

## **The Management of Vocational High School Curriculum Implementation Based on Islamic Boarding Schools (A Study at Manbaul Ulum Vocational School in Cirebon, Ciwaringin of Cirebon Regency, Bina Insan Mandiri in Cirebon)**

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**Abstract:** This study examines a model of curriculum integration rooted in Pesantren (Islamic boarding school) principles across three Vocational High Schools (VHSs) in Cirebon Regency: VHS Manbaul Ulum, VHS Ciwaringin, and VHS Bina Insan Mandiri. The research explores how national curriculum standards, vocational competencies, and Islamic educational values are designed, implemented, and managed to produce graduates with both technical proficiency and strong Islamic character. A qualitative case study method was employed, utilizing observations, interviews with teachers, Kyai, principals, and Pesantren administrators, and curriculum documentation. Analysis focused on the planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation of the integrated model. Results indicate that integration was achieved through stakeholder collaboration, with an organizational structure promoting synergy between vocational and Islamic education. Instructional activities combined vocational learning with Pesantren practices such as religious study, memorization, and daily moral formation. Regular evaluations involved feedback from parents and industry partners. While the model effectively nurtured religious-professional graduates, challenges included academic overload, limited student rest, scheduling issues, and insufficient teacher preparation for integrated instruction. This study contributes to developing a Pesantren-based curriculum management framework, supporting the advancement of holistic and competitive vocational education in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Curriculum Integration; Pesantren; Vocational Education; Islamic Character; Collaborative Model.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia is grappling with significant challenges in labor absorption, particularly concerning the graduates of vocational high schools (VHSs). According to data from the Indonesia's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), the

Open Unemployment Rate (OUR) for VHS graduates reached 8.49% during the period from February 2018 to February 2020. As of February 2024, the national unemployment figure remains high, with 7.2 million individuals unemployed. Notably, VHS graduates continue to be the largest contributors to unemployment, with a rate of 8.62%, significantly higher than that of Senior High School (in Indonesian as SMA) graduates at 6.73%, and university graduates at 5.63% (Mashabi & Prastiwi, 2024). This data reflects a reality that contradicts the mandate of Law Number 20 of 2003, which emphasizes that VHSs are intended to prepare students to enter the workforce (Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20, 2003).

This condition indicates a significant gap between the objectives of vocational education and the realities in the field. The primary cause of this phenomenon lies in the mismatch between the competencies taught in VHSs and the needs of the industry (Deissinger, 2004), which is often attributed to curriculum misalignment. Dwini Handayani, a senior researcher at the Demographic Institute of the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Indonesia identifies the high unemployment rate among VHS graduates as a consequence of job-seeking processes that are misaligned with their skillsets, as well as a lack of seriousness in connecting vocational skills with the demands of the business and industrial sectors (CNBC Indonesia, 2023).

Nevertheless, there is a notable deficiency of empirical studies examining the profound influence of corporate participation in implementing new curricula, such as the Merdeka curriculum. This research seeks to fill this void by comprehensively analyzing the industry's significant contribution to implementing Indonesia's Merdeka curriculum. It aspires to provide valuable perspectives to the ongoing discussion on vocational education. When analyzing how industrial engagement in Merdeka may improve the curriculum, the literature shortage becomes clear. Although the curriculum emphasizes accurate results and follows a factory-modeled instructional approach, nothing is known about how the industry's engagement drives this transition (Yoto et al., 2024).

This study investigates the industry's crucial role in implementing Indonesia's Merdeka curriculum to fill this critical gap. Mengdi Shi While studies lead us toward an understanding of international collaboration in vocational education (Shi et al., 2023), and the meta-analysis by (Jiahong & Yang, 2023) introduces the idea of diverse teaching methods, both do not reach the depth and focus on the Merdeka Curriculum that characterizes this research. Similarly, research by (Silver, 2022) exploring the role of technology in vocational education provides insights but does not delve into the paradigm shift introduced by the Merdeka Curriculum. This research breaks new ground by revealing the industry's intricate relationship with the Merdeka curriculum's

distinctive teaching method in Indonesian VS. This research goes beyond prior findings to show how much the industry has helped implement the Merdeka curriculum. This research bridges a knowledge vacuum by introducing new ideas and findings, contributing to vocational education reform in Indonesia by examining theoretical and practical aspects.

