

THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE: EDUCATIONAL INNOVATIONS AT THE JUNIOR SECONDARY LEVEL IN PKBM AULADUL MUSTOPA CIANJUR INDONESIA

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Abstract: *Islamic Education at PKBM (Community Learning Center) plays a strategic role in shaping the character of learners with noble morals, especially for those who do not follow formal education pathways. As part of non-formal education, PKBM provides opportunities for communities to access flexible learning services, including religious education. One of the main problems faced in the region is the low learning motivation among children and adolescents from economically disadvantaged families. Many of them are unable to continue formal schooling due to financial constraints, limited parental support, and the need to contribute to household income. This condition results in gaps in both academic knowledge and moral education. PKBM emerges as a solution to bridge this gap by providing alternative education that is accessible, flexible, and rooted in Islamic values. Islamic Education at PKBM aims to instill values of faith, piety, and good character in accordance with Islamic teachings in daily life. The material taught includes creed (aqidah), worship (ibadah), ethics (akhlak), as well as Islamic history and culture. The learning is delivered contextually so that it is easily understood and relevant to the lives of learners, who generally come from diverse backgrounds in terms of age, occupation, and life experience. This article discusses the importance of integrating faith and knowledge in junior secondary education as an innovative strategy. The study was conducted at the Junior High School level of PKBM Auladul Mustopa, Cianjur Regency, Indonesia. The aim of this research is to examine the implementation of Islamic-based learning (boarding school) at the junior secondary level. This is a qualitative study, utilizing questionnaires and interview results from teachers, students, and parents. The research focuses on the learning process within the boarding school environment and the significance of Islamic education for early adolescents. The findings indicate that Islamic education is crucial to be instilled from an early age, especially in today's rapidly developing world where various technologies significantly influence children's activities.*

Keywords: *Integration of Faith And Knowledge, Educational Innovation, Junior Secondary School, Boarding School*

Introduction

Education is a process of learning and developing individual abilities, knowledge, and character through interaction with the environment, teachers, and fellow students. The ultimate goal of education is to nurture personal potential, enhance intellectual abilities, and cultivate noble character. According to Plato, "Education is the process of shaping the soul," while Ki Hajar Dewantara, the Father of Indonesian Education, emphasized that education is a process of cultural formation and self-development.

In Indonesia, education is categorized into three types: formal, non-formal, and informal education. Formal education generally begins in early childhood and continues through higher levels, with junior secondary education serving as a critical stage in shaping cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development. At this stage, it is equally important to integrate spiritual values (faith) with academic knowledge (science) to foster intelligent, well-rounded individuals with strong moral character. This vision is also aligned with Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System.

However, many children and adolescents from economically disadvantaged families struggle to continue formal education. Limited financial capacity, lack of parental support, and the necessity to contribute to family income often result in weak learning motivation and hinder access to quality education. This has created educational disparities and a lack of character formation among early adolescents. In response to these challenges, Community Learning Centers (PKBM) have emerged as a non-formal educational alternative, providing flexible access to both academic and religious education for those who are left behind by the formal system.

Religious and general education are two inseparable components. To live meaningfully in society, individuals require general knowledge to interact and contribute, while as human beings created to worship, they also require religious guidance. Therefore, integrating both aspects in the learning process is essential—particularly Islamic education, which plays a vital role in shaping faith, piety, and moral values.

The integration of Islamic and general education represents a significant educational innovation. Traditionally, schools have emphasized either general or religious education, often neglecting one in favor of the other. In contrast, Islamic-based schools, especially those adopting a boarding school system, provide a more holistic approach by combining both dimensions in a balanced manner. Nevertheless, the current national curriculum has yet to fully harmonize this integration, creating a gap between academic achievement and moral development.

This study focuses on PKBM Auladul Mustopa, a junior secondary-level Islamic boarding school located in Cianjur Regency. The research examines the implementation of Islamic-based learning within a non-formal education setting and its role in addressing the educational and character-building needs of early adolescents. The findings are expected to contribute to curriculum development and raise awareness of the importance of integrating faith and knowledge in non-formal education institutions.

Research Method

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach focused on PKBM Auladul Mustopa in Cianjur Regency, Indonesia. The scope is limited to examining how the integration of Islamic and general education in a boarding school environment addresses the problem of low learning motivation among students from economically disadvantaged families. Data were collected from teachers, students, and parents through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and classroom observations to capture multiple perspectives.

The collected data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model—data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The analysis emphasized themes related to learning motivation, strategies of integrating Islamic and general education, and character development in early adolescents. The findings are context-specific to PKBM Auladul Mustopa and are not intended for broad generalization but rather to provide an in-depth understanding that can inform curriculum innovation in non-formal education.

