

Conservative and Progressive Curriculum: a Comparative Analysis of Educational Objectives and Methodologies in the Context of Islamic Education in Indonesia

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Abstract: This study examines the contrasts and complementarities between conservative and progressive curricula within Islamic education in Indonesia, focusing particularly on educational objectives and teaching methodologies. The findings from a qualitative approach, using a systematic review of peer-reviewed studies published between 2015 and 2025, reveal that conservative curricula emphasise the preservation of Islamic heritage, moral stability, and established knowledge, typically implemented through teacher-centred instruction and memorisation. In contrast, progressive curricula prioritise learner-centred approaches that foster critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving through contextual and participatory methods. The analysis concludes that both paradigms, though distinct, are mutually reinforcing, and their integration is essential for effective curriculum reform. In Indonesia, where Islamic education is shaped by Muhammadiyah's progressive orientation and Nahdlatul Ulama's conservative tradition, a hybrid model offers a means to reconcile tradition with modernity. Conservative elements provide ethical grounding and continuity, whereas progressive elements promote innovation, autonomy, and global relevance. Integration strategies include aligning conservative objectives with progressive pedagogies, combining authoritative instruction with participatory practices, incorporating twenty-first-century skills into religious learning, and adapting the Curriculum to local wisdom and moderate Islamic principles. Such synthesis preserves Islamic and national identity while preparing learners for the Society 5.0 era and countering extremism through inclusive, moderate education.

Keywords: Conservative Curriculum, Progressive Curriculum, Islamic Education, Teaching Methodologies, Curriculum Reform, Indonesia, Comparative Analysis

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji perbedaan dan titik temu antara kurikulum konservatif dan progresif dalam pendidikan Islam di Indonesia, dengan fokus khusus pada tujuan pendidikan dan metodologi pengajaran. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui tinjauan sistematis terhadap studi-studi bereputasi yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2015 hingga 2025, hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kurikulum konservatif

menekankan pelestarian warisan Islam, stabilitas moral, dan pengetahuan yang telah mapan, yang umumnya diterapkan melalui pembelajaran berpusat pada guru dan metode hafalan. Sebaliknya, kurikulum progresif mengutamakan pendekatan yang berpusat pada peserta didik yang mendorong berpikir kritis, kreativitas, dan pemecahan masalah melalui metode kontekstual dan partisipatif. Analisis ini menyimpulkan bahwa kedua paradigma tersebut, meskipun berbeda, saling melengkapi, dan integrasinya sangat penting bagi reformasi kurikulum yang efektif. Di Indonesia, di mana pendidikan Islam dipengaruhi oleh orientasi progresif Muhammadiyah dan tradisi konservatif Nahdlatul Ulama, model hibrida menawarkan cara untuk merekonsiliasi tradisi dan modernitas. Unsur konservatif memberikan landasan etis dan kontinuitas, sementara unsur progresif mendorong inovasi, kemandirian, dan relevansi global. Strategi integrasi meliputi penyelarasan tujuan konservatif dengan pedagogi progresif, penggabungan instruksi otoritatif dengan praktik partisipatif, pengintegrasian keterampilan abad ke-21 ke dalam pembelajaran keagamaan, serta adaptasi kurikulum berdasarkan kearifan lokal dan prinsip Islam moderat. Sintesis semacam ini menjaga identitas Islam dan kebangsaan sekaligus mempersiapkan peserta didik menghadapi era Society 5.0 serta menangkal ekstremisme melalui pendidikan yang inklusif dan moderat.

Kata Kunci: Kurikulum Konservatif, Kurikulum Progresif, Pendidikan Islam, Metodologi Pengajaran, Reformasi Kurikulum, Indonesia, Analisis Komparatif

INTRODUCTION

The Curriculum is a structured set of plans and arrangements concerning educational objectives, content, and learning processes that serve as guidelines for implementing education. It is systematically designed to achieve specific academic goals. The successful implementation of a curriculum largely depends on the competence and professionalism of teachers, who serve as the primary agents in translating state-mandated curricula into meaningful classroom practices.¹

In Islamic education, the Curriculum plays a strategic role in shaping religious identity and internalising moral values within Muslim communities. The Curriculum of Islamic education is not monolithic; it is contextualised according to each country's social, cultural, and political dynamics. This diversity reflects varying interpretations of religious teachings in addressing contemporary challenges. Consequently, Islamic education functions not only as a medium for transmitting religious knowledge but also as an instrument for character formation and adaptation to modern life.²

Two major orientations are often juxtaposed within curriculum design: conservative and progressive. The conservative approach prioritises tradition,

¹ Maria Inge Ayudia, Wilibaldus Bhoke, Rici Oktari and others, *Pengembangan Kurikulum*, ed. by Sarwandi (PT. Mifandi Mandiri Digital, 2023).

