



The Integration of Cambridge Curriculum in Islamic Education at Bilingual Boarding School Surakarta

Woro Yustia Pratiwi^{1✉}, Wachidi², Muh. Nur Rochim Maksum^{3✉} ⁴Nur Farid Khoiruddin

¹²³Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, Surakarta, Indonesia

⁴Faculty of Education, Qassim University

ABSTRACT

The implementation of global curricula in Islamic schools faces challenges, as some teachers and students have not yet been able to adapt optimally. This study examines the integration of the Cambridge Curriculum at SMA ABBS Surakarta, focusing on planning, implementation, evaluation, as well as supporting and inhibiting factors. Employing a qualitative field research design with a phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The research subjects included the principal, vice principal for curriculum, teachers, and students. The findings reveal that successful implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum in this Islamic school is supported by three main pillars. First, the readiness of human resources, built through tiered training programs and international certification, with teachers required to have at least CEFR B2 English competency. Second, the adoption of innovative learning methods, particularly student-centered learning, practical activities, and authentic assessments that align with Cambridge International standards. Third, adequate infrastructure that meets international benchmarks, thereby facilitating effective curriculum delivery. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the application of the Cambridge Curriculum within an Islamic school context, which remains relatively rare in Indonesia. The research contributes to the broader discourse on curriculum globalization by highlighting how Islamic schools can integrate international standards while maintaining their religious identity. Practically, the study implies the need to strengthen teacher competencies, sustain infrastructure support, and develop adaptive learning strategies to ensure broader success in similar institutions.

ABSTRAK

Penerapan kurikulum global di sekolah Islam menghadapi kendala karena sebagian guru dan siswa belum mampu beradaptasi secara optimal. Penelitian ini difokuskan pada integrasi Cambridge di Sekolah Islam yang menjadikan tujuan untuk menganalisis penerapan Kurikulum Cambridge di SMA ABBS Kota Surakarta dengan fokus pada perencanaan, pelaksanaan, evaluasi, serta faktor pendukung dan penghambat dalam proses penerapan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan penelitian lapangan dan pendekatan fenomenologi. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada konsep pembahasannya yang mengarah pada

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pembelajaran Kurikulum Cambridge di Sekolah Islam. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Subjek penelitian terdiri dari Kepala Sekolah, Wakil Kepala Sekolah Bidang Kurikulum, guru, dan siswa SMA ABBS Kota Surakarta. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keberhasilan penerapan kurikulum ini ditopang oleh tiga pilar utama: (1) kesiapan sumber daya pendidik yang dibangun melalui program pelatihan berjenjang dan sertifikasi berstandar internasional dengan persyaratan kompetensi bahasa Inggris minimal CEFR B2 (2) penerapan metode pembelajaran inovatif yang mengintegrasikan pendekatan student-centered learning, kegiatan praktikum, dan sistem penilaian autentik, serta (3) dukungan infrastruktur pendidikan yang memenuhi standar Cambridge International. Penelitian ini berbeda dari penelitian sebelumnya karena mengambil konsep pada sekolah Islam yang masih jarang menerapkan kurikulum Cambridge. Implikasi dari penelitian ini adalah meningkatnya pengetahuan siswa di sekolah Islam.

Introduction

Education is one of the crucial aspects in developing future generation to adapt the changes in environments (Siahaya et al., 2024). Education in Indonesia continues to experience changes and improvements in its curriculum system in order to improve the quality of learning (Aditiya & Fatonah, 2023). The national curriculum has undergone several revisions, such as the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum, but in its implementation it is still considered less flexible and less oriented towards global standards (Rahman et al., 2025). The national education system still faces challenges in creating a curriculum that can accommodate the needs of students with various backgrounds and prepare them to face global competition (Woldegiorgis & Chiramba, 2025). Every curriculum consist of innovation in increasing positive behaviour (Nursalam et al., 2023). This raises the need to adopt a more diverse education system that is able to increase the competitiveness of students at the international level (Hart & Rodgers, 2024). In line with these developments, several educational institutions in Indonesia have begun to adopt international curriculum, one of which is the Cambridge curriculum (Taqiyuddin & Aisyah, 2023). The integration of the Cambridge curriculum with the national curriculum aims to improve student competency in various aspects, especially in science, mathematics and English (Hanif, 2023; Shahat et al., 2022). The Cambridge curriculum is known for its problem-solving based approach and critical thinking skills, which can help learners develop broader academic abilities that are relevant to global needs (O'Dwyer & Rogers, 2024). In addition, this curriculum also provides more objective and internationally based academic evaluation standards, which can increase the competitiveness of graduates at the global level (Fernandes & Singh, 2022; Wu & Koh, 2022).