The relevance of the curriculum as the core of the learning process is critically important. Research indicates that aligning the curriculum with industry needs can significantly enhance the employability of VHS graduates (Wismansyah et al., 2024). Presidential Instruction Number 9 of 2016 on the Revitalization of VHS emphasizes the necessity of curriculum alignment, which includes the development of a roadmap, improvement of educators' competencies, and collaboration with the business and industrial sectors (Presidential Instruction of the Republic of Indonesia Number 9, 2016). However, the implementation of curriculum alignment in practice continues to face various challenges, including infrastructure limitations and readiness in curriculum management (Ngoasong, 2022).

This study proposes a novel approach focusing on a curriculum integration management model based on the Pesantren (Islamic boarding school) system, which is expected to offer concrete solutions to existing problems. This approach aims to integrate the VHS curriculum with religious values and holistic learning, so that graduates are not only prepared to enter the workforce but also possess strong character. The objectives of this research are to analyze the causes of the mismatch between the VHS curriculum and industry needs; develop a curriculum integration management model centered on Pesantren-based education; identify the impact of implementing this model on improving the employability of VHS graduates in the business and industrial sectors; and provide policy recommendations for developing a relevant and applicable VHS curriculum.

The first research was conducted by Ilham, D., & Suyatno. This research aims to describe the development of curriculum management and learning at Muhammadiyah Boarding School Prambanan Yogyakarta. This research is a type of qualitative research with a case study approach. Data were collected through interview, observation, and documentation techniques from the community relations section at Muhammadiyah Boarding School. The collected data were analyzed using interactive inductive analysis techniques which include: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that: 1.) The principles of curriculum development consist of four principles: the principle of social significance, the principle of growth, the principle of individual differences, and the principle of integration; 2) Curriculum development and learning at Muhammadiyah Boarding School includes two

important aspects, namely: integration of the national education curriculum and boarding school, and making Muhammadiyah Boarding School a center for moral development of students (Irwan et al., 2019).

The significance of this research also lies in its relevance to national education policy. The revitalization of VHS, as outlined in the Presidential Instruction, reflects the government's commitment to enhancing the quality of human resources in Indonesia. This study will not only provide new insights into curriculum alignment but also examine the implementation of existing policies in practice. By analyzing best practices in curriculum integration within Pesantren-based VHS, the research aims to present a model that can be adopted by other educational institutions to improve the quality of job-ready graduates. Furthermore, the findings are expected to serve as valuable input for policymakers in formulating strategic measures to reduce unemployment among VHS graduates and enhance their competitiveness in the labor market (Plihal & others, 1992).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study method to explore and analyze the management model of curriculum integration in VHS based on the Pesantren system. The qualitative approach was selected due to its suitability for investigating complex phenomena within educational contexts, particularly those involving the integration of curricula that encompass the unique aspects of both the Pesantren tradition and vocational education (Albar et al., 2024). In this study, the researchers conducted on-site visits to the research location to gather in-depth information related to the management of curriculum integration in VHS based on the Pesantren system (Sugiyono, 2017).

This research was conducted at VHS affiliated with Islamic boarding schools, specifically at Pondok Pesantren Manbaul Ulum in Cirebon Regency, Ciwaringin in Cirebon Regency, and Bina Insan Mandiri in Cirebon City. The research timeline spanned from the preparation of the research proposal to the writing of the final report, scheduled to take place from January to October 2024.

In this study, researchers came directly to the research location to explore information related to the management of the integration of the pesantren-based vocational high school curriculum. This qualitative research has characteristics that make humans as research instruments, namely responsive, adaptive, holistic, awareness of the context of being able to process immediately, being able to pursue clarification, being able to summarize immediately and

being able to explore answers and being able to pursue deeper understanding (Creswell, 2012).

The following authors present a table of data analysis techniques from the description above:

**Table 1. Data Analysis Technique** (Creswell, 2012)

<b>Data Analysis Technique</b>	<b>An explanation</b>
Data Reduction	Simplification of data that has been collected through the process of selection, focusing, and abstraction, especially on parts that are relevant to the research objectives.
Data Presentation	Presentation of data that has been reduced in the form of tables, graphs, or descriptive narratives to facilitate understanding of the relationship between data.
Data Triangulation	Validating data by comparing results from interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure consistency and validity of findings.
Conclusion Drawing	Drawing conclusions based on patterns, themes, and relationships that emerge from the data that has been analyzed.
Verification	Rechecking conclusions and findings by referring to field data to ensure validity and consistency.

