

Integration of Islamic Religious Education Curriculum with the Independent Curriculum: A Framework for Holistic, Inclusive and Responsive Education

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ABSTRACT. The integration of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) with the Independent Curriculum has emerged as a strategic approach to developing holistic, inclusive, and adaptive education in Indonesia. This study aims to analyze the concept of integrating the IRE curriculum with the Independent Curriculum, identify existing integration models, and formulate a framework that supports character development and religious moderation. A narrative literature review was employed by analyzing 25 relevant sources, including scientific journal articles, books, and official educational policy documents published between 2021 and 2026. Data were examined through thematic categorization, content analysis, and conceptual synthesis. The findings reveal that curriculum integration promotes contextual, collaborative, and student-centered learning while strengthening character education, critical thinking skills, tolerance, and religious moderation. The integrated curriculum also facilitates the development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor competencies through holistic learning experiences. Furthermore, it contributes to creating inclusive and adaptive educational environments that respond effectively to contemporary social and educational challenges. The study concludes that integrating Islamic Religious Education with the Independent Curriculum provides a strategic framework for enhancing the quality and relevance of Islamic education in Indonesia. Future research should focus on examining the practical implementation and effectiveness of this integration in schools and madrasahs.

Keywords: *Islamic Religious Education (IRE), independent curriculum, curriculum integration, character education, religious moderation*

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INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia encourages the development of learning that is holistic, inclusive, and responsive to students' needs (Syahrir et al., 2024). In this context, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) has a strategic role in shaping students' character, morality, and attitudes of religious moderation. Holistic learning emphasizes the development of cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects of students, while inclusive and responsive learning ensures equal participation and adapts learning to diverse social and cultural background (Sari, 2023) (Mustoip, 2023) (Yunus, V., Zakso, A., Priyadi, A.T., Hartoyo, 2023). Along with increasing social challenges such as intolerance, radicalism, discrimination, and moral degradation, strengthening religious moderation through education has become increasingly important. Religious moderation promotes tolerance, balance, and harmonious social relations in multicultural societies (Akhmadi, 2019). Therefore, integrating the IRE curriculum with the

Independent Curriculum is considered an important step toward creating education that is relevant to contemporary needs and capable of producing students with strong character, critical thinking skills, and inclusive attitudes (Halim et al., 2023) (Shobirin et al., 2025).

Previous studies have shown that the Independent Curriculum provides significant opportunities for developing active, flexible, and character-oriented learning (Sirait et al., 2024) (Anggini et al., 2024). Nevertheless, studies discussing the integration model between the Islamic Religious Education curriculum and the Independent Curriculum remain limited and generally descriptive in nature. Most existing research only examines the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education learning without systematically explaining the forms of curriculum integration, development principles, and implementation frameworks applicable in the context of Islamic education. In fact, a systematic integration model is essential to ensure that Islamic values are aligned with the objectives of the Independent Curriculum in promoting inclusive, humanistic, and relevant education in accordance with contemporary developments. However, previous studies mostly discuss the implementation of the Independent Curriculum or Islamic Religious Education separately, while studies focusing on their systematic integration remain limited. In addition, there is still a lack of discussion regarding integration models and frameworks that can support holistic, inclusive, and responsive learning in Islamic education. Based on these issues, this study aims to analyze the integration of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum with the Independent Curriculum concept and to identify strategies that can support the development of adaptive and character-based education in Indonesia.

Based on these issues, this study focuses on how the integration of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum with the Independent Curriculum concept can be implemented to create holistic, inclusive, and responsive education. This study aims to analyze the concept of integrating Islamic Religious Education with the Independent Curriculum, identify possible integration models, and formulate a systematic integration framework for the development of Islamic education in Indonesia. The findings of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of Islamic education curriculum studies and provide practical recommendations for educators, schools, and policymakers in implementing Islamic Religious Education learning that is relevant to modern educational demands.

METHOD

This study employed a literature review approach using a narrative review design to analyze the integration of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum with the Independent Curriculum concept in developing holistic, inclusive, and responsive education. This approach was selected because the study focuses on conceptual analysis and the synthesis of theories, research findings, and educational policies related to curriculum integration in Islamic education. The data sources were obtained from scientific journals, academic books, conference proceedings, and official educational policy documents related to Islamic Religious Education, the Independent Curriculum, religious moderation, and holistic education. Literature searches were conducted through academic databases such as Google Scholar, Garuda, and DOAJ using keywords including “Islamic Religious Education,” “independent curriculum,” “religious moderation,” “holistic education,” and “curriculum integration”. The selection of literature sources was based on several inclusion criteria: publications relevant to the research topic, articles published between 2021 and 2026 to ensure the use of recent references, studies discussing curriculum integration, Islamic education, or the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, sources originating from credible and peer-reviewed scientific publications.

