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## MODERNIZATION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION A Network Study of Integrated Islamic Schools in North Sumatra

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### ABSTRACTS

*This paper explains the modernization of Islamic education through a case study of the Integrated Islamic School Network (JSIT) in North Sumatra. The shifting educational landscape and the rising demands of a globalized society propel the need for modernizing Islamic education in Indonesia. Traditional Islamic educational institutions like madrasahs and pesantren are complemented by integrated Islamic schools that balance religious teachings with contemporary academic knowledge. This transformation addresses the educational needs of Indonesia's large Muslim population while preserving Islamic values and identity. The emergence of these integrated schools indicates a significant shift towards a more holistic educational approach that includes both Islamic and secular curricula, reflecting the dual demand for spiritual guidance and competitive academic performance. This study explores the impact of the modernization of Islamic education through a network of Integrated Islamic Schools in North Sumatra, Indonesia. It investigates how these schools integrate traditional Islamic values with modern educational practices and how this affects educational outcomes and community perception. Employing a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach, the study gathers in-depth descriptive data through interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis from multiple Integrated Islamic Schools. This method provides a comprehensive understanding of the educational transformations and their implications on students and educators. The results showed that JSIT North Sumatra has implemented various educational innovations, including using technology in learning, an integrated curriculum, and participatory teaching methods. This modernization process improves the quality of education in general and strengthens the integration of Islamic values in the curriculum and school activities. This study provides insights into how Islamic education can evolve to meet the needs of modern times without losing its Islamic essence.*

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Modernizing Islamic education does not mean abandoning its basic values but rather adjusting its methods, approaches, and content so that it remains relevant and can meet the needs of the younger generation in facing increasingly complex future challenges. (Azyumardi Azra, 2002) This is very relevant in the context of education in Indonesia, a country with the largest Muslim population in the world, where Islamic education plays a vital role in shaping the character and identity of the nation. (Harahap, 2019).

In the 21st century, there have been exciting changes in Indonesia's education trend. The dominance of educational institutions that previously consisted of Madrasahs, Islamic boarding schools, and public schools began to shift. (Asari, 2018) One of these changes is the emergence of integrated Islamic schools in Indonesia. (Frاندani, 2023) The emergence of these integrated Islamic schools reflects a change in the country's education landscape. (Rahman & Iswantir, 2023).

In the late 1980s, Integrated Islamic schools began to emerge in Indonesia. The initiative to establish these schools came from campus activists who were members of the Lembaga Dakwah Kampus (LDK), whose members came from the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), the University of Indonesia (UI), and several other well-known universities. These LDK activists are individuals who are concerned with the situation of education in Indonesia and are aware of the importance of education based on Islamic values. (Raharja & Nurachadijat, 2023).

This change in educational trends shows an effort to meet the diverse educational needs of the community. Integrated Islamic Schools are an alternative education system that focuses on developing Islamic religious values without neglecting quality academic education. (Mandala Putra et al., 2023).

JSIT, as a network of Integrated Islamic schools that includes approximately 1,000 schools, indicates the existence of an organization that facilitates the growth and development of these schools. In addition, thousands of other Integrated Islamic Schools are not formally incorporated in JSIT but continue to operate throughout Indonesia. This shows the community's strong interest and support for the concept of education promoted by Integrated Islamic Schools. (Hamdan et al., 2023) The data reflects that Integrated Islamic Schools have been enthusiastically received by the wider community, indicating a demand and appreciation for education that combines religious values with a secular curriculum. It also shows the success of Jamaah Tarbiyah's efforts in spreading Islamic thought and providing alternative education to the Indonesian people. (Rahman & Iswantir, 2023).

JSIT aims to teach students to love the Indonesian nation and homeland. (Muhjanah et al., 2023) Facing bad stigma wisely through strengthening Islamic values, removing the stigma of radicalism, strengthening the basic national consensus, objectivity in scientific sources, dealing with issues with in-depth studies, the performance of education activists, perfecting the correct understanding of Islam, increasing communication with government elements, integration with local wisdom, synergy in realizing development, and exploring the history of the struggle of Islamic figures (Muhamad et al., 2023).