Results And Discussion

Integration of Religious and General Education

One of the most persistent issues in Islamic educational discourse is the dichotomy between religious and general knowledge. Al-Attas (1980) argues that the bifurcation of knowledge in Muslim societies has weakened the holistic formation of learners. He advocates for a framework in which Islamic metaphysics serves as the foundation of all sciences. This resonates with Halstead (2004), who emphasizes that education in Islam must integrate both intellectual and spiritual dimensions to cultivate *insan kamil*—a complete human being.

In the Indonesian context, Rokhman et al. (2019) highlight how the dualistic system of national education—comprising secular schools and religious madrasah—has created tensions but also opportunities for synthesis. Efforts at integration, such as embedding Islamic values into mathematics, science, and language instruction, demonstrate innovative models of contextual education. UNESCO (2015) similarly stresses the importance of education that fosters both global competencies and local cultural-religious values, aligning with the holistic aims of Islamic pedagogy.

The findings of this study demonstrate that PKBM Auladul Mustopa adopts a distinctive approach to curriculum design, one that deliberately integrates Islamic religious education with general academic subjects. This integration is not a superficial or symbolic gesture but is carefully embedded within teaching practices. For instance, mathematical concepts such as fractions, percentages, and ratios are contextualized through examples from Islamic inheritance law (*faraid*) and zakat calculations. Similarly, concepts of time measurement are related to the daily prayer schedule, thereby showing students the immediate relevance of mathematical and scientific knowledge to their lived religious practice.

This approach aligns with Abdullah's (2017) argument that Islamic education should be understood as a living practice rather than the mere transmission of doctrinal knowledge. By framing academic knowledge through the lens of Islamic values, students are not only able to understand abstract concepts more concretely, but they are also motivated to see knowledge as an extension of their faith. This corresponds with the broader principle in Islamic pedagogy that *'ilm* (knowledge) should always be connected with *amal* (practice).

From an international perspective, Halstead (2004) highlights that one of the key challenges in contemporary Islamic education is the risk of producing fragmented learners when secular and religious knowledge are taught in isolation. PKBM Auladul Mustopa provides an antidote to this problem. By embedding Islamic values in subjects like mathematics, science, and language, it prevents the compartmentalization of knowledge and allows learners to develop holistic intellectual and moral identities. In the Indonesian context, Rokhman et al. (2019) identify dualism in education—where religious and general subjects are separated—as a persistent problem that leads to disconnected forms of learning. PKBM Auladul Mustopa, through its integrative model, offers a practical solution to this long-standing issue, particularly at the level of non-formal education.

An equally important finding concerns the role of teachers in facilitating this integration. Teachers at PKBM Auladul Mustopa are not merely transmitters of information but act as *murobbi*—educators who nurture the intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth of their students. Lesson plans are consciously designed to ensure coherence with both national curriculum standards and Islamic teachings. This dual responsibility requires teachers to be creative, professionally competent, and deeply rooted in Islamic knowledge. Hashim (2018) argues that teachers in Islamic education must act as “cultural translators,” bridging classical Islamic sciences with modern academic knowledge. This conceptualization underscores the pivotal role of teacher agency in realizing curriculum integration

The implications of this integrative model are profound. Students not only experience education as something relevant to their religious lives but also acquire a framework to reconcile their faith with the demands of modern knowledge. This contributes to the creation of learners who are both academically competent and spiritually grounded, thereby reflecting the Islamic educational ideal of producing balanced human beings (*insan kamil*).

Furthermore, the integrative approach resonates with global discourses on holistic education. UNESCO (2015) emphasizes the importance of education that develops not only cognitive skills but also ethical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of human personality. PKBM Auladul Mustopa demonstrates how this can be effectively implemented in a local context through contextualization, teacher agency, and curriculum innovation.

Boarding School Routines and Character Building

Another significant finding of this study is the role of the boarding school system in character formation. Students at PKBM Auladul Mustopa reside in dormitories during weekdays and return home on weekends. This arrangement allows for the cultivation of structured religious routines and moral discipline beyond the classroom. The daily schedule includes congregational prayers, Qur'an memorization (*tahfidz*), Qur'an recitation improvement (*tahsin*), *dhuha* prayers before class sessions, and even night prayers (*qiyamullail*).

These practices are not framed as mere ritual obligations but are strategically designed to build discipline, responsibility, time management, and spirituality. Nata (2016) emphasizes that effective character education in Islamic schooling requires three key components: habituation (*ta'wid*), structured introduction (*ta'rif*), and role modeling (*uswah hasanah*). The use of the Habits Tracker notebook at PKBM Auladul Mustopa is a concrete example of such pedagogical strategy. It helps students monitor their daily practices and encourages personal accountability, thereby reinforcing character formation through self-regulation.

From a global educational lens, Lickona (1991) argues that character formation requires the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. The boarding school routines at PKBM operationalize this principle by ensuring that students not only understand Islamic values intellectually but also practice and internalize them in daily life. The result is a holistic environment where character development is not incidental but systematically embedded in the fabric of school life.