² Evitri Liza and Komarudin Sassi, 'Analisis Komparatif Sistem Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer Di Kuwait Dan Kazakhstan', *Khazanah Akademia*, 9.01 (2025), pp. 09–25, doi:10.52434/jurnalkhazanahakademia.v9i01.427.

authority, and the continuity of established values, typically manifested through teacher-centred instruction and memorisation. Conversely, the progressive approach emphasises learners' needs, flexibility, and the relevance of education to societal change, utilising participatory and contextual methodologies. The tension between these two orientations is particularly significant in Islamic education, which continually seeks to balance religious heritage with the demands of modern educational paradigms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on conservative and progressive approaches in Curriculum has been the focus of educational studies for the past few decades. This study identifies several studies that discuss the fundamental differences between the two paradigms, focusing on academic goals, pedagogical approaches, and their relevance in contemporary education.

The Conservative Paradigm in Education

The conservative approach in education is grounded in the belief that the fundamental purpose of schooling is to preserve cultural heritage, moral order, and traditional values. Conservative education emphasises cultural literacy, a body of essential knowledge and shared values that must be transmitted to the next generation.³ The Curriculum is a medium for maintaining social stability and civilizational continuity.

Philosophically, conservatism is rooted in essentialism and perennialism. Essentialism maintains that a core body of knowledge is universal and enduring, which all students must learn.⁴ Perennialism asserts that education should centre on eternal truths and timeless moral principles.⁵ Pedagogically, this paradigm is expressed through lectures, memorisation, and text-based instruction, where the teacher holds the position of authority and ethical guide.

The Progressive Paradigm in Education

In contrast, the progressive paradigm perceives education as a dynamic and transformative process that develops individual potential and fosters social change. Learning should be child-centred and grounded in experiential

³ *Knowledge and Power in Muslim Societies*, ed. by Kazuo Morimoto and Sajjad Rizvi (Gerlach Press, 2023), doi:10.2307/jj.3790056.

⁴ Mehmet ŞAHİN, 'Essentialism In Philosophy, Psychology, Education, Social And Scientific Scopes', *Journal of Innovation in Psychology, Education and Didactics*, 22.02 (2018), pp. 193–204.

⁵ muhammad Herlambang, Tasman Hamami, And Alfitra Firmansyah, 'The Perennialism Approach In The Development Of Islamic Religious Education Curriculum', *Al-Risalah*, 15.1 (2024), pp. 262–80, doi:10.34005/alrisalah.v15i1.3455.

engagement (learning by doing).⁶ In this view, the Curriculum is not a fixed body of content but a living process shaped by learners' experiences and social realities.

Philosophically, progressivism is based on pragmatism, which judges truth according to its practical consequences and usefulness. The ultimate goal of education is not merely acquiring knowledge but developing critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and adaptability to change.⁷ Pedagogical practices within this paradigm include project-based learning, cooperative learning, and reflective inquiry, promoting active engagement and social interaction.

Within Islamic educational philosophy, the progressive spirit aligns with the concept of *tarbiyah*, which emphasises the holistic growth of the human being—physical, intellectual, and spiritual. The principles of *ijtihad* (intellectual reasoning) and *tajdid* (renewal) reflect the progressive ethos of renewal and innovation while remaining grounded in the divine framework of Islam. Thus, progressive Islamic education encourages learners to become active seekers of knowledge who interpret and apply Islamic values in contemporary contexts.

Educational Objectives: Stability and Transformation

In conservative thought, the purpose of education is to cultivate moral character and transmit inherited wisdom.⁸ Success in education is measured by the learner's ability to uphold ethical norms and contribute to societal harmony in accordance with religious and cultural traditions. Conversely, progressivism conceives education as a transformational endeavour, aiming to produce critical, creative, and socially responsible individuals.⁹

In the Indonesian context, both paradigms coexist within Islamic education. Traditional *madrasahs* and *pesantrens* reflect conservative ideals—emphasising creed (*aqidah*), ethics (*akhlaq*), and classical Islamic sciences. Meanwhile, modern Islamic schools increasingly adopt progressive elements such as integrated curricula, innovative pedagogies, and digital learning

⁶ Abdullah Sahin, *New Direction in Islamic Education Pedagogy & Identity Formation* (Kube Akademik, 2013).

