

Curriculum Management of Pesantren-Based Early Childhood Education

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ABSTRACT

Early Childhood Education (ECE) plays a strategic role in shaping children's character and spirituality from an early age, especially when integrated with the distinctive values of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). This study aims to explore and describe the curriculum management of pesantren-based ECE at Al-Battani Kindergarten, Bandungrejo, Mranggen, Demak, with a focus on the aspects of planning, implementation, and evaluation. Using a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. The findings reveal that learning practices have internalized pesantren values such as sincerity, discipline, and Islamic etiquette through daily activities such as collective prayers, *shalat dhuha*, memorization of short surahs, and the *sorogan* method. However, curriculum management remains informal, lacking written curriculum documents that integrate national ECE standards with pesantren values. Child development evaluations also do not yet use standardized indicators, and there is a competency gap among teachers between pesantren and formal ECE backgrounds. The study concludes that it is crucial to develop a written integrative curriculum, provide dual-competency-based teacher training, create contextual spiritual evaluation instruments, and establish a coordination forum between pesantren and educational institutions. This research provides both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of locally based Islamic curricula and is currently being followed up with the development of an integrative curriculum prototype and teacher training to be piloted in similar institutions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (ECE) represents the most crucial stage in forming the foundation of children's character, values, and spiritual intelligence. In the context of Islamic education, Early Childhood Islamic Education (ECIE) not only emphasizes cognitive and motor development but also prioritizes spirituality and moral character through joyful and integrative learning approaches (Fitriani, 2020). In Indonesia, the emergence of pesantren-based ECE institutions has become an innovative alternative for cultivating Islamic values from an early age (Zamroni, 2018). Pesantren, as the oldest Islamic educational institution in the archipelago, upholds core values such as sincerity, discipline, and simplicity—values that are highly relevant for early childhood education (Hasanah, 2021). Instilling these values early is essential for deeply rooting them in the child's personality. This is in line with Islamic principles that view education as a lifelong process, beginning from the cradle to the grave. Therefore, pesantren plays a pivotal role not only in religious instruction but also in shaping holistic character development in children.

However, many ECE institutions still rely on the national curriculum without systematically adapting it to pesantren-based values. This misalignment creates a gap between the aims of Islamic education and the curriculum's implementation on the ground (Fitriani, 2020; Zuhri, 2017). This issue is further exacerbated by limited managerial capacity to integrate a curriculum approach that balances both spiritual and academic dimensions. In this context, curriculum management innovation is needed to ensure a more directed learning process that positively impacts children's character development. Additionally, the rapid pace of social transformation, modernization, and early exposure to digital media greatly influences the development of children's values and morals. Islamic education institutions, including pesantren-based ECEs, are therefore required to respond to these challenges with a contextual, holistic, and value-based curriculum. Curriculum reform becomes an urgent necessity—not only to transfer knowledge, but also to serve as a moral stronghold for the younger generation (Zuhri, 2017).

This study is grounded in the need to understand curriculum management models in ECE that align with Islamic values and the socio-cultural context of the community. A curriculum that is not only normative but also locally relevant is key to instilling values of character and spirituality from an early age. This mandate aligns with government regulations, such as the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 137 of 2014 on National ECE Standards and the Ministry of Religious Affairs Regulation No. 90 of 2013 on Religious-Based ECE (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014; Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2013). Normatively, the basis for developing Islamic-based curricula is also emphasized in the Qur'an, Surah At-Tahrim [66]: 6: "*O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire...*" and in the hadith of Prophet Muhammad SAW: "*Every child is born in a state of fitrah. Then, it is his parents who make him Jewish, Christian, or Magian*" (Bukhari No. 1385; Muslim No. 2658), indicating the significance of early education in shaping values and personality.

Preliminary research conducted at Al-Battani Kindergarten, Bandungrejo, Mranggen, Demak, revealed that the learning process has already incorporated pesantren elements such as daily prayers, congregational *shalat*, short surah memorization, and the use of traditional pesantren methods like *sorogan* to teach Arabic letters. However, no written curriculum document was found that explicitly integrates national ECE standards with pesantren-specific values. This indicates that curriculum management at Al-Battani remains informal and heavily reliant on the experience of teachers and institutional leaders (Field Observation, 2025). Beyond the absence of formal documentation, challenges also arise from teacher competencies. Some teachers have strong pesantren backgrounds but lack formal ECE training, while those with formal ECE qualifications are less familiar with pesantren educational traditions. This imbalance affects the coherence of curriculum vision and its uniform implementation in classrooms. Thus, the need for an integrative curriculum management system becomes increasingly evident.