Meanwhile, irrelevant articles, non-scientific opinions, and sources lacking methodological clarity were excluded from the analysis. A total of 25 articles and related documents were selected and analyzed in this study. The data analysis process involved several stages, including data reduction, thematic categorization, content interpretation, and conceptual synthesis. The analysis focused on comparing the main concepts of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum and the

Independent Curriculum, identifying integration models, and examining their relevance to the development of holistic, inclusive, and responsive education. The findings were then presented descriptively and analytically to formulate a systematic framework for curriculum integration in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The findings of this study demonstrate that the integration of the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum with the Independent Curriculum provides a comprehensive framework for developing holistic, inclusive, and responsive education. Based on the analysis of relevant literature and educational policy documents, several key themes emerged, including the conceptual foundations of curriculum integration, the implementation of student-centered learning approaches, the strengthening of character education and religious moderation, and the development of adaptive learning environments that respond to contemporary educational challenges. These findings illustrate how curriculum integration can support the achievement of educational goals that balance academic excellence, character formation, and social responsibility.

Table 1. Results of the integration of IRE curriculum with the independent curriculum

Integration Aspect	Islamic Religious Education (IRE) Curriculum	Independent Curriculum Concept	Integration Results
Educational Orientation	Emphasizes moral, spiritual, and character development based on Islamic values	Focuses on student-centered and competency-based learning	Development of holistic education integrating academic competence and character values
Learning Approach	Religious learning based on values, ethics, and worship practices	Flexible, contextual, and project-based learning	Contextual Islamic learning that is more interactive and relevant to students' lives
Character Development	Formation of religious attitudes, morality, and discipline	Strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile and soft skills	Integration of Islamic values with character and citizenship education
Inclusiveness	Encourages tolerance and respect for diversity through religious moderation	Promotes inclusive and equitable learning opportunities	Creation of inclusive learning environments that respect cultural and religious diversity
Critical Thinking Skills	Understanding and analyzing Islamic teachings through the Qur'an and Hadith	Encourages critical, creative, and analytical thinking	Students develop reflective and critical perspectives toward religious and social issues
Learning Methods	Lectures, discussions, worship practices, and moral habituation	Collaborative and project-based learning methods	More active, collaborative, and participatory Islamic learning processes
Use of Local Context	Utilizes local religious and cultural values in learning	Curriculum adaptation based on local needs and contexts	Learning becomes more responsive to social and cultural conditions

Assessment System	Assessment of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects	Authentic and continuous assessment	Comprehensive evaluation of students' knowledge, attitudes, and skills
Role of Teachers	Teachers act as moral and spiritual role models	Teachers function as facilitators and learning companions	Teachers become facilitators who integrate Islamic values with active learning
Expected Educational Outcomes	Students possess strong religious understanding and good morals	Students become independent, critical, and adaptive learners	Formation of students with strong character, moderation values, and 21st-century competencies

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the integration of the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum with the Independent Curriculum provides a strategic framework for developing holistic, inclusive, and responsive education in Indonesia. Both curricula share similar orientations in emphasizing character development, competency-based learning, and the cultivation of social values relevant to contemporary educational challenges. The Independent Curriculum promotes flexible and student-centered learning (Anggini et al., 2024), while the IRE curriculum emphasizes moral, spiritual, and ethical development rooted in Islamic teachings (Syahnaz et al., 2025). The integration of these two curricula therefore creates opportunities for developing balanced education that addresses cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains simultaneously (Mukherjee & Kittur, 2025) (Suryaman, 2020). One important aspect identified in this study is the integration of Islamic values into holistic learning practices. Holistic education views students as individuals with intellectual, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual dimensions that must be developed in balance. This perspective aligns with the objectives of Islamic education, which aim not only to improve academic achievement but also to build noble character and moral responsibility (Mustoip, 2023). Through the Independent Curriculum, teachers are given flexibility to design contextual and meaningful learning activities that integrate Islamic values into real-life experiences (Prihatin et al., 2025) (Khaerunnisa et al., 2025). Project-based learning, collaborative discussions, and reflective activities can support students in understanding religious teachings more deeply and applying them in daily life (Susilowati, 2022).