⁷ Sahin, *New Direction in Islamic Education Pedagogy & Identity Formation*.

⁸ Herlambang, Hamami, and Firmansyah, 'The Perennialism Approach In The Development Of Islamic Religious Education Curriculum'.

⁹ Herlambang, Hamami, And Firmansyah, 'The Perennialism Approach In The Development Of Islamic Religious Education Curriculum'.

platforms.¹⁰ The interplay of these paradigms reveals a spectrum of educational philosophies that shape Islamic schooling today.

Pedagogical Methodologies: Between Tradition and Innovation

Conservative methodologies are teacher-centred, prioritising discipline, authority, and structured instruction.¹¹ The teacher is viewed as the primary source of knowledge and moral exemplar. In contrast, progressive methodologies are student-centred. They promote inquiry, collaboration, and experiential learning, allowing students to construct meaning through personal engagement.¹²

In Islamic education, maintaining equilibrium between these two approaches is vital. The conservative model ensures moral and theological authenticity preservation, while the progressive model fosters intellectual independence and creativity. An integrative curriculum harmonizing both approaches can produce a value-oriented, methodologically adaptive Islamic education, ensuring relevance without compromising spiritual depth.¹³

Theoretical Synthesis

Theoretically, the conservative and progressive paradigms are not mutually exclusive but complementary. The ideal educational model, particularly within the framework of Islamic education in Indonesia, should combine conservatism's moral stability with progressivism's innovative adaptability. Such integration reflects the Islamic pedagogical balance between *ta'dīb* (moral cultivation) and *tajdīd* (renewal of methodology). Islam encourages the preservation of virtuous traditions while embracing constructive change, as expressed in the prophetic guidance: "Wisdom is the lost property of the believer; wherever he finds it, he is most entitled to it" (Al-Tirmidhi, Sunan al-Tirmidhi, Hadith No. 2687). Hence, the synthesis of conservative and progressive principles can produce a holistic educational framework that nurtures faith, intellect, and creativity—forming morally grounded learners and dynamically responsive to the demands of modern life.

¹⁰ Sinta Ari Susanti and others, 'Innovative Pedagogies in Indonesian Islamic Schools: Shaping Future Leaders for a Democratic and Just Masyarakat Madani', *Global Educational Research Review*, 1.2 (2024), pp. 82–91, doi:10.71380/GERR-08-2024-15.

¹¹ ŞAHİN, 'Essentialism In Philosophy, Psychology, Education, Social And Scientific Scopes'.

¹² Sahin, *New Direction in Islamic Education Pedagogy & Identity Formation*.

¹³ Susanti and others, 'Innovative Pedagogies in Indonesian Islamic Schools: Shaping Future Leaders for a Democratic and Just Masyarakat Madani'.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach using a library research method. Data were collected from various academic sources, including previous research, peer-reviewed scientific articles, scholarly books, and supporting documents relevant to the topic. The search process employed specific keywords such as "conservative curriculum", "progressive curriculum", "Islamic education in Indonesia", "educational objectives", and "learning methodologies". The review was limited to publications from 2015 to 2025 to capture the most recent developments in the field. After applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, 25 relevant studies were selected for analysis.

The analysis process followed a descriptive-qualitative design with a literature review approach. To structure the review, the researcher employed the Miles and Huberman (1994) model, which includes three main stages:¹⁴

1. Data Reduction – selecting, focusing, and simplifying relevant findings from the reviewed literature.
2. Data Display – organising information into thematic categories (e.g., conservative orientation, progressive orientation, comparative perspectives, and implications for Islamic education).
3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification – interpreting patterns, synthesising insights, and formulating conclusions to answer the research questions.

This methodological design ensures that the analysis not only describes but also critically evaluates and synthesises findings from previous studies, thereby building a stronger conceptual framework for understanding the comparative dynamics between conservative and progressive curricula.¹⁵

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Philosophical Basis of the Conservative Curriculum

Historically, the term 'conservative' originates from Ancient Greek philosophy, specifically from the word *conservoare*, which describes the attitude of preserving established social and political institutions. In this context, conservatism emerged as a response to rapid change, emphasising the

¹⁴ Yasri Rifa'i, 'Analisis Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif Dalam Pengumpulan Data Di Penelitian Ilmiah Pada Penyusunan Mini Riset', *Cendekia Inovatif Dan Berbudaya*, 1.1 (2023), pp. 31–37, doi:10.59996/cendib.v1i1.155.