Previous studies have made significant contributions to this field. Fitriani (2020) discussed integrated Islamic ECE curriculum models, but did not focus on managerial aspects; Zamroni (2018)

examined the institutional management of religious ECE; and Nurfadilah (2021) explored the integration of Islamic values into teaching materials in pesantren-based ECE, though without addressing technical curriculum management. Similarly, Arifin (2019) investigated instructional strategies in pesantren-based Islamic kindergartens (RA), but limited his study to classroom methodologies without touching on institutional curriculum planning. Meanwhile, Marlina and Setyawan (2020) explored the integration of pesantren values in rural ECE learning environments, yet did not formulate a systematic and applicable managerial model. Hence, there remains a lack of research focusing on how curriculum management is practically implemented in pesantren-based ECEs, especially at the local level and in formal institutions such as Al-Battani Kindergarten.

These preliminary findings underscore the urgency of academic inquiry to formulate a curriculum management model that harmonizes national curriculum standards with pesantren values. A curriculum management approach is needed that is not only administrative in nature but also responsive to the developmental needs of young children and rooted in the local pesantren culture (Sutarto, 2019). This research is crucial for providing a comprehensive overview of curriculum management practices in pesantren-based ECE institutions as a foundation for policy-making focused on improving the quality of early Islamic education. Additionally, the results of this study are expected to inform the development of teacher training programs that integrate pesantren-specific managerial and pedagogical perspectives, and contribute to the creation of local curricula that balance national standards with children's spiritual and character needs in a holistic way.

This study is based on the hypothesis that curriculum management is not merely an administrative matter but lies at the heart of educational quality. In the context of pesantren-based ECE, integrating Islamic values through systematic management provides clear direction for teachers in designing content, learning strategies, and assessment of child development. Furthermore, a curriculum that is thoroughly integrated with pesantren values will not only create a religious learning atmosphere but also foster a social-spiritual environment that aligns with Islamic educational character. Therefore, the effectiveness of the curriculum in shaping the Islamic character of young children largely depends on how well its managerial processes can harmonize the visions of both national education and pesantren in a sustainable way.

The main objective of this study is to explore and describe the curriculum management of pesantren-based ECE at Al-Battani Kindergarten, particularly in terms of curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation. This research also aims to identify the strengths, challenges, and strategies employed by the institution in managing early childhood Islamic education in a pesantren setting. The study contributes by offering a contextual and systematic curriculum management model that combines national ECE standards with pesantren-specific values. This model is expected to serve as a reference for other ECE institutions with similar characteristics and to support policymakers in formulating regulations for early childhood Islamic education in Indonesia.

2. METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach using a case study design, aimed at describing and deeply understanding the practice of curriculum management in pesantren-based Early Childhood Education (ECE) at Al-Battani Kindergarten, Bandungrejo, Mranggen, Demak. This approach was selected as it is deemed most appropriate for exploring meaning, processes, and the implementation context of the curriculum within a unique socio-religious environment. A case study design was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive explanation of a phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined (Yin, 2014). Qualitative research not only yields numerical data but also rich narratives filled with meaning, experiences, and contextual practices observed in the field (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research subjects consisted of the school principal, homeroom teachers, Islamic studies teachers, and administrators of Al-Battani Kindergarten. All participants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique in which informants are chosen based on their knowledge, experience, and

significant role in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the ECE curriculum. Subject selection was based on their direct involvement in curriculum management and their understanding of the pesantren values implemented in learning. This technique aligns with the principles of qualitative research, which prioritizes the depth of information over the number of informants (Moleong, 2017).

The research procedure began with a preliminary study conducted through field observation and a review of the school's internal documents. This stage aimed to gain an initial understanding of the curriculum structure and learning activities carried out. Subsequently, the researcher moved on to the main data collection phase, which included in-depth interviews with key informants, participatory observation of learning activities, and the collection of supporting documents. During this process, the researcher spent a designated period at the site to directly observe the institution's dynamics and gain a comprehensive contextual understanding.