The study also found that curriculum integration contributes to the strengthening of inclusive education through the implementation of religious moderation values. Religious moderation emphasizes tolerance, balance, respect for diversity, and peaceful coexistence within multicultural societies (Fardiansyah et al., 2026) (Muh ibnu sholeh & Siti Fatinnah Binti Ab Rahman, 2025). In this context, Islamic Religious Education can function as a medium for promoting inclusive attitudes and reducing the risks of intolerance and radicalism among students. The Independent Curriculum supports this process through differentiated learning approaches and active student participation regardless of social, cultural, or religious differences (Yunus, V., Zakso, A., Priyadi, A.T., Hartoyo, 2023) (Asrori & Riki Dwi Angga Saputro, 2025). As a result, the integration of the two curricula can create a more democratic and inclusive learning environment that respects diversity and encourages mutual understanding among learners (Guberina, 2023). Another important finding is related to the development of critical and analytical thinking skills through curriculum integration. The Independent Curriculum encourages students to think critically, creatively, and independently in solving problems (Fadila et al., 2025). These competencies are highly relevant to Islamic education, particularly in understanding religious texts contextually and critically. Students are encouraged not only to memorize religious concepts but also to analyze and reflect upon the meaning of Islamic teachings in relation to social realities and contemporary

issues (Rafi et al., 2025). This approach can help students develop moderate perspectives and prevent rigid or exclusive interpretations of religion. Furthermore, collaborative and inquiry-based learning methods encourage students to become active participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients of information. The integration of the IRE curriculum with the Independent Curriculum also highlights the importance of contextual and locally responsive learning (Siti Rahmawati et al., 2025). One of the principles of the Independent Curriculum is flexibility in adapting learning to local needs and socio-cultural conditions. In Islamic education, this principle can be implemented by incorporating local religious traditions, cultural values, and community practices into the learning process (Abdul Ghani et al., 2023) (Permana et al., 2025). Such contextualization helps students understand Islamic teachings in ways that are relevant to their daily experiences and social environments. In addition, the use of local resources and community involvement strengthens the relevance and sustainability of learning outcomes.

Despite its potential benefits, the study also identifies several challenges in implementing curriculum integration. These challenges include limited teacher readiness, insufficient understanding of the Independent Curriculum concept, lack of innovative learning resources, and the persistence of conventional teaching practices focused mainly on memorization and teacher-centered instruction. Previous studies have shown that the successful implementation of curriculum reform depends greatly on teacher competence, institutional support, and continuous professional development (Danial et al., 2024) (Affandi, 2025). Therefore, teachers need adequate training and guidance to effectively integrate Islamic values with student-centered and project-based learning approaches. Overall, the integration of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum with the Independent Curriculum can serve as an effective framework for creating education that is holistic, inclusive, and responsive to contemporary societal needs. This integration not only strengthens students' religious understanding and moral character but also develops critical thinking, collaboration, tolerance, and adaptability in multicultural contexts. Consequently, the integration model has the potential to contribute significantly to the development of quality Islamic education that is relevant to the challenges of the modern era

CONCLUSION

The integration of the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum with the Independent Curriculum demonstrates significant potential in developing holistic, inclusive, and responsive education in Indonesia. This study found that both curricula share common orientations in strengthening character education, promoting student-centered learning, and developing competencies relevant to contemporary educational challenges. The integration framework enables Islamic values such as tolerance, morality, religious moderation, and social responsibility to be implemented through contextual, collaborative, and project-based learning approaches. In addition, the integration supports the development of students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor competencies simultaneously, thereby creating learning experiences that are more meaningful and relevant to students' social and cultural realities. The findings of this study imply that curriculum integration can become an effective strategy for improving the quality of Islamic education and strengthening inclusive educational practices in multicultural societies. Therefore, educators and policymakers are encouraged to provide continuous support through teacher training, curriculum development programs, and the provision of innovative learning resources that align with the principles of the Independent Curriculum. Nevertheless, this study is limited to conceptual and literature-based analysis. Future research is recommended to conduct empirical studies on the implementation of curriculum integration in schools or madrasahs, particularly regarding its impact on students' character development, learning outcomes, critical thinking skills, and attitudes toward religious moderation.

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