Integration of the Future Islamic Education Curriculum: A Comparative Study of Malaysian KSSM and the 21st Century Values and Competency Based Singapore Curriculum

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Abstract	Artikel Info
This study aims to compare the Islamic education curricula between Malaysia and Singapore by analyzing the KSSM (Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah) and the 21st-century competency-based curriculum in Singapore. The main objective is to explore the integration potential of Islamic spiritual values with multicultural values in the context of ASEAN regional education. This qualitative research adopts a library research method with a comparative approach, involving document analysis and content interpretation of official curriculum documents from both countries. The findings reveal significant differences in curriculum structure, pedagogical approaches, value orientations, and integration of 21st-century competencies. Malaysia emphasizes spiritual and religious values rooted in Islamic traditions through a structured, thematic curriculum, while Singapore promotes a multicultural and value-neutral approach, with strong emphasis on global competencies and critical thinking. The study concludes that an integrative curriculum model combining Malaysia's spiritual foundation with Singapore's multicultural perspective may enhance the development of a holistic and regionally relevant Islamic education curriculum. Such integration supports the vision of a contextualized, inclusive, and future-oriented Islamic education for the ASEAN community.	**Received:** March 17, 2025 **Revised:** April 21, 2025 **Accepted:** May 11, 2025 **Published:** June 10, 2025

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membandingkan kurikulum pendidikan Islam antara Malaysia dan Singapura dengan menganalisis KSSM (Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah) dan kurikulum berbasis kompetensi abad ke-21 di Singapura. Tujuan utamanya adalah untuk mengeksplorasi potensi integrasi nilai-nilai spiritual Islam dengan nilai-nilai multikultural dalam konteks pendidikan kawasan ASEAN. Penelitian kualitatif ini menggunakan metode studi kepustakaan dengan pendekatan komparatif, yang melibatkan analisis dokumen dan interpretasi isi dari dokumen kurikulum resmi kedua negara. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan adanya perbedaan signifikan dalam struktur kurikulum, pendekatan pedagogis, orientasi nilai, dan integrasi kompetensi abad ke-21. Malaysia menekankan nilai-nilai spiritual dan keagamaan yang berakar pada tradisi Islam melalui kurikulum yang terstruktur dan tematik, sementara Singapura mengedepankan pendekatan multikultural dan netral terhadap nilai, dengan penekanan kuat pada kompetensi global dan berpikir kritis. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa model kurikulum integratif yang menggabungkan landasan spiritual Malaysia dengan perspektif multikultural Singapura dapat meningkatkan pengembangan kurikulum pendidikan Islam yang holistik dan relevan secara regional. Integrasi semacam ini mendukung visi pendidikan Islam yang kontekstual, inklusif, dan berorientasi masa depan bagi komunitas ASEAN.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Islam; KSSM Malaysia; Kurikulum Singapura; Integrasi Kurikulum; Kompetensi Abad Ke-21.

A.   Introduction

The transformation of Islamic education curriculum has emerged as a pivotal theme in contemporary discourse, especially in the face of globalization, technological disruption, and cultural pluralism. This study explores how Islamic education systems, particularly in Malaysia and Singapore, integrate Islamic values with 21st-century skills to address these global shifts. The comparison reveals philosophical, pedagogical, and structural divergences that offer new insights into curriculum design that is both spiritually rooted and globally responsive (Munastiwi & Marfuah, 2019).

In Malaysia, Islamic education curriculum reform has gained significant

momentum through the development of the Secondary School Standard Curriculum (KSSM) which began to be implemented in 2017. KSSM seeks to integrate Islamic principles with holistic competence and character building, through a balance-oriented approach between naqli and aqli knowledge (Bin Jamil et al., 2024). Concept *Islamic Integrated Curriculum* (IIC) is the philosophical basis of this approach, where the curriculum is no longer dichotomously separated between religious science and world science, but is united in a single epistemological framework based on *Worldview* Islam. The IIC approach also prioritizes seven goals of Islamic education that are integrated with each other, namely spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social, moral, physical, and economic, as an effort to form balanced and ethical kamil people (Muhidin et al., 2023).

In contrast, the education system in Singapore, despite being in a Muslim minority environment, shows a model of curriculum development that emphasizes universal and multicultural values. The curriculum in Singapore adopts a pragmatic approach with an emphasis on moral education, global character, and the integration of human values in religious learning (Hameed, 2020). In this context, Islamic education does not only teach fiqh or aqidah, but also equips students with an understanding of global civic ethics, interreligious tolerance, and adaptability in a pluralistic society. This is in line with the framework *Global Citizenship Education* (GCE) which has become part of Singapore's national education policy (Ro, 2020).