The research instruments used in this study included open-ended interview guidelines, observation sheets, and a document analysis checklist. The interview guide was developed based on the research questions and focus, aiming to explore curriculum planning, implementation strategies, Islamic value integration, and evaluation systems. Meanwhile, the observation sheet was used to record learning practices, classroom atmosphere, and interaction patterns between teachers and students. The documents analyzed included daily lesson plans (RPPH), schedules of religious activities, children's development reports, and instructional handbooks used in pesantren-based learning.

Data collection was carried out through three primary methods. First, in-depth interviews were conducted to obtain reflective and descriptive verbal data from key informants. Second, direct observation of learning activities was carried out to assess the alignment between curriculum planning and classroom implementation. Third, document analysis was conducted on curriculum-related documents and administrative records to obtain written information for triangulation purposes. These methods support the principle of data reinforcement through multiple sources (Sugiyono, 2021).

The data analysis technique used in this study followed the Miles and Huberman model, which includes three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data reduction involved filtering information relevant to the research focus; data display was performed by categorizing findings into main themes; and conclusions were drawn through interpretation of the meanings emerging from field data. To ensure the validity of the findings, source and methodological triangulation were applied, comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the obtained information (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

Through this methodology, the study aims to produce an accurate, comprehensive, and contextual description of curriculum management practices in pesantren-based ECE. The findings are expected to contribute not only theoretically to the development of Islamic education management studies but also practically to ECE institutions in developing integrative, value-based curricula that are adaptive to local contexts.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to describe the curriculum management of pesantren-based Early Childhood Islamic Education (ECIE) at Al-Battani Kindergarten, Bandungrejo, Mranggen, Demak. The findings were obtained through in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis. The results respond to the hypothesis that curriculum management integrated with pesantren values can more effectively shape the Islamic character of young children.

3.1 Curriculum Planning

Curriculum planning at Al-Battani Kindergarten is conducted flexibly and is based on practical experience. While the primary reference remains the National ECE Curriculum, pesantren values such as simplicity, Islamic etiquette (*adab*), and spirituality are embedded in daily programs through habituated religious activities. However, these values are not yet systematically structured within an official curriculum document. This suggests that Islamic values are deeply rooted in the school culture, even if they are not formally institutionalized (Daily Learning Plan Documentation, 2025).

According to the principal of Al-Battani Kindergarten, “We plan the curriculum together with teachers and pesantren caregivers in regular meetings, but we do not yet have a dedicated team to develop a formal written curriculum document” (Interview, April 17, 2025). As a result, the planning process tends to be adaptive to daily dynamics without a clear administrative foundation. This leads to inconsistencies in the evaluation and development of learning due to the absence of a standardized framework. Observations revealed that planning activities are conducted verbally and agreed upon collectively, without being documented in a systematic written format. This creates challenges in maintaining continuity across semesters. If there is a change in school leadership or teaching staff, the continuity of the curriculum may be disrupted. Therefore, the institution requires a formal curriculum document that articulates its Islamic vision and mission while aligning with national ECE standards, serving both as a basis for accountability and an instrument for institutional oversight (Planning Meeting Observation, 2025).

3.2 Learning Implementation

The implementation of learning at Al-Battani integrates pesantren values practically into classroom activities. Daily routines include reciting prayers before lessons, *shalat dhuha*, memorizing short *surahs*, and learning Arabic letters using the traditional *sorogan* method. Children appear to enjoy the learning process as it is delivered in an age-appropriate and enjoyable manner (Learning Observation, April 18, 2025). One teacher noted, “We don’t just teach knowledge; we also instill politeness, cleanliness, and respect for parents—all part of pesantren values” (Interview, Class A Teacher, April 19, 2025). Teachers also use storytelling of the Prophets’ lives to instill honesty and kindness. However, most teachers still rely on intuition and personal experience due to the lack of structured learning modules that integrate both national ECE and pesantren curricula.

Documents such as daily schedules and lesson plans (RPPH) show that Islamic values are reflected in nearly all activities but are not explicitly labeled in the curriculum design (Daily Schedule and RPPH Documents, 2025). This presents an opportunity to develop integrative guidelines that include not only academic content but also character formation based on local pesantren values.