Islamic education is one of the learning areas that is beginning to pay attention to developments in educational quality. Efforts to improve the quality of Islamic education are adopting internationally recognized technological developments. One example is the Bilingual Muslimat in Sidoarjo, which adopts the Cambridge Curriculum, integrated with the national curriculum. With this integration, it is hoped that Muslim individuals can receive an education equivalent to an international standard while still upholding Islamic teachings (Yamin & Astutik, 2023). The implementation of this integration has various impacts, both positive and challenges that need to be considered. The implementation of the Cambridge curriculum in the Indonesian education system can have an impact on the

academic development and character of students. This curriculum allows students to get a more active and creative learning experience in the learning process (Carbajal & Baranauskas, 2025; Kemendikbudristek, 2022). Research shows that a curriculum with a global focus improves students' cultural competence and English language skills, preparing them for post-secondary education and international employment (Lee et al., 2023). However, there is also the possibility of inconsistencies with national regulations that must be considered. Some schools that implement this curriculum must face administrative challenges, such as differences in evaluation systems, national curricula that must remain integrated, and the need for accreditation according to national education regulations (Islam et al., 2025). In addition, the limited number of teachers who understand the Cambridge system is a challenge in itself. The effectiveness of this integration is also an important factor in improving the overall quality of education. One of the schools that has implemented the integration of the Cambridge curriculum is SMA ABBS Surakarta. This school combines the National curriculum with the Cambridge curriculum to provide a broader learning experience for its students. The implementation of this curriculum includes the use of English as the language of instruction in several subjects, as well as academic evaluations that follow international standards. In addition, this school also instills Islamic values in its learning system, so that students get a balance between academic education and character building.

The Cambridge Curriculum's benefits and distinctiveness make it appealing in and of itself, and its implementation in Indonesian schools is a distinct phenomenon. The school is different from other Indonesian schools in general because it uses English as the language of instruction for learning activities (Agustin et al., 2022). Previous research conducted by Adilah et al., (2023) shows that in Singapore Intercultural School, an International school in Jakarta, various types of curriculum are available such as Singapore Curriculum, IGCSE, and IB Diploma. For preschool level, this school uses Singapore Curriculum, while at primary and secondary level, IGCSE and Singapore Curriculum are implemented. At junior college level, IB Diploma curriculum is used. The difference between National and International curriculum lies mainly in the language used; National curriculum prioritizes Indonesian, while International curriculum uses English as the main language. The difference with this research is that Nisa' Ardilah's research discusses various International curriculum in Jakarta while this research focuses on the implementation of Cambridge Curriculum in Surakarta.

Meanwhile, Christiana et al., (2022) shows that the concept of the Cambridge curriculum at the Junior High School level aims to form a generation that is confident, responsible, reflective, innovative, and ready to contribute. The implementation of this curriculum is carried out in three stages, namely: (1) introduction or socialization of the curriculum through orientation for students and parents, (2) application of the curriculum according to the procedures applicable in the Cambridge curriculum, and (3) evaluation through assessment of student learning outcomes. The results of the implementation of the Cambridge curriculum are that students can continue to high school with the Cambridge A Level curriculum, many achieve academic achievement, and this school is one of the best in Indonesia in implementing the Cambridge curriculum. The difference with this study is that Christiana's study discusses focusing on junior high schools, while this study is on high schools with an emphasis on student readiness to face A Level.

The gap in this research is in the opinion of (Lewin et al., 2023) which revealed that religious education was not implemented in the curriculum. However, religious education can help shape an individual's values and beliefs. In England, religious education is a curriculum requirement to provide learning to students. In Indonesia, religious instruction in the Cambridge Curriculum has yet to be regulated. This poses a

challenge for character development. However, the Cambridge curriculum is considered quite good and may be more attractive to international and local students. According to (Sultana, 2022), religious curriculum is part of the subject that can never be separated from human's life. The high level of interest in the Cambridge curriculum makes religious studies an opportunity to be included in Cambridge subjects. The emphasis on individual personality in religious studies makes the Cambridge curriculum a more comprehensive learning experience. Abdulloh & Makruf (2023) It was stated that curriculum integration has only been implemented in some schools, but not comprehensively. This creates a gap for some individuals in different environments. The differences in education received by each individual create a gap in educational quality. This gap needs to be analyzed more deeply to ensure that more individuals understand the importance of equitable educational programs being implemented equally. Due to the lack of religious instruction in the Cambridge program, some Islamic schools have been reluctant to implement it.