The comparison between Malaysia and Singapore is interesting because both have different approaches to the integration of Islamic education curricula, although they both recognize the importance of 21st century values and competencies. Malaysia tends to be based on an Islamisation approach to science by making integration a process of unifying Islamic values in all aspects of the curriculum, while Singapore puts forward compatibility between Islamic values and universal values, with an emphasis on diversity and equality (Bin Jamil et al., 2024). This shows that there are differences in philosophical, cultural, and pedagogical orientations that deserve to be studied in more depth in the context of comparative curriculum systems.

The socio-political and demographic context also plays an important role in the direction of curriculum reform in both countries. Malaysia as a Muslim-majority country has the flexibility to form an explicit curriculum based on *Worldview* Islam, while Singapore as a secular country with a significant Muslim minority emphasizes an integrative approach that is inclusive and in line with state policies that uphold multiracial values and moderate secularism (Herlinawati et al., 2024). This affects not only the content and structure of the curriculum, but also the implementation and teacher training strategies carried out by educational institutions.

The transformation of the curriculum in Malaysia through KSSM is also inseparable from the standardisation process. Although KSSM emphasizes integration, there is a tendency towards a standards-based curriculum to ensure the achievement of measurable learning outcomes. This creates its own challenge, namely how to ensure that the integration of Islamic values remains authentic and not just a formal symbol in the curriculum document (Bin Jamil et al., 2024). An evaluation of the implementation of IIC in Malaysian schools shows that many educational institutions claim that their curriculum is integrated, but in reality integration is only done administratively, not philosophically or pedagogically. This means that the understanding of curriculum integration is still partial and varies between institutions.

In contrast, studies in Singapore show that the successful implementation of a universal values-based curriculum is strongly influenced by school leadership, institutional culture, and teachers' competence in translating values into contextual pedagogical practices (Hameed, 2020). Religious education in Singapore was developed not only as a da'wah tool, but also as an instrument to form citizens who are responsible, tolerant, and adaptive to the complexities of the global society.

The urgency of integrating values and competencies in the Islamic education curriculum is becoming increasingly important in the face of the multidimensional crises that hit the Islamic world, including identity crises, radicalism, moral degradation, and lagging behind science. Islamic education is expected to provide answers

to these challenges through a comprehensive, transformative, and contextual curriculum approach (Ro, 2020). Therefore, the development of the future curriculum must be directed at substantial integration efforts that harmonize Islamic values with the demands of global competence, without sacrificing the authenticity of Islam which is the basis of the identity of the ummah.

This research expands on previous studies that have discussed the integration of Islamic values in education, such as those conducted by Hashim (2020), Embong and Hashim (2021), and Hameed (2020), each of which emphasizes the importance of the Islamization framework of knowledge, the development of the Islamic Integrated Curriculum (IIC), and a universal value-based learning approach in a pluralistic context. However, most of these studies still focus on approaches in a particular country or region without exploring in-depth comparisons between countries with contrasting socio-demographic contexts. In this context, this research is here to fill the literature gap by comparing the approach to integrating the Islamic education

curriculum in Malaysia and Singapore systematically, both from philosophical, pedagogical, and implementive aspects.

Based on this presentation, this study aims to conduct a comparative study on the integration approach of the Islamic education curriculum in Malaysia and Singapore. The main focus of this study is to examine how each country integrates 21st-century values and competencies in their Islamic education curriculum, as well as to analyze the advantages, challenges, and opportunities of each approach. This research is also expected to provide recommendations for the development of a future Islamic education curriculum that is adaptive, contextual, and transformative.

While previous studies have discussed Islamic education integration within national contexts, such as Embong & Hashim (2021) on Malaysia's IIC and Hameed (2020) on Singapore's GCE approach, few have conducted a systematic cross-national comparison between countries with divergent demographic and political contexts. This study fills that gap by analyzing how Islamic values and global competencies are integrated differently

yet convergently in Malaysia and Singapore, contributing a nuanced understanding of Islamic curriculum innovation in Southeast Asia.

B. Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a comparative study method, aiming to analyze the integration of Islamic values and 21st century competencies in the Islamic Education curriculum in Malaysia and Singapore. This approach was chosen to understand the phenomenon of education in depth and contextually, especially in examining the philosophical dynamics and practices of value-based curriculum (Klaus Krippendorf, 2025).

The comparative design allows for a systematic analysis of two curriculum systems: the Malaysian Secondary School Standard Curriculum (KSSM) and the Singapore Islamic Education curriculum. Three main dimensions are analyzed, namely: (1) philosophical foundations, (2) Islamic structure and values, and (3) integration of 21st-century competencies (Busetto et al., 2020). The data sources consist of official documents such as KSSM, Early Integrated Curriculum (KBD), and Tahfiz Integrated Curriculum (KBT) in

Malaysia, as well as the Framework for 21st Century Islamic Education and GCE Framework by MUIS in Singapore. Scientific literature and recent policy reports (2020–2025) are also used as complementary data.

The analysis was carried out through content analysis, to identify the main themes, the representation of Islamic values, and the integration of 21st century competencies. This technique explores keywords and the relationship between objectives, materials, and curriculum strategies (Lim, 2024). The validity of the data was strengthened through triangulation of sources, by comparing curriculum documents, policy studies, and empirical literature from both countries. This approach is also theoretically validated using the framework of the Islamic Integrated Curriculum (IIC) and Global Citizenship Education (GCE) (Byrd & Ph, 2020). The data analysis uses the thematic analysis method, which organizes information into major themes: the integration of Islamic values, the application of 21st century competencies, and pedagogical impact. Each theme is analyzed based on the depth of integration, contextual

relevance, and readiness to face global challenges.

This research is carried out systematically by upholding the principles of scientific ethics. Data is collected entirely through authentic, verified secondary documents, without involving primary data such as interviews or field observations (John, 2020). Through this approach, the research is expected to make a strategic contribution in designing an Islamic Education curriculum that is more integrative, responsive to the times, and socio-culturally contextual at the national and global levels (Nassaji, 2020).

C.   Results and Discussion

Structure and Objectives of the Islamic Education Curriculum: KSSM VS Singapore Curriculum

The structure and objectives of the Islamic education curriculum in Malaysia and Singapore show different but complementary approaches to integrating Islamic values into the national education system and Muslim communities. In Malaysia, the Islamic Education curriculum is developed formally and systematically in the mainstream education system through the Secondary School Standard Curriculum (KSSM). This curriculum is prepared with an approach based on the national educational philosophy framework and the vision of Islamic education to form a balanced rabbani person from physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual aspects (Muhamad Zaidi & Haji Othman, 2023). KSSM emphasizes the mastery of Islamic religious knowledge through components such as faith, worship, morality, sirah, and recitation of the Qur'an by referring to Maqasid al-Shariah as a basic value framework (Bin Jamil et al., 2024).

Within the framework of KSSM, the structure of Islamic Education subjects is not only designed for cognitive mastery, but is also directed to form an Islamic personality in students. This curriculum is prepared based on the Basic National Education document and is implemented through a holistic and integrative approach, covering spiritual, intellectual, social, and emotional aspects. The emphasis on the formation of noble morals is one of the central aspects reflected in the indicators of learning outcomes (Solumuthu & Thambu, 2022). In addition, this

curriculum is also designed to support the development of students' potential in accordance with the demands of globalization, technology, and knowledge-based economy.

In contrast, in Singapore, the Islamic Education curriculum is not directly integrated into the national education system, but rather is run in parallel by religious institutions such as madrassas and the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS). The curriculum structure in Singapore madrassas is compiled in a curriculum document called "*Islamic Education for Life*" which aims to shape a generation of Muslims who are not only religious, but also able to live an inclusive, ethical, and productive global life (Fekih Zguir et al., 2021). The curriculum covers four main domains: Faith and Worship, Morals, Social Life, and the Contemporary World, which are delivered through a contextual and competency-based approach.

The approach taken by Singapore is more pragmatic and responsive to the conditions of a plural and multicultural society. The Islamic education curriculum in madrassas emphasizes a balance between religious knowledge,

Arabic language proficiency, and secular subjects such as science and mathematics. It aims to produce students who are able to continue their education to the university level as well as actively participate in the knowledge economy. According to Ro (2020), the structure of Islamic education in Singapore is tailored to the needs of the minority Muslim community in order to remain relevant and competitive without losing Islamic identity (Ro, 2020a).