3.3 Curriculum Evaluation

Child development evaluation is conducted using a descriptive-narrative approach. Teachers periodically record behavioral and habitual changes in daily journals, focusing on moral and spiritual aspects such as honesty, obedience in worship, and social care. However, there are no standardized assessment indicators, particularly for measuring Islamic character traits in a systematic and quantitative way (Child Development Report Documentation, 2025). Several teachers shared that they “find it difficult to assess sincerity or a sense of responsibility in children due to the lack of specific instruments; we simply record what we observe each day” (Interview, Class B Teacher, April 20, 2025). This indicates that evaluations are subjective and unstandardized, even though they are aligned with qualitative approaches typical in early childhood education.

Observations confirmed that teachers record children’s development through daily narratives such as: “Today, the child was able to recite the prayer before entering the bathroom and practiced it correctly.” This shows that assessment is based on direct observation but lacks a rubric or benchmark to measure the development of Islamic values in children (Class A Evaluation Observation, 2025). Therefore, the institution needs to develop a more operational and measurable spiritual evaluation instrument.

3.4 The Role of Pesantren Darul Qur’an

Pesantren Darul Qur’an serves as the spiritual and cultural foundation of the kindergarten. Its presence creates a strong religious atmosphere. Weekly, pesantren caregivers conduct spiritual guidance sessions for both teachers and parents. These activities serve as a means to transmit pesantren values into the classroom informally but intensively (Guidance Activity Observation, April 19, 2025). The pesantren caregiver stated, “We try to ensure that values such as sincerity, humility, and etiquette remain present in children’s learning, even if they are not formally embedded in the

institutional structure" (Interview with Pesantren Caregiver, April 20, 2025). Although not formally institutionalized, this involvement has been a vital force in shaping children's Islamic character.

However, the absence of an official forum integrating the pesantren's role into curriculum management means that pesantren directives are often undocumented and lack continuity. The school's vision and mission documents reflect the ideological influence of the pesantren but are not translated into operational documents like the RPPH or syllabus (Vision and Mission Documentation, 2025). A coordination structure is needed to allow the pesantren to functionally contribute to institutional management.

3.5 Challenges and Institutional Needs of Al-Battani Kindergarten

The main challenge faced by the institution is the absence of a written curriculum document that systematically combines national ECE standards with pesantren values. Teachers often interpret Islamic values personally without standardized references, leading to inconsistent learning quality across classes (Interview with Principal, April 21, 2025). Additionally, differences in teacher backgrounds create pedagogical gaps. Teachers with pesantren backgrounds often lack understanding of early childhood principles such as play-based learning and stages of cognitive development, while formally trained ECE teachers struggle to integrate Islamic traditions such as *adab* and *sorogan* into play-based activities (Teacher Interviews and Observations, April 21–22, 2025).

Training documentation reveals that no specialized training programs on pesantren-based curriculum management have been implemented. Therefore, the institution's key needs include: (1) the development of a written integrative curriculum, (2) teacher training that accommodates dual competencies (ECE and pesantren traditions), and (3) the creation of applicable Islamic character assessment systems (Training Attendance and Minutes Documentation, 2025). With support from the government and pesantren leadership, a curriculum management model based on local Islamic values can be implemented systemically.

The curriculum management of pesantren-based Early Childhood Islamic Education (ECIE) at Al-Battani Kindergarten, Bandungrejo, Mranggen, Demak Discussion Based on Research Findings :

3.6 Curriculum Planning

In the context of Islamic education, curriculum planning should encompass not only cognitive and motoric elements but also the spiritual and affective dimensions of the child. This aligns with Al-Ghazali's view that education must be directed toward the purification of the soul and the formation of morality (*ta'dib*), rather than merely transferring knowledge. Although TK Al-Battani has internalized pesantren values in its practices, the absence of a written structure indicates that these values have not yet been institutionalized systemically. The curriculum, as a formal document, represents the articulation of an educational vision. According to Ornstein & Hunkins (2017), curriculum planning should be systematic, participatory, and reflective. At TK Al-Battani, however, the process remains spontaneous and intuitive, relying heavily on teachers' judgment, thus making it vulnerable to inconsistency and difficult to evaluate. This reveals the weak role of documentation in educational management.

Moreover, the concept of curriculum mapping has not yet been implemented in this institution. Curriculum maps are essential to ensure continuity between learning levels and across semesters. In the event of teacher or leadership transitions, learning can continue in line with established directions. Without such a map, the institution risks losing its strategic focus in implementing values-based education.