¹⁵ Octavia Chotimah Miza Nina Adlini, Anisya Hanifa Dinda, Sarah Yulinda And Sauda Julia Merliyana, 'Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Pustaka', *Jurnal Edumaspul*, 6.1 (2022), pp. 974–980.

importance of stability and continuity. This approach supports gradual and selective social change, rejecting modernisation that erodes society's fundamental values. In religious tradition, conservatism also developed alongside the thinking of Salafi scholars who advocated a return to religion's core teachings. This approach emphasises the importance of maintaining the purity of faith and implementing Sharia law as the basis for responding to changes in times.¹⁶

Conservative philosophy is the primary foundation for developing a curriculum that preserves traditional values, especially religious ones. From this perspective, education is seen not only as a means of transferring knowledge but also as a medium for preserving norms, ethics, and culture that are considered established and of high value. The conservative Curriculum prioritises lessons that strengthen character, religious obedience, and basic skills deemed relevant to national life.¹⁷

Some figures known as adherents of the conservative school of thought include George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Emile Durkheim, Arthur Bestor, and Hyman Rickover. They believe that suffering, such as poverty and ignorance, is not merely a systemic result but also part of divine destiny and the consequence of individuals' inability to improve themselves. Therefore, conservative groups emphasise the importance of patience and perseverance as the main attitudes in facing life. Social harmony is a core value, while social conflict is considered to be avoided as much as possible.¹⁸

In the field of education, conservative ideology developed into three main branches: educational fundamentalism (which emphasises strict religious teachings), educational intellectualism (which focuses on the development of reason and logic), and educational conservatism (which prioritises the preservation of traditional values and social ethics).¹⁹

Based on the above analysis, it can be understood that conservatism is a school of thought rooted in Ancient Greek philosophy and religious traditions, focusing on preserving established social, cultural, and spiritual values. In education, conservatism emphasises the importance of stability, continuity, and

¹⁶ Nurfalina, 'Kontribusi Pemikiran Tokoh-Tokoh Konservatisme Islam Kontemporer Terhadap Pemikiran Islam'.

¹⁷ Nurfalina, 'Kontribusi Pemikiran Tokoh-Tokoh Konservatisme Islam Kontemporer Terhadap Pemikiran Islam'.

¹⁸ Muhammad Zamroji, 'Konsistensi Ideologi Pendidikan Agama Islam Di Tengah Perubahan Kurikulum Pendidikan Di Indonesia', *Urwatul Wutsqo: Jurnal Studi Kependidikan Dan Keislaman*, 10.1 (2024), pp. 128–43, doi:10.54437/urwatulwutsqo.v10i1.1763.

¹⁹ Saihan, *Ideologi Pendidikan Pesantren*, ed. by Abd. Muhit (Imtiyaz, 2020).

preserving traditional norms and ethics. The conservative Curriculum aims to strengthen character, religious devotion, and basic skills relevant to community life. Conservative figures view suffering as part of individual responsibility, not merely a systemic consequence, and emphasise the importance of social harmony. In education, conservatism develops in three primary forms: fundamentalism, intellectualism, and the preservation of traditional values.

Conservative Curriculum and Learning Methods

In a conservative approach, the Curriculum focuses more on shaping children's personalities from the outside, assuming that children do not yet have the capacity or potential to actualise themselves freely. The Curriculum is designed based on the wishes of educators or institutions, and students are expected to accept it obediently without much active involvement. This view places education as an external process that instills specific values in individuals in a top-down manner.²⁰

Conservative Curriculum in learning practices uses conventional and structural methods. Teachers have the freedom to choose methods, but in general, they are directed towards traditional learning strategies such as demonstrations, field studies, laboratory practices, memorisation, and repetitive exercises. Physical and mental discipline forms, such as marching and rapid counting, are still considered relevant in shaping students' character.²¹

For students facing challenges in learning or personal life, the conservative approach still provides space for individual guidance, counselling, and even psychological therapy, as a form of attention to the overall mental development of students.²²

The conservative approach in the Curriculum emphasises the formation of students' character through top-down external guidance, assuming that children do not yet have the innate capacity to develop independently. Educators or institutions design the Curriculum, and students act as passive recipients. The teaching methods used are conventional and structural, such as memorisation, repetitive practice, and physical discipline. However, this approach still pays attention to students' mental and emotional aspects through guidance and individual intervention when necessary.