Currently, the term "integrated" has become a trend in Islamic education in Indonesia. However, if you pay attention, this term has a variety of meanings in its use. The emergence of integrated Islamic schools has made many people consider it a brand

or symbol of their school. This means that the term "integrated Islamic" is deemed to be able to give confidence to the public regarding the educational institution "school" managed by Muslims. The term "Integrated Islamic School" went viral among the public when Islamic schools under JSIT Indonesia adopted it as their school slogan. Using this term, they can compete nationally in various aspects, both in academics and non-academics. These Integrated Islamic Schools began to shift the dominance of other private schools, even being able to compete with public schools. In Indonesia's context of Islamic education, the term "integrated" refers to a curriculum approach that integrates various disciplines, religious values, and other aspects into an integrated whole. In an integrated Islamic school, learning is focused on spiritual aspects and includes general subjects such as math, science, language, and others. Thus, students get a holistic and comprehensive education combining religious aspects and academic development (Frاندani, 2023).

Integrated Islamic schools, which use this term as part of their identity, have gained significant attention and popularity. They have the advantage of providing a balanced education, focusing on religious values and traditions while providing a competitive education in academic and non-academic terms. This has changed society's view of Islamic schools, which previously may have been perceived as providing only religious education, into comprehensive educational institutions that can compete with other schools. (Rahman & Iswantir, 2023).

The presence of integrated Islamic schools that use this term as part of their identity has created strong branding. This branding helps communicate to the community that the school is an Islamic school that provides integrated education that includes religious and academic aspects. This branding also reflects the school's efforts to be the best in various fields, whether in educational achievement, non-academic achievement, or adequate supporting facilities. (Zamroni & Sukiyani, 2014)

Along with their popularity, integrated Islamic schools have been able to compete nationally with other schools, including public schools. Their success in competing can be seen in their students' academic achievements, participation in non-academic activities, and their role in supporting students' character and moral development. This shows that the integrated approach in Islamic education has positively impacted providing quality education that is relevant to the times. Therefore, it is essential to examine and understand how this modernization process takes place, its challenges, and how schools and their communities respond to these challenges. This knowledge and understanding will be crucial in assisting Islamic education in Indonesia and perhaps elsewhere in navigating their path toward practical and sustainable modernization. It will also help ensure that Islamic education remains a source of knowledge and inspiration for the younger generation of Muslims while preparing them to be active, informed, and responsible global citizens. (Hadi & Sasongko, 2022).

Islamic education in Indonesia is facing a critical transition phase with the emergence of challenges and opportunities from the digital and global era. Modernization in Islamic education is a necessity and a chance to improve the quality and relevance of Islamic education in an increasingly complex and dynamic society. (Aida et al., 2020).

## **B. METHOD**

In this research, qualitative methods were used, with a special focus on the phenomenological approach. This approach was chosen because it can produce in-depth descriptive data, both in the form of writing and speech, from individuals and behavioral observations. Phenomenology allows researchers to gain a more holistic and in-depth understanding of the research subject's experience.(Sugiono, 2007). The research design adopted allows for data collection from multiple locations with similar characteristics. This approach is essential because it provides a broader and more varied understanding of the phenomenon under study. This enriches the analysis by providing multiple perspectives and contexts, increasing the data's depth and richness. The selection of this qualitative method of phenomenological approach is based on its effectiveness in developing theory from a variety of similar research backgrounds. This allows researchers to identify common patterns and themes that emerge from the data, which can then be used to build theory. The theory developed from this approach is expected to have a broader generality to be applied or transferred to a wider situation or context. (Sitorus, 2011). Data collection, in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis were used. These techniques allow researchers to gain first-hand perspectives from subjects and observe their interactions in a natural context. The data obtained is then analyzed in depth to discover themes, patterns, and relationships that may not be immediately apparent.