Religious education is a form of learning provided to individuals to understand and develop valuable character. Islamic education can provide training for individuals to develop ethical and spiritual values. Religious education leads people to a more positive character through the presence of God in their lives (Komariah & Nihayah, 2023). Simanjuntak et al., (2022) stated that religious education as a national curriculum can support the Cambridge curriculum with the equality of combined learning. Meanwhile, (Yamin & Astutik, 2023) stated that in technology advancement, Islamic School pay more attention to the integration of the Cambridge and national curriculums combined. However, research on the integration of Cambridge and Islamic learning is still rare. The novelty of this study lies in its discussion of the integration of the Cambridge Curriculum and the National Curriculum to provide learning in Islamic schools. This study investigates how a global curriculum is contextualized in an Islamic educational environment, which is rarely documented in Indonesian literature. Furthermore, this study also implement suggestion program for Religious education to be a part of Cambridge Curriculum.

With this phenomenon, it is important to further examine how the Cambridge curriculum is implemented in Indonesia, especially at ABBS Surakarta High School. The objectives of this study are to describe: 1) Cambridge curriculum planning at ABBS Surakarta High School. 2) implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum at ABBS Surakarta High School. 3) Cambridge Curriculum evaluation system at BBS Surakarta High School. 4) supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum at SMA ABBS Surakarta City. This study is expected to provide an overview of the planning, implementation, evaluation system and challenges faced in its implementation. In addition, this study can also provide recommendations for other educational institutions that want to adopt a similar system in order to optimize the benefits of integrating the International curriculum.

Methods

This research was conducted within the qualitative research paradigm. As explained by Jackman et al. (2022), qualitative research is an approach used to understand phenomena in depth by exploring the experiences, perceptions, and perspectives of individuals or groups in natural contexts. The study was designed as field research with a phenomenological approach. This approach was chosen because the study aimed to capture the lived experiences of the principal, vice principal for curriculum, teachers, and students in implementing the Cambridge Curriculum at SMA ABBS Surakarta. The school was selected as the research site because it had formally adopted the Cambridge Curriculum. The participants included the Principal, Vice Principal for Curriculum,

teachers, and students, with four interviewees serving as key informants due to their direct experiential knowledge.

Data were collected through three techniques: interviews, observations, and documentation. In-depth structured interviews were conducted with the Principal, Vice Principal for Curriculum, teachers, and students to obtain detailed information about curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation. The interviews also explored the Vice Principal's perception of the curriculum's effectiveness, the support provided by the school, and the involvement of students in the learning process. Classroom observations were carried out to directly observe the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum. During these observations, the researcher recorded how teachers managed their classes, the teaching methods applied, students' responses to lessons, and the instructional aids used. Documentation was also collected in the form of Semester Programs (Promes), policy documents, and photographs of school facilities. These documents served to complement and verify the findings obtained through interviews and observations.

To ensure data validity, triangulation techniques were applied. Both data triangulation and source triangulation were used by comparing interview results with observations and documentary evidence (Susanto et al., 2023). This strategy strengthened the reliability of the findings and supported argumentation. Data analysis was carried out using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which involved three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The analysis was performed iteratively until data saturation was reached. Ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining informed consent from all participants before data collection. Interviewees agreed that their contributions could be included in the research, and their identities were kept confidential to protect privacy.

Results and Discussion

Result

The school implements a strict recruitment process, where prospective teachers must have English language skills of at least B2 level (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) and an educational background that is in accordance with the field being taught, such as English, Mathematics, and Science. Observation and documentation results show that in an effort to improve the quality of teaching, the school organizes internal training through the SPK (School of Expertise Program) program which is held every semester, as well as external training organized directly by Cambridge with a duration of two to three months. In addition, a "study group" forum is available as a means of discussion and sharing experiences between teachers, so that the learning process continues to develop and remains in accordance with Cambridge standards.

"Teacher readiness in the Cambridge program required to follow a series of training that has been set. Training organized by the foundation through SPK (School of Expertise Program) and training that comes directly from Cambridge. This training generally lasts for two to three months. In addition, in our school there is also a 'study group' forum for teachers, which is a place to discuss and exchange ideas."