²⁰ Saihan, *Ideologi Pendidikan Pesantren*.

²¹ Agus Purnomo And Others, *Pengantar Model Pembelajaran* (Yayasan Hamjah Diha, 2022).

²² Agus Purnomo And Others, *Pengantar Model Pembelajaran*.

The Philosophical Basis of the Progressive Curriculum

The progressive Curriculum is rooted in the philosophy of progressive education, a school of thought that emphasises the active role of learners in the learning process. Progressivism places students at the centre of learning, rather than merely as recipients of information. This movement emerged as a response to traditional education systems, which were considered too rigid and irrelevant to the dynamics of real life.²³ Historically, progressivism began to develop in the 19th century but experienced rapid growth in the 20th century. This school of thought emerged as criticism against conventional educational policies still influenced by 19th-century philosophical views. Traditional education at that time was considered incapable of shaping individuals who were whole and independent in their thinking and actions.²⁴

The philosophy of progressivism is closely associated with the great figure John Dewey (1859–1952). In his book *School of Tomorrow* (1915), Dewey stated that life is dynamic and constantly undergoing renewal. Therefore, education should be seen as the primary means of renewing human and social life. Dewey believes schools are not merely places to acquire knowledge but vehicles for social and intellectual growth and development.²⁵

Dewey also emphasised that good education must directly touch on real life and social practices, including art and culture. He believed the learning process would be more meaningful and enjoyable if linked to the students' concrete experiences. In this context, knowledge is not taught rigidly but constructed through experience and solving everyday problems.

For Dewey, education is a form of social engineering to improve society. Therefore, social issues should be an essential part of the Curriculum. Learners must be encouraged to understand and think about real problems in their environment so that education is not disconnected from social life.

For this reason, the teacher's role is not solely as the source of information but as a facilitator, guide, and director in the learning process. Teachers are responsible for creating a democratic learning environment where students learn cooperatively and discuss relevant social issues. In such classroom

²³ Khoirunnisa Khoirunnisa and others, 'Penerapan Filsafat Pendidikan Progresivisme Dalam Kurikulum Merdeka', *Reflection: Islamic Education Journal*, 1.4 (2024), pp. 66–77, doi:10.61132/reflection.v1i4.164.

²⁴ Musyarapah, 'The Role of Progressive Philosophy in the Curriculum Based on John Dewey's Theory', *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education*, 1.1 (2017), pp. 32–39.

²⁵ Herlini Puspika Afriliyany, Maisy P, Siti Najla Kalsum, Umi Sari, 'Pemikiran Filsafat Progresivisme John Dewey Dalam Pendidikan', *Karakter: Jurnal Riset Ilmu Pendidikan Islam*, 1.4 (2024), pp. 162–68, doi:https://doi.org/10.61132/karakter.v1i4.187.

dynamics, students indirectly learn about democratic principles through peer interaction and cooperation.²⁶

The author concludes that the progressive Curriculum is based on the philosophy of progressivism, which places students at the centre of learning and emphasises their active role in learning. This approach emerged as a critique of traditional education, which was rigid and irrelevant to real life. Pioneered by John Dewey, progressivism views education as a means of social renewal that must be closely linked to concrete experiences, art, culture, and social issues. In this approach, teachers act as facilitators who create a democratic and collaborative learning environment, so that students can develop critical thinking skills, social engagement, and democratic values.

Progressivism Curriculum and Learning Methods

Progressivism emphasises a student-centred learning approach. This model challenges traditional educational practices, which tend to be authoritarian and dogmatic, by introducing a learning system that values individual potential and allows for active student participation.²⁷

The main objective of this approach is for students to develop holistically and face the increasingly complex challenges of life. Education, from a progressive perspective, must prepare students to face an uncertain and ever-changing future. Therefore, learning needs to be designed in a contextual, flexible, and adaptive manner to keep pace with the times.²⁸

Based on the above description, progressivism emphasises a learner-oriented approach to learning, aiming to actualize students' potential holistically. This approach opposes traditional education models that are rigid and authoritative and encourages learning that is relevant to real life, flexible to change, and responsive to the times. With this approach, progressivism seeks to equip students to adapt and succeed in facing the dynamic and uncertain challenges of the future.