In addition, psychological research supports the effectiveness of routine and structured environments in moral development. According to Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, children and adolescents acquire values primarily through observation and imitation of role models. The communal life in a boarding school provides constant exposure to positive models—teachers, peers, and mentors—who embody the Islamic values being taught. This continuous reinforcement accelerates the process of internalization, transforming values into habitual behavior rather than temporary compliance.

This finding is also culturally significant in the Indonesian context. Historically, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) have been central institutions in shaping the moral and intellectual identity of Indonesian Muslims (Azra, 2014). By combining structured academic learning with religious habituation, PKBM Auladul Mustopa continues this legacy, while also adapting to the needs of contemporary non-formal education. Unlike purely formal schools, PKBM creates a 24-hour learning environment where values are lived, practiced, and reinforced through community life.

Furthermore, the boarding school approach also addresses the social realities of its students. Many come from disadvantaged or fragmented family backgrounds, where structured moral guidance at home may be limited. Boarding school routines thus provide a compensatory environment, ensuring that children are not deprived of consistent guidance and value formation (Gunawan, 2023). This reflects Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, where the microsystem of school can substitute and strengthen the functions of family in shaping children's development.

The implication here is that character education cannot be effectively achieved through classroom instruction alone. It requires a supportive environment where values are consistently modeled, practiced, and reinforced. PKBM's boarding school model demonstrates how non-formal institutions can play a crucial role in character building, particularly in contexts where family or community support is weak. Moreover, it highlights the adaptability of Islamic educational traditions in responding to modern challenges while maintaining their core mission of cultivating faith, discipline, and noble character.

Challenges in Implementation

Despite its innovative approach, PKBM Auladul Mustopa faces several challenges in implementing its integrative educational model. These challenges reflect not only the institution's internal dynamics but also broader structural and systemic issues in non-formal Islamic education.

a. Diversity of Student Backgrounds

First, the diversity of student backgrounds presents difficulties in balancing academic and religious content. Some students come from families with strong Islamic traditions and are well-versed in religious practices, while others have minimal exposure to such traditions. This

diversity requires differentiated teaching strategies that cater to varied levels of prior knowledge. However, as Sesrita (2020) notes, such differentiation demands high levels of creativity, pedagogical skill, and resource investment from teachers. Moreover, the limited number of trained educators in non-formal schools makes it difficult to implement sustained personalized learning. Teachers often rely on collaborative peer learning, where students with stronger religious knowledge support their peers, yet this approach requires continuous supervision to avoid misinterpretation of Islamic concepts.

The diversity also extends to socio-economic conditions. Students from low-income households may lack access to adequate learning resources, such as textbooks or stable internet connections, which are increasingly necessary in modern education. This inequality can create gaps in achievement and motivation, putting additional pressure on teachers to design inclusive and accessible learning materials.

b. The Double-Edged Nature of Technology

Second, the influence of technology emerges as a double-edged sword. On the positive side, technology provides innovative learning tools such as interactive videos, online discussion forums, and AI-based applications that can enrich teaching and learning. For instance, mobile applications for Qur'an memorization (tahfidz) or interactive platforms for science experiments can help bridge the gap between theory and practice. Technology also allows PKBM students to connect with broader educational networks, gaining exposure to ideas beyond their immediate environment.

However, uncontrolled exposure to digital media can distract students, foster addictive behaviors, and reduce motivation for structured learning. Research shows that young learners are particularly vulnerable to online distractions, such as gaming or social media (Livingstone & Helsper, 2017). This challenge is magnified in non-formal institutions like PKBM, where supervision outside school hours is often limited. Al-Fadhli and Khalfan (2009) argue that successful technology integration requires clear pedagogical frameworks and digital literacy training to prevent misuse. Similarly, UNESCO (2021) warns that the digital divide in developing countries exacerbates educational inequality, particularly for students from low-income families such as those enrolled in PKBM. Without targeted interventions, technology risks widening gaps rather than bridging them.

c. Physical and Social Environment

Third, the physical and social environment poses additional constraints. Being located in a residential neighborhood, the school faces limitations in facilities and infrastructure, such as space for sports, laboratories, and libraries. These constraints restrict the school's ability to provide well-rounded learning experiences that balance cognitive, physical, and creative development. Furthermore, the absence of proper facilities for science and technology subjects makes it harder to fully integrate modern knowledge with Islamic teachings.