(Interview with Ms. Mia Febriana, M.Pd as the principal of SMA ABBS Surakarta, 2025).

"In general, schools have certain criteria in accepting teachers, both general and specific requirements. Especially for teachers in the Cambridge program, one of the main

requirements is good English skills. In addition, academic qualifications are also an important consideration. This will lead to curriculum alignment between Cambridge and national" (Interview with Mr. Achrudin, S.Pd., Gr. as the deputy head of curriculum of SMA ABBS Surakarta, 2025).

The school's planning strategy in preparing educators is realized through the ASTC (Al-Abidin Subject Teachers Conference) program, which functions as a forum for discussion and collaboration between teachers in compiling learning materials. Given the school's status as a Cambridge Center, English language proficiency is a crucial requirement. Therefore, teachers routinely hold weekly study groups to improve their English language competency. In addition, the school holds internal training, including syllabus analysis, lesson plan preparation, and understanding the Cambridge assessment system.

"In our school, there is a program called ASTC (Al-Abidin Subject Teachers Conference), which serves as a forum for teachers to prepare all subjects so that students can understand the material well. In addition, we have a commitment for teachers readiness to always teach using English, considering that our school is a Cambridge Center. Usually, teachers form study groups to support each other in improving English skills." (Interview with Ms. Mia Febriana, M.Pd as the principal of SMA ABBS Surakarta, 2025).

"In terms of preparation, there are two types that we do. The first is internal preparation from the school, and the second is external preparation through seminars or training organized by Cambridge. For training from Cambridge itself, the implementation time sometimes does not coincide with the beginning of the school year. This program will show some successful integration of Cambridge and national curriculum that lead to balance education". (Interview with Mr. Achrudin, S.Pd., Gr. as the deputy head of curriculum of SMA ABBS Surakarta, 2025)

The assessment system in the Cambridge Curriculum at SMA ABBS Surakarta is implemented in accordance with the provisions and guidelines set by Cambridge, covering aspects of assessment and evaluation guidelines. To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the assessment system, teachers attend official training from Cambridge and then share their knowledge with fellow educators. The learning resources provided are also very supportive, including workbooks for formative assessments and specimen papers and past papers for summative assessments. In addition, teachers also design additional questions for formative assessments to facilitate the learning process, especially when students are not yet ready to work on Cambridge standard questions.

"In Cambridge, the learning tools are very complete. The books used are equipped with workbooks that can be used for formative assessment. While for summative assessment, specimen papers and past papers are available." (Interview with Mr. Achrudin, 2025).

The facilities at SMA ABBS Surakarta have met Cambridge standard criteria in terms of completeness, security, and operational governance. Classrooms, laboratories, and libraries have met Cambridge requirements, including the provision of a special Storage Room that can only be opened by the Exam Officer for storing exam documents. There are three physics, chemistry, and biology laboratories, all of which have met safety and feasibility standards. Overall, the facilities and infrastructure at this school have supported the implementation of Cambridge-based learning and exams, although there are some areas such as the hall that still need improvement.

"In terms of facilities, we feel that it is quite supportive. We have even registered ourselves as an official Cambridge center. For practical needs, laboratories are also available. However, there are several things that we are still evaluating and fixing, such as the condition of the hall at the front which is not yet ideal. Meanwhile, for the learning aspect, God willing, it has been running quite well." (Ms. Nurma S.Pd as Cambridge Subject Teacher, 2025) .

Education is a process to transfer experience through generation in traditional and modern ways. Education can help in providing more understanding for individuals. In this case, the implementation of a learning program can impact individual behavior (Cherinet & Tulu, 2025).

Implementation of Cambridge Curriculum at ABBS Surakarta High School

Schools must adhere to extremely stringent guidelines and standards while administering the Cambridge examinations, including handling exam questions, which must be done meticulously in accordance with relevant protocols. However, because Cambridge credentials are widely accepted worldwide, schools value the Cambridge system, which ensures honesty and integrity in assessments.

A placement test is used to gauge student proficiency, particularly in English, before students are chosen to enroll in the Cambridge course at SMA ABBS Surakarta. The test score serves as the selection criterion, and individuals with the highest scores are given preference.

"The first requirement, for the placement test (to measure a person's ability in a certain field) must be tested using English score must be selected, the best English score that we place in the Cambridge class. The next, for example, say from one hundred students fifty we place in Cambridge, then fifty are distributed" (Interview with Ms. Nurma S.Pd as the Deputy Head of Curriculum at ABBS Surakarta High School, 2025).