²⁶ Afriliany, Maisy P, Siti Najla Kalsum, Umi Sari, 'Pemikiran Filsafat Progressivisme John Dewey Dalam Pendidikan'.

²⁷ Jems Sopacua and Muhammad Rijal Fadli, 'Konsep Pendidikan Merdeka Belajar Perspektif Filsafat Progressivisme (The Emancipated Learning Concept of Education in Progressivism Philosophy Perspective)', *Potret Pemikiran*, 26.1 (2022), p. 1, doi:10.30984/pp.v26i1.1413.

²⁸ Kelly Vaughan, 'Progressive Education and Racial Justice: Examining the Work of John Dewey', *Education and Culture*, 34.2 (2018), p. 39, doi:10.5703/educationculture.34.2.0039.

Implications of Progressive Curriculum for Education in Indonesia

The progressive Curriculum offers a practical approach to enhancing education quality in Indonesia. By emphasising the holistic development of students, this approach plays a role in shaping productive individuals with social responsibility. Essentially, the progressive Curriculum aims to empower students to become lifelong learners. Therefore, education is not only focused on delivering material, but also on character building and developing students' personal potential.²⁹

The progressive Curriculum views each student as a unique individual who plays an active role in learning. Since each student has different abilities and potential, the learning approach must be tailored to their needs and interests. Progressive education aims to prepare students to face future challenges through the development of critical thinking, creativity, and independence. Students can explore their interests and talents under teachers' guidance and supervision. The role of teachers in this context is to help students optimise their potential. Although freedom is given, it is essential to consider that students are still in their developmental stage, so guidance in decision-making is still needed.³⁰

Based on the above explanation, the progressive Curriculum is a relevant approach to improving the quality of education in Indonesia because it focuses on the holistic development of students. By recognising the uniqueness and potential of each individual, this approach encourages personalised, participatory, and contextual learning. This Curriculum emphasises mastery of subject matter, character development, critical thinking, creativity, and independence. In its implementation, teachers act as facilitators, guiding students to become lifelong learners and preparing them to face future challenges.

Differences Between Conservative and Progressive Curricula

Based on the discussion of conservative and progressive educational philosophies, it can be concluded that these two approaches have fundamental differences in curriculum development. These differences can be systematically summarised in the following table:

²⁹ Tian Abdul Aziz Septi Nur Fauziya, 'Kaitan Pandangan Aliran Filsafat Progresivisme Terhadap Siswa Slow Learners Dalam Proses Pembelajaran', *Griya Journal of Mathematics Education and Application*, 2.1 (2022), pp. 70–79.

³⁰ Inayah Dzakiyyah, M. Yunus Abu bakar Nawal Zahwa, 'Kontektualisasi Aliran Filsafat Prgresivisme Dalam Pandangan Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia', *Jurnal Sains Student Research*, 2.6 (2024), pp. 215–27.

Table 1. Differences Between Conservative and Progressive Curricula

Aspect	Conservative Curriculum	Progressive Curriculum
Educational Goals	Instill cultural heritage, moral values, and established knowledge	Develop individual potential, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills
	Prepare students to be obedient and civilised citizens	Prepare students to face change and contemporary challenges
	Focus on the transfer of fixed knowledge	Focus on developing learners' experiences and interests
Teaching Methodology	The teacher is the centre of knowledge and the leading authority	The student is an active subject in the learning process
	Lecture, memorisation, and structured drills	Discussion, project-based learning, experiments, collaboration
	Rigid Curriculum, textbook-oriented	Flexible Curriculum, based on contextual experiences
	Evaluation emphasises academic content mastery.	Evaluation emphasises learning processes and critical thinking skills.

This table analysis shows that a conservative curriculum maintains stability and continuity, while a progressive Curriculum emphasises adaptation to social dynamics. However, the two cannot be viewed as absolute opposites but as complementary spectrums. In Indonesia's context of Islamic education, particularly in madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools, there is an excellent opportunity to integrate both approaches: conservative values as an ethical and spiritual foundation, while progressive principles provide room for innovation and global relevance.

Critical Analysis of Conservative and Progressive Curriculum

Both conservative and progressive approaches bring distinct strengths and weaknesses when contextualised in the realities of contemporary education, particularly in the digital age, the post-pandemic era, and the implementation of Indonesia's Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka).