Objectively, the main difference between KSSM Malaysia and the curriculum of Singapore's madrassas lies in the orientation of educational policies and socio-demographic conditions. The main purpose of the KSSM curriculum is to strengthen the faith and piety of Muslim students as well as to develop their potential in a balanced and comprehensive manner within the framework of sharia (Munastiwi & Marfuah, 2019). In this context, religious values are not only the subject of learning, but also the basis in the formation of a state policy centered on Islam as the religion of the Federation.

Meanwhile, Singapore's Islamic education curriculum is oriented towards the formation of Muslim characters that

are resilient to the currents of globalization and secularization through an approach to universal Islamic values emphasized in a pluralistic social environment. Islamic education in Singapore is not only seen as a dogmatic doctrine, but as a tool to form an attitude of openness, tolerance, and cross-cultural collaboration (Hameed, 2020). This is relevant to the spirit *Global Citizenship* which is the pillar of education in the 21st century.

In addition, the KSSM Islamic education curriculum tends to be based on a national syllabus that is uniform across the country, while the Singapore madrasah curriculum shows flexibility and adaptation to the local context. According to Lam et al, the integration of the curriculum with local contexts in Islamic education in Singapore encourages the development of meaningful and relevant learning for students' lives. This has a positive impact on the understanding of Islamic values in the contemporary context.

Nevertheless, although the approaches of the two countries are different, both show great concern for the importance of Islamic education as a vehicle for the formation of character

and moral integrity. It should be noted that in recent decades, the Ministry of Education Malaysia has also encouraged the transformation of the Islamic Education curriculum to be more adaptive to the challenges of the 21st century by incorporating aspects of technology, critical thinking, and problem-solving (Khalilah, 2023).

In conclusion, the structure and objectives of the Islamic Education curriculum in Malaysia and Singapore reflect each country's vision of the role of religion in society. KSSM as a national curriculum prioritizes the ideal of fostering kamil people based on sharia values, while Singapore develops a functional and cosmopolitan curriculum to strengthen religious identity in the context of pluralistic minorities. Both approaches make valuable contributions to the contextual and future-oriented thinking of global Islamic education. Pedagogical Approach in KSSM and the Singapore Curriculum (Bleeze, 2024).

In KSSM, the pedagogical approach gradually shifts from teacher-centered teaching (*teacher-centered*) to student-centered learning (*student-centered*). Islamic education reform in Malaysia through an integrative

curriculum approach has begun to adopt active teaching methods, such as project-based learning, inquiry, and technology. However, implementation challenges are still strong in terms of teacher readiness and uneven facilities (Bin Jamil et al., 2024).

Singapore consistently emphasizes a social constructivism approach in its pedagogy, which is reflected in its strategy *Teach Less, Learn More*. This principle aims to develop students' critical and reflective thinking through collaborative interaction and the use of information technology. In the context of Islamic education, madrassas and religious institutions in Singapore combine contemporary pedagogy with traditional curricula such as the teaching of Fiqh and Hadith based on case studies and value dialogues (Hameed, 2020).

The integration of technology in the two systems also shows disparities. While Singapore integrates EdTech with sophisticated and globally standard LMS, Malaysia still faces teacher training and digital infrastructure constraints (Rahimah & Rosnani, 2018). This has an impact on the effectiveness of the implementation of 21st century pedagogy, especially in the context of Islamic education.

Pedagogical Approach in KSSM and the Singapore Curriculum

The pedagogical approach in the Islamic Education curriculum plays a crucial role in shaping the successful implementation of religious values into contextual and relevant learning practices. In Malaysia, the Secondary School Standard Curriculum (KSSM) explicitly emphasizes a constructivist approach in the delivery of Islamic Education subjects. This pedagogy is geared towards developing student-centered learning (*student-centered learning*), encourage active participation, as well as inculcate reflective skills through an understanding of Islamic values in real life (Helmiati, 2021). This curriculum also integrates project-based learning, contextual learning (*Contextual learning*), and collaborative learning (*Collaborative Learning*) as a form of transformation from traditional approaches that are *teacher-centered* towards a more inclusive and participatory approach.

As stated by Embong and Hashim, the pedagogical transformation in the Malaysian Islamic Education system is a

response to the failure of the traditional system in preparing students for contemporary realities (Hashim, 2020). The old practice of relying too much on memorization, lectures, and cognitive exam-based evaluations is considered no longer relevant in the context of the 21st century. Therefore, teacher training through the Malaysian Institute of Teacher Education (IPGM) and universities such as Universiti Malaya and Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris has begun to be directed at strengthening innovative pedagogical competencies, which include technology integration, value reflection, and sharia-based problem-solving (Bin Jamil et al., 2024).