## **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. The philosophy of the Integrated Islamic School Network affects Integrated Islamic High Schools in North Sumatra**

As the 21st century approaches, there has been an exciting change in Indonesia's education trend, especially Islamic education. The emergence of Integrated Islamic Schools characterizes this change. Previously, Indonesia recognized three main models of educational institutions, namely pesantren, madrasah, and (public) schools. (Frاندani, 2023).

The (public) school is an educational institution that is a legacy of the Dutch colonial period. This institution teaches a variety of general sciences, such as natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. This shows an attempt to integrate religious education with general education, creating a more integrated and balanced education model between religious and general sciences. These changes reflect the dynamics of education in Indonesia over time.

Sekolah Islam Terpadu (SIT) was established with the initiative and direction of Tarbiyah members. Therefore, the Tarbiyah ideology embraced by these founders became the primary foundation for SIT's operations. Tarbiyah ideology is an understanding of Islam encompassing all aspects of human life. (Ihsanudin & Soleh, 2023). This means that Islam is not only considered a religion that regulates the affairs of the hereafter but also a system that regulates various aspects of life, including Adalah (state), politics, economics, society, education, and other aspects of life. This ideology originated from Islamic religious studies conducted informally in mashallah, mosques, and campuses. Still, it later developed more broadly to involve the fields of economics, Islamic education, the establishment of Integrated Islamic Schools, and even the formation of political parties such as the Justice (Prosperous) Party. (Akhwan et al., 2019).

The ten typical muwashafat of tarbiyah cadres that are used as a benchmark for the success of the cadre of tarbiyah congregations are as follows:

- a. *Salīm al-'aqīdah* (straight faith): Having a firm and straight belief in Islam's *aqidah* (belief).
- b. *Shahīh al-'ibādah* (worship correctly): Performing worship correctly by Islamic teachings.
- c. *Matīn al- khulūq* (solid morals): Having strong and good morals, living with high morals.
- d. *Qadīrun 'ala al-kasbi* (able to earn): Able to earn a living in a halal and productive way.
- e. *Mutsaqqaf al-fikr* (having an insightful mind): Having a broad understanding and insightful thinking.
- f. *Qawiyy al- jism* (healthy and robust body): Maintain physical health and have a strong body.
- g. *Mujāhidun linafsih* (having an earnest soul): Having a strong spirit and determination in developing oneself.
- h. *Munāzhamun fi syu'ūnih* (able to organize all affairs neatly): Able to organize personal and social affairs in an orderly manner.
- i. *Harīshun 'ala waqtihi* (able to manage time): Efficient in managing time and performing tasks well.
- j. *Nafi' lighairihi* (beneficial to others): Seeking to provide benefits and positive contributions to society and others around him.

These ten characteristics are guidelines or benchmarks for tarbiyah cadres in living life, contributing to society, and being an example for others. (Raharja & Nurachadijat, 2023).

The philosophy of the Network of Integrated Islamic Schools (JSIT) plays a vital role in shaping the educational approach at Integrated Islamic High Schools in North Sumatra. JSIT, as a network that focuses on integrating Islamic values into the education curriculum, has a significant impact on how Integrated Islamic High Schools conceptualize and implement teaching and learning.

First, JSIT's philosophy emphasizes the importance of integrating Islamic values in all aspects of education. This means that education in Integrated Islamic High Schools is focused on academic knowledge and building students' character based on Islamic values. Thus, these schools are not only a place to learn general knowledge but also to deepen the understanding and practice of Islam.

Secondly, JSIT advocates a holistic approach to education. In Integrated Islamic High Schools, this is manifested in the development of a curriculum that includes not only general subjects but also comprehensive religious education and extracurricular activities that support students' spiritual, intellectual, and social development. This holistic approach is designed to prepare students academically and as balanced and responsible individuals in society.

Thirdly, the JSIT philosophy also encourages the application of innovative and participatory learning methods. In Integrated Islamic High Schools, this may mean using technology in learning, project-based learning methods, or approaches that promote students' active involvement in education. The aim is to make the learning process more exciting and compelling and to prepare students to face the challenges of the modern era.