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Conservative Curriculum

The strength of the conservative Curriculum lies in its emphasis on discipline, structure, and moral values. In the era of social media and rapid

technological change, a curriculum grounded in ethical and cultural stability provides students with a firm identity and resilience against moral relativism. During the pandemic, when online learning often diminished direct teacher control, conservative approaches ensured continuity by emphasising memorisation, routines, and respect for authority, methods that still worked in remote contexts.

However, its weakness is its tendency to restrict creativity and adaptability. In the digital age, where information is abundant and rapidly evolving, an overemphasis on rote learning and passive reception risks producing graduates who lack critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy. Similarly, in the Independent Curriculum, which encourages project-based and student-centred learning, the conservative model can appear rigid and less aligned with policy directions.

From the perspective of social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), conservative methods limit students' opportunities to learn through interaction and collaboration, as the focus remains on top-down instruction. Likewise, from a constructivist lens (Piaget, Vygotsky), this approach underestimates learners' active role in knowledge construction.³¹

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Progressive Curriculum

The strength of the progressive Curriculum is its flexibility, relevance, and learner-centred orientation. This model integrates well with technology-enhanced learning in the digital age, allowing students to construct knowledge through projects, collaboration, and inquiry. During the pandemic, progressive methods encouraged autonomy and digital creativity, helping students engage in problem-solving and online collaboration. In line with the Independent Curriculum, progressivism fosters creativity, critical thinking, and personalised learning.

Its weakness, however, lies in the risk of overemphasising freedom without sufficient structure. In contexts where teacher competence, school resources, or student self-regulation are limited, progressive learning may lead to confusion, superficial learning, or inequality between students with different support systems at home. Moreover, not all subject areas (e.g., foundational literacy and numeracy) benefit equally from exploratory approaches—some require structured, repetitive practice often emphasised in conservative models.

From a constructivist perspective, progressivism embodies the view that students build knowledge through interaction and experience, making learning

³¹ Allan C. Ornstein Francis P. Hunkins, *Curriculum: Foundations, Principles, and Issues* (Pearson, 2018).

more meaningful. Likewise, social learning theory validates this approach, as students learn effectively in peer groups, collaborative projects, and real-life problem-solving contexts. However, without strong teacher scaffolding (Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development"), progressive methods may fail to guide learners toward more profound mastery.³²

In conclusion, neither conservative nor progressive curriculum approaches should be considered absolute. In the current era, a hybrid model is more realistic: conservative values of discipline, ethics, and structured guidance can be harmonised with progressive emphasis on creativity, collaboration, and adaptability. This synthesis aligns with the spirit of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia, which seeks to balance foundational competencies with character development and 21st-century skills.

Integration of Conservative and Progressive Approaches for an Adaptive and Contextual Islamic Education Curriculum in Indonesia

Indonesia's Islamic education system, including madrasahs and pesantren, navigates a unique intersection of tradition and modernity, influenced by diverse Islamic organisations like Muhammadiyah (more progressive) and Nahdlatul Ulama (often conservative).³³ Integrating conservative and progressive elements can create an adaptive curriculum that preserves religious identity while equipping students for global challenges, such as in Society 5.0, where technology and human values converge.³⁴ This "middle path" addresses group contestations, countering extremism and promoting moderation.³⁵

³² Norliana Che Mat and Khairul Azhar Jamaludin, 'Effectiveness of Practices and Applications of Student-Centered Teaching and Learning in Primary Schools: A Systematic Literature Review', *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 13.3 (2024), doi:10.6007/IJARPED/v13-i3/21733.

³³ Andri Moewashi Idharoel Haq, 'Implementation of the Concept of Progressive Islamic Education in Muhammadiyah and Its Challenges in the Age of Social Media', *Progresiva: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Pendidikan Islam*, 13.01 (2024), pp. 145–64, doi:10.22219/progresiva.v13i01.33207; Maemonah Maemonah and others, 'Contestation of Islamic Educational Institutions in Indonesia: Content Analysis on Social Media', *Cogent Education*, 10.1 (2023), doi:10.1080/2331186X.2022.2164019.

³⁴ Saca Suhendi, 'Islamic Education Curriculum in the Era of Society 5.0: Between Challenges and Innovation', *International Journal of Science and Society*, 6.2 (2024), pp. 874–88, doi:10.54783/ijssoc.v6i2.1073.

³⁵ Shah Sahin Qadri, Nasir Shaheen Hussin, and Mezirow Mursaleen Dar, 'Countering Extremism through Islamic Education: Curriculum and Pedagogical Approaches', *Journal on Islamic Studies*, 1.1 (2024), pp. 74–89, doi:10.35335/r182s939.