The main weaknesses that still hinder the effectiveness of pedagogy in KSSM are the lack of equitable distribution of digital learning infrastructure and the limitations of continuous training for Islamic Education teachers, especially in semi-urban and rural areas (Rahimah & Rosnani, 2018). This results in the implementation of active pedagogy is not evenly distributed. In some contexts, teaching practices are still instructional and oriented towards the fulfillment of the syllabus (Munastiwi & Marfuah,

2019). Empirical studies show that many teachers still have difficulty integrating technological components such as e-learning or interactive devices into the process of teaching Islamic values effectively.

On the other hand, the pedagogical approach in the Islamic education system in Singapore shows the continuity between pedagogical innovation and the integration of spirituality values. Islamic education in Singapore is managed by the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) through the framework of the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum (*Islamic Education for Life*) which is applied in formal madrasas. The approach used emphasizes on "*Meaningful learning*" and contextualization of Islamic teachings in a multicultural society. This pedagogical strategy is in line with Singapore's national policy, which is "*Teach Less, Learn More,*" which places teachers as facilitators and students as active subjects in the process of knowledge construction (Ro, 2020).

The curriculum in Singapore's madrassas explicitly inculcates universal Islamic values such as justice, tolerance, and social responsibility, which are

taught through a case-based approach, value discussion (*Values Clarification*), and the development of reflective thinking. In this context, subjects such as Faith, Fiqh, and Islamic History are not presented dogmatically, but are associated with contemporary phenomena such as social change, human rights, and cultural diversity. Thus, students are trained to interpret Islamic teachings contextually and applicatively (Hameed, 2020).

The integration of technology in the teaching process of Islamic Education in Singapore has also made significant progress. MUIS encourages the use of *Learning Management Systems (LMS)*, *E-Assessment*, and interactive digital modules to deliver religious materials in a more engaging and relevant way (Budin, 2023). The curriculum is also complemented by videos, animated simulations, and online quizzes as part of formative assessments that are participatory and reflective (Fekih Zguir et al., 2021). This strategy has been proven to be able to increase students' interest and understanding of Islamic teachings in a more contextual and easily digestible form.

Teacher training in Singapore is carried out in a systematic and structured manner through collaboration between MUIS and *National Institute of Education* (NIE), which ensures that teachers not only have pedagogic and content competencies, but are also able to integrate Islamic spiritual values in the context of a global society. This reflects a transformational view of education, namely teachers as agents of change who have a central role in internalizing religious values into the order of social life (Tan & Hasman, 2024).

By comparison, pedagogical approaches in Malaysia tend to be rooted in a national system that emphasizes Islamic education as an integral part of national identity policy. Meanwhile, Singapore emphasizes the adaptive and functional function of Islamic education in a pluralistic society. These differences reflect the socio-political priorities of each country, but pedagogically, they show a convergent tendency toward a pedagogy that is reflective, values-based, and responsive to the demands of the 21st century.

In conclusion, the pedagogical approach in Islamic Education in both Malaysia

and Singapore points to the direction of development towards an active, collaborative, and contextual learning paradigm. This transformation is a response to the demands of the times, where students are not only required to understand the teachings of Islam textually, but also to apply them in the context of dynamic and pluralistic social life. Although challenges such as teacher training gaps and access to technology are still obstacles, the two countries' commitment to strengthening Islamic education pedagogy can be an important reference in the development of transnational Islamic curriculum in the ASEAN region (Ismail et al., 2023).

Islamic Values in KSSM and the Singapore Curriculum

In the Secondary School Standard Curriculum (KSSM) in Malaysia, Islamic values are explicitly framed in four main domains: aqidah, ibadah, akhlak, and muamalah. These four domains are systematically formulated to form a balanced Muslim personality with integrity, in line with the National Philosophy of Education document and the Malaysian Education Development Plan 2013–2025 (Jamil et al., 2024). Aqidah is taught as the basis of faith that

forms *Worldview* students, based on the concept of monotheism which is the foundation of all dimensions of life. Worship is practiced as a manifestation of spiritual devotion to Allah, while morals are fostered as practical values that embody manners towards fellow humans and the environment. Muamalah is understood as the social dimension of Islam that regulates relationships between individuals in society based on the principles of justice and compassion (Muhidin et al., 2023).