Strengthening curriculum planning should also be aligned with regulatory documents such as Ministry of Education Regulation No. 137 of 2014 on National Standards for Early Childhood Education and Ministry of Religious Affairs Regulation No. 90 of 2013. While TK Al-Battani ideologically fulfills the Islamic aspects, it has yet to formally synchronize national regulations with the local uniqueness of pesantren education. This underscores the urgency of forming a dedicated curriculum development team within the institution.

Ultimately, undocumented curriculum planning hinders the institution's ability to build accountability toward parents and external supervisors. The principal lacks a formal reference to justify learning outcomes. In this regard, the curriculum document functions as a "pedagogical contract" between the institution and educational stakeholders that must be seriously developed.

3.7 Learning Implementation

The learning practices at TK Al-Battani reflect the philosophy of Islamic education that integrates *adab* (morality), *amal* (practice), and *'ilm* (knowledge). This is evident in routines such as prayers, congregational prayers (*shalat*), and the learning of hijaiyah letters. Ibn Khaldun emphasized that early childhood education should focus on habituation (*ta'wid*), not merely the transmission of information. TK Al-Battani has demonstrated this principle through the reinforcement of daily religious activities for children. However, the lack of structured learning modules is a major hindrance. Learning modules are essential to ensure coherence between learning content, methods, and objectives.

Fitriani (2020) found that Islamic-based ECE institutions with integrative learning modules tend to be more consistent in implementing religious values than those without. TK Al-Battani currently lacks such modules. In addition, the lack of teacher training in integrative approaches leads to pedagogical gaps. Teachers from pesantren backgrounds often excel in religious aspects but lack skills in play-based and sensorimotor learning techniques. Conversely, formally trained ECE teachers struggle to integrate Islamic traditions such as *adab* and *sorogan* into play-based activities. This highlights the need for dual-competency-based training programs.

According to the Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) theory by NAEYC, early childhood education must consider the child's developmental stage, individual needs, and cultural context. TK Al-Battani fulfills the cultural context through its pesantren-based character but still lacks in terms of individualization and age-appropriate pedagogical strategies. Strengthening learning implementation also requires classroom supervision and *lesson study* initiatives. Supervision should not be merely administrative but serve as a reflective tool for improvement. Periodic supervision can provide teachers with feedback to help them deliver Islamic values in more effective and enjoyable ways.

3.8 Curriculum Evaluation

Evaluation is a critical part of curriculum management, as it serves as the foundation for determining the effectiveness of programs and for future planning. At TK Al-Battani, teachers' assessments tend to be narrative and subjective. While this aligns with an *assessment for learning* approach, it becomes problematic without clear and standardized indicators. Evaluation is only effective when accompanied by targeted feedback.

Bloom's taxonomy (1956) states that evaluation should cover cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. TK Al-Battani's evaluations emphasize affective and spiritual aspects, but lack standardized instruments. For example, traits like sincerity and discipline are assessed based on teachers' impressions rather than measurable indicators, which may lead to inconsistencies and unfair assessments among students.

One major cause of weak evaluation is the absence of value-based assessment rubrics. Rubrics are vital in character-based education as they provide explicit benchmarks. Marlina & Setyawan (2020) found that pesantren-based ECE institutions that developed Islamic personality rubrics improved teachers' reflective quality regarding students' spiritual development.

Additionally, the absence of portfolio-based progress reports is a notable shortcoming. Portfolios should function as documentation of a child's developmental journey over time. When well developed, portfolios can serve as both a reflection tool for teachers and a medium for communicating progress to parents. Currently, TK Al-Battani's reports are mostly general narratives. In the long term, the institution needs to develop a Spiritual and Moral Development Checklist relevant to its local context. This checklist could be structured according to early childhood

developmental stages and formulated collaboratively with Islamic education experts, providing a more accurate, objective evaluation instrument that reflects Islamic integration in learning.

3.9 The Role of Pesantren Darul Qur'an

The pesantren plays a strategic role in shaping the spiritual atmosphere and Islamic values at TK Al-Battani. The presence of the pesantren caregiver as a spiritual mentor lends religious legitimacy to the values taught in class. According to Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory, educational institutions serve as spaces for reproducing dominant cultural values—in this case, pesantren culture. However, the pesantren's role has yet to be fully integrated into curriculum management structures. It remains a background ideology rather than an active participant in curriculum planning and evaluation.