Based on Table 1. Data Analysis Technique above can be explained that the research of *A Management Model for Curriculum Integration in Vocational High Schools* has a clear and measurable research blueprint; the data obtained can be analyzed and explained scientifically and with scientific arguments.

Primary data sources are data obtained from the first data source through procedures and data collection techniques in the form of interviews and observations. In qualitative research, the number of data sources or respondents is not predetermined, because if maximum information has been obtained, the purpose of reviewing has been fulfilled. Therefore, the concept of samples in qualitative research is related to how to select respondents and certain social situations that can provide solid and reliable information about the focus of the researcher. To obtain clear data and in accordance with the research problem, the researcher visited the research location and obtained data from respondents which included: researchers, principals, other leaders, teachers and students (Salim & Syahrur, 2012).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Curriculum Integration Design

Vocational education at VHS plays a strategic role in preparing a skilled, job-ready, and technologically adaptive workforce. However, amid the challenges of globalization, there is an urgent need to strengthen the moral and spiritual dimensions of students. The increasing prevalence of moral degradation, permissive culture, and character crises demands an educational approach that goes beyond technical skills and prioritizes the cultivation of noble character (Tuala & Wachidah, 2025). This is where the importance of integrating vocational curricula with Pesantren-based (Islamic boarding school) education becomes evident (Zafi et al., 2021).

This integration model represents an effort to combine the strengths of vocational curricula with the distinctive Islamic values of Pesantren education. Pesantren have long demonstrated their abilities to produce graduates who are not only intellectually capable but also spiritually resilient and morally upright. Therefore, integrating the national curriculum with the Pesantren (*diniyah*) curriculum is considered an innovative response to contemporary challenges while also preserving the nation's cultural and religious identity (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024).

The implementation of this model is centered on three VHSs: VHS Manbaul Ulum, VHS Ciwaringin, and VHS Bina Insan Mandiri. These institutions are Pesantren-based vocational schools that have actively adopted an integrated curriculum approach. Their programs of expertise include Computer and Network Engineering, Livestock Agribusiness, Institutional Financial Accounting, Light Vehicle Automotive Engineering, Software and Game Development, and Motorcycle Engineering and Business. In addition to vocational subjects, these schools offer *diniyah* programs such as classical Islamic text studies (*kitab kuning*), Qur'anic memorization (*tahfidz al-Qur'an*), worship habituation, and Arabic language training (Tiwow et al., 2025).

The goals of this curriculum integration are: (1) to unify the national and Islamic curricula within a single instructional system; (2) to enhance students' spiritual competencies and vocational skills in a balanced manner; (3) to optimize the resources and facilities of the Pesantren; (4) to produce globally competitive graduates who uphold Islamic values; (5) to foster young entrepreneurs grounded in sharia principles; and (6) to develop a replicable curriculum model for other vocational schools. The curriculum structure is divided into three main components: (1) the national curriculum (general and vocational subjects); (2) the Pesantren curriculum (*kitab kuning*, *fiqh*, Arabic language, *tahfidz*, and others); and (3) the integration of Islamic values into

vocational learning, including Islamic work ethics, professional etiquette, and sharia-based business management (Syukron et al., 2025).

The implementation strategy is carried out through several key initiatives: the establishment of a joint curriculum development team consisting of vocational school teachers and Pesantren ustadz; teacher training programs designed to equip educators with the skills to deliver vocational content through an Islamic lens; the development of an integrated schedule to ensure a balanced implementation of both vocational and *diniyah* activities; and the cultivation of character values through role modeling and a school-wide culture rooted in Islamic principles. All processes are tailored to the unique characteristics of each institution. Through this integration model, Pesantren-based vocational schools are expected to produce graduates who are not only technically competent but also firmly grounded in Islamic character. These students are envisioned to be well-prepared not only for entering the workforce or becoming entrepreneurs, but also for serving as agents of positive change who embody and promote Islamic values within the broader society.