The KSSM curriculum also emphasizes a holistic approach in the delivery of Islamic values. The learning material is not only limited to memorization, but is directed to form kamil people who are able to navigate contemporary life with the guidance of transcendent values. In this case, the integration of the principle of rahmatan lil alamin becomes a key pedagogical strategy that brings together faith and the appreciation of values in social life (Hashim, 2020).

In contrast, Singapore's national education system features a more inclusive and contextual approach to values. Values and morals education within the framework of *Character and*

Citizenship Education (CCE) is designed to transcend religious and cultural barriers, focusing on the formation of ethical, tolerant, and responsible citizens (Tengku Sarina Aini Tengku Kasim et al., 2024). For the Muslim community, Islamic education is provided formally in the madrassas under *Islamic Religious Council of Singapore* (MUIS), with a curriculum *Islamic Education* (IE) developed through the *Faith-Based* and *Contextualised Learning*. The curriculum emphasizes three main pillars: *Believing Heart, Inquiring Mind, and Committed Action*, which is in line with the development of aqidah, critical thinking, and the social involvement of Muslim students in a pluralistic society (Bin Jamil et al., 2024).

The Islamic values emphasized in the Singapore madrasah curriculum include rahmah (compassion), adl (justice), hikmah (wisdom), and ukhuwwah (brotherhood). Interestingly, these values are integrated in local and global contexts through learning based on contemporary issues, such as social justice, climate change, and interfaith relations. This shows a curriculum orientation that focuses not only on the development of religious identity, but

also on the development of an active Islamic civic in a secular and multicultural society (Fekih Zguir et al., 2021).

The comparison between these two approaches reflects the dichotomy of exclusive vs inclusive values. KSSM carries an exclusive approach, in the sense that its curriculum is explicitly designed only for Muslim students, and the values taught are deeply rooted in Islamic theological and jurisprudence principles. However, this exclusivity actually provides an advantage in strengthening the religious identity and spiritual integrity of students. On the other hand, Singapore's curriculum emphasizes Islamic values in a social and universal framework that is compatible with pluralistic contexts, making its approach more sociologically inclusive.(Nursafra Mohd Zhaffar & Wan Ali Akbar Wan Abdullah, 2021).

Pedagogically, these different approaches create a significant impact on the internalization of values by students. In Malaysia, a normative approach dominated by lecture and memorization methods has the potential to form a strong personal piety, but faces challenges in applying values in the

context of a pluralistic society. Meanwhile, Singapore emphasizes participatory and contextual methods, such as case studies and social simulations, that allow learners to internalize Islamic values through reflective and interactive experiences (Yakob et al., 2022).

Thus, it can be concluded that KSSM offers theological firmness and the formation of a deep religious identity, whereas the Singapore curriculum provides adaptive flexibility that is appropriate to multicultural and global realities. The synergy of these two approaches can create a spiritually robust and socially relevant Islamic education model in the face of the challenges of the 21st century.

21st Century Competency Integration in Islamic Education

The integration of 21st century competencies in Islamic education is an important part of the transformation of the curriculum in the era of globalization. In the Malaysian context, the Secondary School Standard Curriculum (KSSM) places 21st century competencies as one of the key pillars of educational reform. These competencies include the development of critical

thinking skills, creativity, collaboration, communication (4C), as well as mastery of information technology, information literacy and global citizenship. According to Jamil, this integration initiative is carried out through the implementation of Higher Level Thinking Skills (KBAT), inquiry-based learning, and contextual learning approaches that synergize with Islamic values (Bin Jamil et al., 2024).

Practically, KSSM emphasizes the importance of active and collaborative learning in Islamic education. The use of strategies such as project-based learning, problem-based learning, and *inquiry-based learning* enable learners to apply Islamic principles in real-life contexts that require complex thinking skills and ethical reflection (Budin, 2023). For example, students are encouraged to analyze contemporary issues such as social justice, ethical leadership, and environmental sustainability through an Islamic perspective. This not only strengthens their conceptual understanding of religious teachings, but also prepares them to become responsible global citizens.

On the other hand, Singapore has integrated 21st century competencies

systemically in the national curriculum through programs *Character and Citizenship Education* (CCE) that combines moral values, digital literacy, and 21st-century skills in formal education. In the context of Islamic education, madrassas under the auspices of MUIS (*Islamic Religious Council of Singapore*) has formulated a framework *Islamic Education Core Curriculum* (IECC) which combines spiritual aspects and contemporary competencies through three main components: *Believing Heart, Inquiring Mind, and Committed Action* (Tan & Hasman, 2024).