In an integrative Islamic education context, strong collaboration is needed between the formal (institutional) and traditional (cultural) components. This synergy enhances the authenticity of local Islamic education. Nurfadilah (2021) emphasized that the success of pesantren-based ECE relies heavily on the strength of the relationship between school management and pesantren caregivers. If pesantren involvement is only symbolic, the transmission of values becomes suboptimal.

A curriculum coordination forum between teachers and caregivers should be established as a starting point. The pesantren's role can also be expanded by developing a core values guide for teachers. This guide could serve as a moral compass for teaching practices—covering classroom etiquette, the embedding of *adab* in play, and the spiritual regulation of emotions. When developed collaboratively, it can harmonize modern ECE methods with traditional Islamic values. Ultimately, integrating the pesantren into institutional management will provide a long-term strategic direction. The pesantren is not merely the institution's historical background but should function as a source of values, curriculum inspiration, and a moral-spiritual control mechanism. Therefore, it is crucial to establish the pesantren as an active partner in curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation.

3.10 Challenges and Institutional Needs of TK Al-Battani

The challenges faced by TK Al-Battani reflect the gap between the ideal of Islamic values and the managerial realities of the institution. The absence of an integrative curriculum document forces teachers to work without a standard reference, which risks inconsistency across classes and contradicts the principles of quality education management based on national and local standards.

The differing backgrounds of teachers—from pesantren graduates to formally trained ECE educators—also point to the lack of institutional policy on recruitment and training. Human capital development theory in education stresses that teacher quality is the key determinant of curriculum success. Thus, the institution needs to implement capacity building programs that unify Islamic and pedagogical competencies. Zamroni (2018) observed that the success of faith-based ECE institutions depends on managerial capability to integrate diverse human resources. Currently, TK Al-Battani lacks regular training programs or curriculum coaching that could support the integration of PAUD and pesantren approaches. This is a significant gap that must be addressed urgently.

Additionally, the lack of practical evaluation tools hampers learning outcome assessments. Unstandardized evaluation weakens the institution's accountability to parents and regulators. A comprehensive documentation system is needed, including lesson plans, narrative evaluations, developmental checklists, and student portfolios. To meet these challenges, collaboration among the institution, pesantren, local education authorities, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs is essential. TK Al-Battani could serve as a pilot model for the development of a local pesantren-based curriculum responsive to cultural values, spirituality, and child development. In doing so, the vision of early childhood Islamic education can be realized more systematically and professionally.

4. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the curriculum management of Early Childhood Islamic Education (PAUD) based on the pesantren model at TK Al-Battani, Bandungrejo, Mranggen, Demak. Integrates Islamic values practically into learning activities. These include daily prayers, congregational prayers,

memorization of short surahs, and learning the Arabic alphabet through the *sorogan* method. Pesantren values such as sincerity, simplicity, and discipline are embedded in classroom routines and consistently practiced by teachers. However, the curriculum planning process remains informal and undocumented systematically, making it vulnerable to inconsistencies and disparities between classes. In its implementation, several significant challenges arise. These include the absence of a written curriculum document that integrates national PAUD standards with distinctive pesantren values; the lack of a standardized evaluation instrument for assessing children's Islamic character; and the disparity in competence between teachers who graduated from pesantren and those from formal PAUD institutions. These gaps result in varied teaching approaches and an imbalance between pedagogical and spiritual aspects. Moreover, the pesantren's role—despite its strong potential in shaping children's spirituality—remains informal and is not functionally embedded in the institution's curriculum management structure. Proposed solutions include: (1) developing a written curriculum that integrates national PAUD standards with pesantren values; (2) providing teacher training based on dual competencies, combining PAUD pedagogy with pesantren traditions; (3) designing a contextually relevant rubric for evaluating spiritual and Islamic character development; and (4) establishing a curriculum coordination forum involving teachers, principals, and pesantren caretakers to ensure alignment of educational vision and implementation. This study underscores the urgency of developing a systematic, adaptive, and contextually grounded integrative pesantren-based curriculum management model. Continuous collaboration among educational institutions, pesantren, education offices, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs is essential to develop a curriculum system that not only complies with national regulations but also preserves the Islamic identity and local pesantren culture. This research is being continued through the development of a prototype integrative curriculum and a teacher training module, which will be piloted in response to the findings and pressing needs observed in the field.

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