### **Organizing Curriculum Integration**

The organization of curriculum integration in Islamic boarding school-based VHSs represents a strategic effort to holistically and practically combine Islamic values with national vocational competencies. This model aims to create an educational system that not only focuses on the mastery of technical skills but also cultivates students' character and spirituality in alignment with Pesantren values. Case studies conducted at VHS Manbaul Ulum in Cirebon Regency, VHS Ciwaringin in Cirebon Regency, and VHS Bina Insan Mandiri in Cirebon City illustrate how this organization is systematically and collaboratively implemented.

The initial step in this organizational process involves forming a curriculum development team consisting of various stakeholders, including vocational teachers, religious teachers, Pesantren administrators, school principals, educational staff, and the representatives of students and parents. Team members are selected based on professional competency criteria, cross-disciplinary collaboration ability, high motivation, and availability of time and resources. The organizational structure of the team is clearly designed, comprising a team leader responsible for strategic oversight, a secretary managing administration and communication, and coordinators for curriculum, instruction, human resource development, as well as evaluation and monitoring. Furthermore, sub-working groups are established to address specialized aspects such as instructional material development, educational technology, and partnerships with industry and Pesantren institutions.

The roles of team members are crucial in ensuring the effective implementation of curriculum integration. Entrepreneurship teachers are responsible for developing syllabi and Lesson Plans that integrate Pesantren values into vocational subject matter and for conducting training sessions for other teachers. Religious teachers and Pesantren administrators focus on preparing religious content, character development, and guiding students' spiritual and moral aspects. School principals play a central role by leading the process, providing policy support and resources, and fostering communication with external parties to support the success of curriculum integration.

The team's working mechanism is designed to ensure smooth and productive interdisciplinary collaboration. The team develops a systematic and structured work plan, maintains effective communication among members, and allocates tasks according to each member's expertise and responsibilities. Decision-making is conducted participatively, with the school principal serving as the final authority, while conflict management mechanisms are implemented to resolve disagreements constructively. Team performance evaluations are conducted regularly to ensure that the curriculum's quality and relevance remain intact and can be adapted to the evolving needs of the workforce and education sector.

The entire organizational process emphasizes the importance of synergy between vocational aspects and Pesantren values, ensuring that the resulting curriculum not only meets national standards but is also deeply rooted in students' character and spirituality. Consequently, graduates from Pesantren-based VHSs are expected to compete effectively in the labor market while embodying noble personalities grounded in Islamic values.

This curriculum integration organization exemplifies how vocational education can be innovatively and contextually developed through collaborative and professional involvement of various stakeholders. The success of this model heavily depends on the commitment of all team members, the support of school management, and openness to continuous evaluation and improvement. Through this approach, Pesantren-based VHSs can become leading and relevant educational institutions in the modern era, while preserving the legacy of Islamic values that define their identity (Atika et al., 2025).

### **Implementation of Curriculum Integration**

The implementation of curriculum integration at three VHSs in the Cirebon region, namely VHS Manbaul Ulum in Cirebon Regency, VHS Ciwaringin in Cirebon Regency, and VHS Bina Insan Mandiri in Cirebon City, is carried out systematically by combining vocational education with Pesantren values. This instructional model adopts a dual-track system, wherein students



engage in technical skills and general subject learning from morning until afternoon, while the late afternoon to evening hours are dedicated to Pesantren activities such as Qur'an memorization (*tahfidz*), classical Islamic text studies (*kitab kuning*), and religious lectures (*muhadharah*) (Bin Jamil et al., 2024).

Key programs include memorization of at least one  *juz* of the Qur'an throughout the study period, integrated *diniyah* classes teaching fiqh, aqidah, and *akhlaq*, and *muhadharah* sessions aimed at developing public speaking skills. Additionally, fieldwork practice is directed toward sharia-based institutions such as Islamic banking and Pesantren cooperatives to strengthen both vocational competencies and religious values. Short Pesantren retreats (*Pesantren kilat*) and overnight spiritual activities (*Mabit*) are regularly organized to deepen students' spiritual and character development.

The use of Arabic and English in instruction supports foreign language proficiency, while the scouting program for students fosters leadership and discipline grounded in Islamic values. The Sharia Business Center within the Accounting and Agribusiness departments serves as a platform for developing sharia-based entrepreneurial skills. Continuous supervision and mentoring are conducted by the Vice Principal and Head of Vocational Programs through lesson monitoring, evaluation of tahfidz achievements, and field observations. Furthermore, VHS supervisors from the Cirebon Regency Education Office regularly conduct visits to evaluate the program and provide feedback (Sebastián et al., 2025).

