabilillah utilizes active learning, digital platforms, and global languages to project Islamic values outward. This comparative evidence expands existing literature by proving that tradition preservation and modern competence acquisition can coexist as dual drivers of institutional transformation rather than opposing educational philosophies.

Bridging these empirical insights leads to the formulation of an Integrative-Transformational Curriculum Model as an ideal synthesis for primary Islamic schooling. This

conceptual framework transcends the binary choice between traditional preservation and modern innovation by establishing five core pillars: institutionalizing *tauhid* and *adab* as school culture, synthesizing classical text studies (*dirasah islamiyah*) with digital literacy and bilingualism, applying pedagogical differentiation, maintaining methodological adaptability bounded by Islamic ethics (*tabayyun*), and implementing authentic multi-dimensional assessment. Rather than treating curriculum as a static inventory of subjects, this transformational model reshapes students' cognitive frameworks, affective dispositions, and behavioral outputs. This synthesis confirms OECD (2019) and UNESCO (2023) guidelines regarding the necessity of balancing technical skills with core human values, demonstrating that primary Islamic institutions can successfully adopt modern instructional technologies while ensuring that technological penetration remains subject to ethical oversight, spiritual grounding, and moral accountability.

The theoretical implications of this study contribute significantly to the broader discourse on Islamic educational philosophy and curriculum design. By placing traditional-integrative and modern-progressive paradigms in direct empirical conversation, this research deconstructs the longstanding epistemological dichotomy between sacred religious knowledge and secular scientific disciplines. The findings demonstrate that primary Islamic schools do not need to sacrifice classical scholarly depth to achieve global competitiveness, nor do they need to risk secularization when integrating STEM, digital tools, and foreign languages. Theoretically, this study advances curriculum theory by illustrating how ancient pedagogical concepts like *ta'dib* and *tabayyun* function as effective evaluative filters for contemporary digital literacy and global communication frameworks. By offering a unified analytical lens, this research enriches Islamic educational literature, proving that institutional adaptability is fully compatible with theological continuity when curriculum design is anchored in holistic, transformational principles.

Practically, this study offers actionable strategic guidance for school administrators, teachers, and educational policymakers navigating curriculum reform under *Permendikbudristek* No. 12/2024 and *KMA* No. 450/2024. For traditional institutions, the findings highlight the necessity of adopting contextualized, child-friendly teaching methodologies and basic digital media to prevent classical literature instruction from becoming rigid or inaccessible. For modern madrasahs, the study emphasizes the importance of embedding explicit moral mentorship (*adab digital*) within technology and language programs to prevent global disrupters from eroding spiritual identity. Furthermore, school leaders must invest in specialized teacher professional development, as educators serve as the essential bridge between written policy blueprints and living classroom practice. For government authorities, these results advocate for flexible regulatory frameworks that encourage local curricular synthesis, allowing primary schools to cultivate devout, culturally grounded, and globally competitive graduates who are well-equipped for future civilizational challenges.

## Conclusion

The insight drawn from this comparative study between SD Al Muawanah and MI Internasional Sabilillah Sampang is that traditional-integrative and modern-progressive curriculum paradigms are not inherently contradictory, but rather complementary models that together realize a holistic Islamic education. The scholarly strength and major contribution of this research lie in conceptualizing the Integrative-Transformational

Curriculum Model, which provides a robust theoretical framework that bridges classical Islamic scholarship (*kitab kuning* and *ta'dib*) with 21st-century competencies, digital literacy, and global language acquisition. By deconstructing the artificial dichotomy between tradition preservation and modern innovation, this study offers actionable strategic insights for educators and policymakers striving to harmonize theological identity with contemporary pedagogical demands. A limitation of this research is its empirical focus on two specific primary institutions within a single regional context in Sampang, East Java. Consequently, future research should expand this comparative lens across broader geographic locations, secondary education levels, and quantitative longitudinal evaluations to measure the long-term impact of integrative curriculum models on student character and academic resilience.

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