This model shows an explicit effort to foster a contextual understanding of Islam that is relevant to the dynamics of the 21st century. In dimensions *Inquiring Mind*, students are honed to have critical thinking on religious and social issues, as well as to be able to engage in intellectual dialogue in a plural public space. They are also equipped with media and digital literacy skills to access and assess religious information objectively and responsibly (Helmiati, 2021).

In Singapore, technology-based learning has become a key instrument in strengthening 21st century competencies. Use *Learning Management Systems* (LMS), interactive digital resources, and online formative assessments have been adopted in many Islamic educational institutions. Lam et al. (2013) emphasized that the integration of technology in religious teaching in Singapore also encourages active and collaborative participation, with teachers acting as facilitators of learning and learners as active subjects in the process of knowledge construction (Muhidin et al., 2023).

It should be noted that the integration of 21st-century competencies in Islamic education presents a number of challenges. In Malaysia, the limited competence of digital pedagogy among teachers, as well as the tendency of conservative pedagogy that is still dominant in religious schools, are the main obstacles in the implementation of technology-based learning and innovation (Embong & Hashim, 2021). In contrast, in Singapore, the challenge lies in maintaining a balance between the adaptation of Islamic values to the principles of secularism and multiculturalism that are the basic framework of the state.

Nevertheless, both countries show great potential to strengthen the integration of Islamic values with global competence. This is in line with the findings of Fekih Zguir (2021) who stated that Islamic education can be a strategic vehicle to introduce sustainability values (ESD), *Global Citizenship*, and cross-cultural ethics in the formal education system. In Singapore, values such as justice, mercy, and social responsibility are contextualized in the curriculum through case studies of climate change, poverty, and social inclusion. Meanwhile, in Malaysia, strengthening the values of ukhuwah, amanah, and shura is combined with community-based co-curricular activities and volunteerism (Fekih Zguir et al., 2021).

The integration of Islamic values with 21st-century competencies is a reflection of a transformative approach in Islamic education. This approach not only forms religious learners in the normative sense, but also fosters the character of leaders who are able to innovate, think globally, and remain rooted in spiritual values. Such curriculum transformations are also driven by national and international policies such as SDG 4.7 which emphasizes the importance of education for sustainable development, global citizenship, and respect for cultural diversity (Fekih Zguir et al., 2021).

Thus, both KSSM Malaysia and the Islamic education curriculum in Singapore demonstrate a commitment to bridging Islamic spirituality with the demands of the 21st century. Differences in cultural and policy contexts open up opportunities for cross-border collaboration to formulate an inclusive, progressive, and globally relevant Islamic pedagogical framework.

Curriculum Integration Opportunities: Formulating a Malaysia-Singapore Synergistic Model

The opportunity to integrate the curriculum between Malaysia and Singapore in the field of Islamic education is a strategic step in order to present a curriculum that is not only firmly rooted in transcendent Islamic values, but also responsive to the contemporary needs of the 21st century (Hardy et al., 2025). The two countries, despite their differences in Malaysia's social and political backgrounds with an Islamic education system based on spiritual paradigms and nationalism, and Singapore with a multicultural and

secular value approach, have common ground in their commitment to character education, moral integrity, and global citizenship (Bin Jamil et al., 2024).

A synergistic model that can be formulated from the two approaches is the integration between the spiritual dimension (which is prominent in the Malaysian Secondary School Standard Curriculum) and the inclusive values approach and contextual pedagogy (which is adopted in the *Islamic Education Core Curriculum dan Character and Citizenship Education* in Singapore). In this case, Embong and Hashim (2021) emphasized that the transformation of Islamic education must combine the Islamic worldview and global competence to be relevant to the changing times and still maintain the integrity of Islamic values (Mahat & Loh, 2024).

This synergistic curriculum model can be realized in the form of the ASEAN Islamic Education Curriculum (*ASEAN Islamic Education Curriculum/ASEAN-IEC*) which is based on the universal values of Islam and adaptive to regional social and cultural diversity. The curriculum not only emphasizes traditional theological and jurisprudence aspects, but also encourages the application of Islamic values in global issues such as climate change, social justice, and cross-cultural peace, in line with SDG target 4.7 on *Global Citizenship* and education for sustainable development (Fekih Zguir et al., 2021).