### **Advantages and Disadvantages of Curriculum Integration**

The integration of Pesantren curriculum in VHSs in the Cirebon area combines vocational education with Islamic values to develop students' character and competencies comprehensively. This curriculum instills values such as honesty, responsibility, diligence, and discipline as part of the school culture, ensuring that graduates are not only technically proficient but also possess strong moral integrity. Students receive dual education, acquiring vocational skills in fields such as Computer and Network Engineering, Livestock Agribusiness, and Accounting, alongside *diniyah* studies covering fiqh, aqidah, *akhlaq*, Qur'anic memorization (tahfidz), and Arabic language. This approach enriches students' abilities to compete in the global labor market, particularly within the halal industry and sharia-based institutions. Many alumni have successfully pursued further education at prestigious Islamic universities and gained broader employment opportunities (Huda et al., 2017).

This curriculum model also enhances the school's reputation in the community, reflected by a steady increase in the number of applicants each year. However, the implementation of this integration faces several challenges. The

students' workload becomes heavy as they must allocate time for vocational, general, and *diniyah* learning, especially during national exams, competency tests, and tahfidz programs. The limited availability of teachers capable of integrating Islamic values into technical instruction remains a primary obstacle. Additionally, supporting facilities such as sharia-based laboratories, Islamic libraries, and tahfidz rooms require improvement, particularly at VHS Ciwaringin. The complexity of scheduling lessons also poses a challenge, as it is necessary to ensure a balanced allocation of time across subjects, often necessitating additional sessions outside regular school hours (Wiyono et al., 2023).

### **Design of the Curriculum Integration Management Model**

The design of the curriculum integration management model at VHS Manbaul Ulum, VHS Ciwaringin, and VHS Bina Insan Mandiri in Cirebon Regency is developed based on the principle of harmonizing modern vocational education with Islamic values. The primary objective of this model is to produce graduates who are not only professionally competent but also morally upright in accordance with Islamic teachings (Zulfikar et al., 2025).

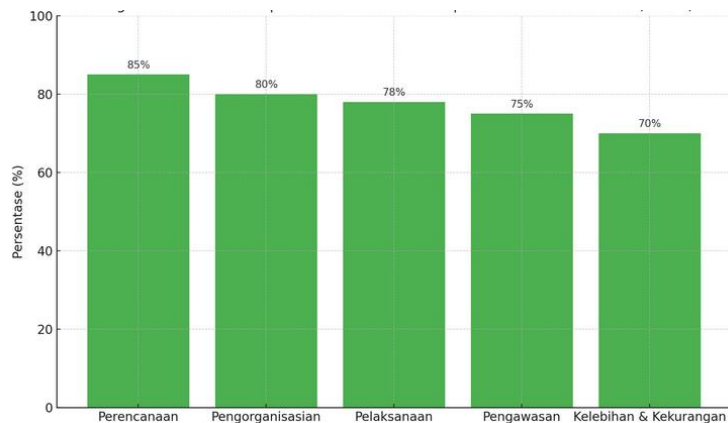
The planning process begins with the formulation of a curriculum that integrates three main components. First, the National Vocational Curriculum, which contains fundamental vocational competencies aligned with study programs such as Computer and Network Engineering, Livestock Agribusiness, and Accounting. Second, the Pesantren content, which includes subjects such as *aqidah-akhlak* (creed and ethics), fiqh, Arabic language, Qur'anic memorization (tahfidz), and classical Islamic text studies (*kitab kuning*). Third, local content that incorporates Cirebon's local wisdom, such as habituation to congregational prayers, *kebitobah* (sermons), and *mubadhorob* (religious gatherings).

The curriculum structure is carefully arranged to avoid overlap between vocational and Islamic subjects. The learning schedule is divided with a focus on vocational and general subjects from Monday to Thursday, while Fridays and Saturdays are dedicated to *diniyah* education and Pesantren activities. Additionally, there is an extra tahfidz session held in the mornings before general lessons commence, aimed at reinforcing the students' religious foundation.