Fourth, JSIT emphasizes the importance of community involvement. Schools under this network often work closely with parents, community leaders, and other institutions to support students' education. This creates a rich and supportive educational environment where students can learn in the classroom and from their surroundings.

Thus, JSIT's philosophy has profoundly influenced Integrated Islamic High Schools in North Sumatra, both in terms of curriculum development, teaching approaches, and community involvement. This reflects an effort to provide an education that is both high quality in academics and rich in spiritual and social values. The influence of the Integrated Islamic School Network (JSIT) philosophy on Integrated Islamic High Schools in North Sumatra can be seen in several additional aspects, including educational leadership, assessment and evaluation, and alum involvement.

## **2. Governance Policy of Tepadu Islamic High School in North Sumatra**

This research reveals that the three integrated Islamic senior high schools that are the focus of the study, namely Alfityan Integrated Islamic Senior High School in Medan, Al Hijrah 2 Integrated Islamic Senior High School in Deliserdang, and Al Izzah Integrated Islamic Senior High School in Batubara, have established various policies that govern their educational governance. These three schools have diligently focused on multiple crucial aspects in ensuring effective and quality education delivery.

First, in terms of curriculum, these three Integrated Islamic High Schools have designed specialized curricula based on Islamic education principles. They strive to harmonize the learning materials with Islamic values and ensure that the curriculum keeps up with the latest scientific developments.

Secondly, school management has adopted efficient policies to organize daily operations. This includes managing schedules, supervising student and teacher attendance, and monitoring the teaching-learning process. Good school management is one of the keys to success in running an organized and purposeful education.

Third, in terms of recruitment of teaching staff, these three Integrated Islamic High Schools have implemented a strict policy in selecting their teachers. They look for individuals with high educational qualifications and a deep understanding of Islamic teachings. In addition, they also provide ongoing training and support to their teachers to ensure the improvement of their competencies.

Fourth, in resource management, this Integrated Islamic High School has set up an efficient policy for managing funds and school infrastructure. They ensure that the available resources are used wisely to support educational activities and school development.

By focusing on these aspects, these three Integrated Islamic High Schools are committed to providing excellent education based on Islamic values and the demands of the times. The educational governance policies they implement become the primary foundation for achieving this goal, which positively impacts the quality of education they provide for their students.

The education governance policies implemented by the three Integrated Islamic High Schools in North Sumatra have significantly impacted the quality of education they provide. In some cases, the positive effects of this policy have been visible through various indicators that measure the progress of education in these schools.

One of the most striking impacts is the improvement in national exam results. The strict and targeted governance policy has helped Integrated Islamic High School

students achieve higher attainment in the national examinations. The results of these exams reflect a better understanding of the subject matter and show that the learning process in these schools is adequate. In addition, this policy has also had a positive impact on student admissions to tertiary institutions. Better performance in national exams and quality learning make Integrated Islamic High School students desirable university candidates. This indicates that the education governance policy has opened the door to higher education opportunities for these students.

Furthermore, education governance policies also influence students' participation in extracurricular activities. With a solid educational foundation, students tend to be more active in various activities outside of class hours. This helps not only with their personal development but also with

#### D. CONCLUSION

Modernizing Islamic education in North Sumatra focusing on the Integrated Islamic School (SIT) network highlights how these schools, such as Alfityan Medan Integrated Islamic Private High School, Al Hijrah 2 Deliserdang Integrated Islamic Private High School, and Al Izzah Batubara Integrated Islamic Private High School, adapt to the demands of the times. The study observed how these schools integrate traditional Islamic values with modern educational approaches. These schools implement a curriculum encapsulating modern science and Islamic values, ensuring students receive a holistic education. This includes teaching science, math, technology, Islamic studies, Arabic language, and religious education. Governance policies emphasize the use of technology in learning. These schools adopt more interactive teaching methods and information technology to enhance teaching and learning, reflecting the shift from traditional to more contemporary techniques.

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