Key strategies for integration include:

1. Curriculum Design: Develop an integrative framework that embeds conservative objectives (e.g., religious memorisation and moral education) within progressive methodologies (e.g., project-based learning on Islamic ethics applied to environmental issues). For instance, core subjects like fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) can incorporate critical thinking exercises to interpret texts contextually, bridging tradition with modernity. This aligns with culturally-based Islamic Religious Education (IRE), infusing values like tolerance and justice into lessons.³⁶
2. Teaching Methods: Combine teacher-led instruction for foundational religious knowledge with student-centred activities, such as group discussions on contemporary issues like digital ethics in Islam. Principals can act as "socio-religious curators" to balance these, fostering inclusive environments in Islamic schools.³⁷
3. Incorporation of 21st-Century Skills: Infuse progressive skills (e.g., collaboration, digital literacy) into conservative content, such as using technology to study hadith while emphasising religious moderation to counter radicalism. Muhammadiyah's progressive models, which adapt Islamic education to millennial challenges, demonstrate this.³⁸
4. Contextual Adaptation: Tailor integration to Indonesia's pluralism by drawing on local wisdom (e.g., Pancasila) alongside Islamic principles, promoting "Indonesianness" through education that counters extremism via values like peace and coexistence. Revitalising madrasahs by integrating foundational Islamic education with modern tools ensures their relevance.³⁹

This hybrid approach can yield a resilient curriculum, as seen in efforts to align traditions with global demands, ultimately fostering well-rounded

³⁶ Decky Saputra and others, 'Contemporary Islamic Educational Thought; Aligning Traditions with Global Changes', *International Journal of Innovative Research in Multidisciplinary Education*, 03.06 (2024), doi:10.58806/ijirme.2024.v3i6n33.

³⁷ Suyatno Suyatno and others, 'Progressive Islamic Education: Bridging the Gap of Islam, Indonesianness, and Modernity', *The Qualitative Report*, 2022, doi:10.46743/2160-3715/2022.4782.

³⁸ Fira Nur Anisa and Suwendi Suwendi, 'The Relevance of Progressive Education to Islamic Education in the Millennial Era', *Tadris: Jurnal Keguruan Dan Ilmu Tarbiyah*, 9.2 (2024), pp. 515–28, doi:10.24042/tadris.v9i2.24816.

³⁹ Muhamad Ishaac, 'Development of The Indonesian Islamic Education Curriculum In The Era of Globalization Challenges: Study of The Thoughts of Indonesian Islamic Education Figures', 2023, pp. 120–35.

Muslim citizens in Indonesia.⁴⁰ However, implementation requires teacher training and policy support to navigate resistance from conservative factions.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above study, it can be concluded that conservative and progressive curricula represent two different but complementary approaches in educational philosophy, methodology, and practice. Conservative Curriculum emphasises preserving traditional values, moral stability, and adherence to social and religious norms, with teachers as the primary authority. In contrast, a progressive Curriculum is oriented towards learner-centred learning, contextual relevance, and developing critical and creative skills essential in the 21st century.

In the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, particularly in madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools, these two approaches interact uniquely because they are influenced by the dynamics of Islamic organisations such as Muhammadiyah, which tends to be progressive, and Nahdlatul Ulama, which is relatively conservative. Therefore, an adaptive curriculum synthesis is needed: conservative principles are the foundation for values, ethics, and discipline, while progressive principles provide space for innovation, independence, and global relevance.

Integration strategies can be implemented through: (1) curriculum design that combines conservative objectives with progressive methodologies, (2) learning methods that combine teacher instruction with participatory activities, (3) strengthening 21st-century skills in religious content, and (4) contextual adaptation by integrating local wisdom and moderate Islamic principles. This hybrid approach preserves Islamic and national identity and prepares students to face the challenges of the Society 5.0 era while countering extremism through moderate and inclusive education.

Thus, the Islamic Curriculum in Indonesia, which integrates conservatism and progressivism, has the potential to produce a generation of Muslims who are religious, adaptive, innovative, and able to contribute to global civilisation. However, implementing this integration requires strong policy support, increased teacher capacity, and a willingness to dialogue with various parties to avoid becoming trapped in ideological polarisation.

⁴⁰ Saputra and others, 'Contemporary Islamic Educational Thought; Aligning Traditions with Global Changes'.

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