This management model also emphasizes the strengthening of flagship programs such as Qur'an memorization (*tahfidz*), sharia-based entrepreneurship, and halal industry training. These programs not only enrich students' learning experiences but also fortify their character as Islamic and professional VHS graduates, ready to compete in the workforce with high integrity and competence.

### Level of Success in Curriculum Implementation

The Pesantren-based integrated curriculum represents an educational approach that merges the national curriculum, vocational training, and Pesantren content into a single holistic learning system. This model emphasizes not only the mastery of academic and vocational competencies but also the development of a strong Islamic character among students. The implementation of this curriculum at VHS Manbaul Ulum, VHS Ciwaringin, and VHS Bina Insan Mandiri serves as a benchmark for evaluating the success of this concept's application.



**Figure 1. Presentation of Successful Implementation of The Curriculum**

Based on the figure 1 and observation results, five key assessment aspects demonstrated a relatively high level of success: planning (85%), organizing (80%), implementation (78%), supervision (75%), and evaluation of strengths and weaknesses (70%). The robustness of the planning process is evident in the development of a curriculum document that harmoniously integrates vocational competencies, religious education, and local content. Effective organization is reflected in the strong coordination between subject teachers and *Kyai* (Islamic clerics) in fulfilling their respective responsibilities (Numgwo et al., 2015).

The curriculum implementation proceeded well despite some technical challenges, while supervision and evaluation efforts have been consistently undertaken to enhance the quality of learning. This curriculum underscores a dual objective: producing graduates who are both technically competent and grounded in Islamic character. Students' discipline has improved, their practical skills through fieldwork have advanced, and their internalization of Islamic values has deepened through routine religious activities (Badrudin & Jakariya, 2017).

Teachers and *Kyai* play a pivotal role in integrating academic content with Islamic teachings, as well as in fostering students' character development. Support from parents and the business sector has also contributed significantly to the success of this curriculum's implementation. Each school has developed its own signature programs, such as the dormitory-based *tahfidz* (Qur'an memorization) program at VHS Ciwaringin, the short-term *Pesantren kilat* program at VHS Manbaul Ulum, and the spiritual mentoring system at VHS Bina Insan Mandiri (Badrudin, 2022).

This integrated curriculum is designed to integrate vocational learning with Islamic religious education simultaneously and harmoniously. On the one hand, vocational competencies include technical skills relevant to the respective fields of study, such as computer engineering, agribusiness, automotive, and catering, which are the main focus in SMK. On the other hand, Islamic character is taught through diniyah learning and religious activities integrated in the education process, with values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, hard work and social care (Wiyono et al., 2023).

## CONCLUSION

The curriculum integration at VHS Manbaul Ulum, VHS Ciwaringin, and VHS Bina Insan Mandiri in Cirebon Regency has been designed through a collaborative approach involving teachers, *Kyai* (Pesantren leaders), school principals, and Pesantren administrators. Together, they have developed a shared vision, mission, and instructional content aligning with Islamic character education with vocational skills training. This planning process also takes into account the needs of the industrial sector as well as the moral and ethical development of students. The school organizational structure is deliberately arranged to facilitate cross-curricular coordination. While there is a functional distinction between vocational instructors and those teaching Islamic subjects, all educators operate within a unified academic system. Coordination among dormitory supervisors, teachers, and Pesantren administrators is reinforced through regular forums to prevent overlapping responsibilities and scheduling conflicts. The implementation of the integrated learning model maintains a balance between theoretical instruction, vocational practice, and Pesantren activities such as Kitab study, Quran memorization (*tahfiz*), and daily moral habituation. Islamic values are also embedded into general subjects and industrial training practices, enabling students to acquire not only technical competencies but also strong Islamic character. Although the implementation process remains dynamic, challenges persist, such as tight schedules and limited instructional time. Monitoring and supervision are regularly conducted by school principals and Pesantren administrators through classroom observations,

evaluations, and teacher reports. The results of this monitoring serve as a basis for refining both instructional content and teaching methodologies. Furthermore, active participation from parents and industry partners in providing feedback enhances the overall quality of education. This integration model has successfully produced graduates who are both vocationally competent and grounded in Islamic values, contributing to the development of a religious school culture. However, several issues still need to be addressed to ensure optimal and sustainable implementation. These include heavy academic workloads, insufficient student rest time, difficulties in synchronizing schedules, and the need for ongoing teacher training in integrative pedagogy.■

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