Communication barriers further complicate collaborative learning. Some students have limited language proficiency, which makes participation in group discussions or project-based learning less effective. Musthofa (2018) observes that community-based Islamic schools often rely heavily on social capital rather than advanced infrastructure. While this reliance can strengthen communal identity and solidarity, it can also limit opportunities for growth and expansion.

d. Teacher Workload and Professional Development

Another significant challenge concerns teacher workload and professional development. Teachers at PKBM Auladul Mustopa not only manage classroom instruction but also serve as mentors, dormitory supervisors, and facilitators of extracurricular religious activities. This multifaceted role can lead to fatigue and burnout, especially when professional support and incentives are minimal. Hashim (2018) stresses that successful integration of Islamic and general education requires teachers to act as cultural translators, yet this role cannot be effectively sustained without ongoing training and institutional support.

Non-formal institutions often lack structured professional development programs, leaving teachers with limited opportunities to upgrade their pedagogical skills or incorporate modern teaching strategies. This is particularly problematic in the digital era, where teachers are expected to integrate ICT tools effectively. Without systematic training, attempts to use technology may remain superficial and fail to address deeper learning goals.

Parental and Community Support

A notable strength of PKBM Auladul Mustopa is the active involvement of parents and the surrounding community in educational processes. Parents are not passive observers but active participants who engage in joint tahsin sessions, attend regular meetings, and monitor their children's progress. One parent even expressed a willingness to become directly involved in school activities during the questionnaire session.

This aligns with Rifa'i et al. (2023), who emphasize that the family serves as the primary center of education, and parental involvement is a strong predictor of student success. From a broader perspective, Epstein (2011) articulates the concept of a triadic partnership between school, family, and community as the foundation of effective education. PKBM Auladul Mustopa exemplifies this model by inviting community leaders to participate in school events and collaborating with nearby mosques for joint programs.

Such partnerships strengthen the legitimacy of the institution and ensure the sustainability of its educational programs. They also help address the problem of low motivation among students from disadvantaged backgrounds. When students observe that their parents and community members value education, their intrinsic motivation to learn increases. Fan and Chen (2001) confirm that parental involvement has a direct positive impact on students' academic achievement and attitudes toward learning.

In this regard, PKBM Auladul Mustopa demonstrates that non-formal education institutions can effectively mobilize community resources to enhance educational outcomes. This participatory model ensures that learning is not confined to the classroom but extends into the family and community, thereby creating a holistic ecosystem for character and knowledge development.

Synthesis and Implications

Taken together, the findings of this study suggest that PKBM Auladul Mustopa represents an innovative model of non-formal Islamic education that bridges the gap between academic knowledge and moral-spiritual values. Through curriculum integration, structured routines, and community collaboration, the school nurtures students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds who often struggle with weak motivation for learning.

The study makes two main contributions to the discourse on educational innovation. First, it demonstrates that curriculum integration is both feasible and effective when lessons are contextualized with Islamic values. Second, it shows that character education is best achieved in a holistic environment where school, family, and community collaborate in a mutually reinforcing manner.

These findings resonate with Al-Attas's (1980) vision of Islamic education, which aims to cultivate balanced individuals (*insan kamil*) equipped with intellectual competence and moral integrity. PKBM Auladul Mustopa provides a living example of this vision by producing learners who are not only knowledgeable but also spiritually grounded and ethically responsible.

For policymakers, the implications are clear. Support for institutions like PKBM should include adequate funding, professional development opportunities for teachers, and strategies to enhance community engagement. Internationally, the case of PKBM contributes to the literature on non-formal education as a tool for reducing educational inequality and promoting character development in the digital age.

Ultimately, the experience of PKBM Auladul Mustopa underscores the potential of non-formal Islamic education to serve as a laboratory of innovation, particularly in contexts where formal schooling struggles to balance the demands of modern knowledge with the imperatives of religious and moral education. By fostering holistic human development, PKBM and similar institutions play a vital role in shaping the next generation of Muslims who are intellectually competent, morally upright, and spiritually resilient.

Conclusion

This study highlights that PKBM Auladul Mustopa has successfully developed an innovative model of non-formal education that integrates Islamic and general knowledge in a harmonious manner. The integration is not merely formal but applied contextually in classroom practices, enabling students to connect academic knowledge with Islamic values in their daily lives. The boarding school system further strengthens character development, as structured religious routines and habituation of discipline, responsibility, and spirituality foster the formation of students' noble character.

Teachers play a central role as *murobbi*, designing creative lessons that align with both national standards and Islamic teachings. Despite challenges such as diverse student backgrounds, limited facilities, and the double-edged influence of digital technology, the school manages to sustain effective learning. Importantly, strong parental involvement and community participation provide essential social capital, enhancing students' motivation, especially for those from underprivileged families.

Overall, PKBM Auladul Mustopa demonstrates that holistic Islamic education can only be realized through the synergy of school, family, and community. This model embodies the vision of forming *insan kamil*—individuals who are intellectually competent, morally upright, and spiritually strong—while being prepared to face the challenges of the digital era. The case offers inspiration for the further development of non-formal Islamic education in Indonesia.

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