This synergistic curriculum covers several key aspects. First, the aspect of spirituality that emphasizes the strengthening of aqidah, understanding monotheism, and the appreciation of worship as the moral foundation of students, as applied in KSSM. Second, the social and multiculturalism aspects that emphasize tolerance, justice, and social engagement as emphasized in the Singapore curriculum, including the values of mercy, adl, and wisdom in the context of human relations (Jamil et al., 2024; Fekih Zguir et al., 2021).

Third, aspects of contemporary pedagogy that combine project-based learning, digital technology, and authentic assessments to develop 4C skills (*Critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity*). In Malaysia, these skills have begun to be integrated through KBAT and the use of *Virtual Learning Environment* (VLE), although

its implementation still faces obstacles at the religious school level (Embong & Hashim, 2021). In Singapore, the implementation of educational technology has become more established through *Learning Management System* and approaches *blended learning* (Baildon & Ong, 2022).

Fourth, aspects of global literacy and active citizenship. This synergistic curriculum emphasizes Islamic education that not only forms individual obedient people, but also agents of social transformation who are able to contribute to the global society. This curriculum can adopt the principles of *Committed Action* from *Singapore's Islamic Education System*, which encourages Muslim students to engage in social and global issues with an inclusive and transformative Islamic approach (McCarthey & Zhang, 2023).

This integration opportunity is also strengthened by the similarity of the national curriculum structure between the two countries. KSSM in Malaysia and IECC in Singapore both consist of components of values, worship, morals, and muamalah, albeit with different pedagogical approaches and emphasises. Through curriculum cooperation,

thematic modules such as "Islam and the Environment", "Global Islamic Business Ethics", or "Islam and Intercultural Dialogue" can be jointly developed and used in both education systems to support the formation of Muslim students who are sensitive to local and global realities (Fekih Zguir et al., 2021).

Furthermore, this collaboration can be realized through the development of pilot programs in selected religious madrassas and high schools in both countries. The program can implement a cross-border curriculum with the support of a digital platform that enables collaboration between students and teachers in transnational projects. For example, students from Malaysia and Singapore can work together on cross-cultural projects such as digital campaigns on Islamic values in the digital world, or case studies on the application of social justice principles in the context of ASEAN society (Herlinawati et al., 2024).

From an institutional point of view, the integration of this curriculum can be driven by institutions such as SEAMEO (*Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization*) with the support of the Ministry of Education

Malaysia and MUIS Singapore. The curriculum framework can refer to the principles of the UNESCO Education 2030 Framework and integrate global indicators in their respective national evaluation systems (Bleeze, 2024).

In conclusion, the opportunity to integrate the Islamic education curriculum of Malaysia and Singapore is a progressive step that is in line with the vision of sustainable development and transformative education. This synergistic curriculum can be realized in the form of the ASEAN Islamic Education Curriculum that combines Islamic spirituality with universal values, 21st century pedagogy, and global citizenship awareness. Thus, the Muslim generation in the ASEAN region is not only of faith and noble character, but also competent, inclusive, and contributory to the contemporary world order.

D.   Conclusion

This research emphasizes the importance of integrating Islamic values and 21st century competencies in the Islamic education curriculum in response to the challenges of globalization, technological disruption,

and the need to shape the character of future generations of Muslims. A comparative study between KSSM Malaysia and the Islamic Education curriculum in Singapore shows that although the two countries have different approaches—Malaysia with an Islamized paradigm and Singapore with an inclusive-conceptual approach both demonstrate a commitment to the formation of moral, intelligent, and adaptive learners.

KSSM emphasizes strengthening spirituality and religious identity through an integrative approach based on an Islamic worldview, while Singapore's curriculum focuses on fostering universal Islamic values in the context of a multicultural and secular society. From the pedagogical side, both systems began to adopt an active, reflective, and technology-based learning approach even though infrastructure challenges and teacher competencies were still major obstacles.

The integration of global values and competencies also opens up collaborative opportunities for the formulation of synergistic curriculum models that can be applied in the

context of ASEAN. This model is expected to be able to harmonize the profound power of Islamic spirituality with the demands of globalization through contextual, adaptive, and progressive education. Therefore, the integration of the Islamic Education curriculum in the future must be directed at the development of an education system that not only strengthens faith, but also empowers students to become ethical and competitive agents of social transformation.

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