As part of the Cambridge curriculum, grade 10 students at SMA ABBS Surakarta study English at the AS Level. Chemistry, Physics, Biology, and Mathematics are the courses taught for A Level students (grades 11 and 12). The learning approach applied at SMA ABBS Surakarta, especially in the Cambridge program, prioritizes the lecture method as the main part of the learning process. This learning approach combines lectures with interactive discussions and practices to enrich the learning experience of students.

"The approach I use is not entirely student-centered, as most of the learning process involves lectures. However, there are times when I invite students to discuss, such as when doing practice or forming groups to solve problems". (Interview with Ms. Nurma S.Pd).

"Given Cambridge's higher level compared to other curricula, sometimes we need to work in large groups to complete assignments. In addition, we also often do practical work, such as in chemistry and others. This is in line with Cambridge's approach which focuses not only on theory, but also on its application in the real world". (Interview with Aqila Najwani as a 12th grade student at ABBS Surakarta High School, 2025)

This curriculum is considered very structured and detailed, making it easier for teachers to deliver materials and design learning plans. For students, many graduates consider the learning materials to be very appropriate for college needs, some even feel that the level of difficulty is equivalent to the material in college. Meanwhile, for teachers, this curriculum is a challenge as well as motivation to continue improving competence. In addition, Cambridge certification, such as IGCSE and A Level, provides opportunities for students to continue their studies abroad, either at the pre-university level or directly to university, according to their respective interests and goals.

"The Cambridge curriculum is considered one of the best in the world because of its highly systematic and detailed structure." (Interview with Ms. Mia Febriana, M.Pd, 2025).

"The first benefit that is felt is the learning experience gained, both by teachers and students. Teachers, for example, continue to learn because the Cambridge curriculum has a more challenging structure and depth than the regular curriculum. For students, the Cambridge curriculum and the notebooks used before are still very helpful in college. In addition, Cambridge certificates, such as IGCSE, can open up opportunities to study abroad, because they can directly enter the Pre-University program. While A Level can directly take students to universities abroad. Of course, it depends on each student's decision whether they want to take advantage of it or not." (Interview with Mr. Achrudin, 2025).

According to Simanjuntak et al., (2022) Cambridge Curriculum is implement in order to support National Curriculum. In this case, the provisions of the rules in Cambridge are as an adaptive curriculum that is matched to help schools improve the quality of education. Cambridge Curriculum is used as international learning in Indonesia for the field of ELT. The adoption of the English curriculum enhances the multicultural experience. In this situation, Cambridge Curriculum obtains learning points, assessments, language skills and language awareness to help identify weaknesses and strengths (Sitompul & Anditasari., 2024). According to Khodijah et al., (2024), education is important because it increase intellectual, emotional, moral and social aspects. With education, self-defense can help in responding to changes (Sukirjo et al., 2025).

Cambridge Curriculum Evaluation System at ABBS Surakarta High School

Cambridge curriculum evaluation at SMA ABBS Surakarta is carried out comprehensively, including assessment of the implementation of the learning process and achievement of learning outcomes. This evaluation mechanism includes periodic supervision through class supervision and detection of obstacles that arise during the implementation of the curriculum. In addition, students undergo regular formative assessments, followed by Cambridge exams at the end of the program which produce certification and evaluation reports. As preparation, students take a Mock Test every semester using past paper questions that are adjusted to the learning material. The final result of this assessment is A Level achievement.

The regular use of mock tests is a way to monitor student learning outcomes, with the final A Level results as the main reference.

"For evaluation, we assess both the implementation process and the results achieved. In terms of implementation, we routinely monitor through classroom supervision and monitor how teachers implement the program in the field, and identify obstacles that arise. In addition, we also conduct periodic formative assessments for students. In the final stage, we hold exams from Cambridge which directly provide certificates and results." (Interview with Ms. Nurma S.Pd).

Cambridge curriculum evaluation at SMA ABBS Surakarta is carried out comprehensively, including assessment of the implementation of the learning process and achievement of learning outcomes. This evaluation mechanism includes periodic supervision through class supervision and detection of obstacles that arise during the implementation of the curriculum. Students undergo regular formative assessments, followed by Cambridge exams at the end of the program which result in certification and evaluation reports. As preparation, students take a Mock Test every semester using past paper questions that are adjusted to the learning material. The final result of this assessment is A Level achievement. At SMA ABBS Surakarta, evaluation activities are carried out routinely. The school holds an assessment every three months, while the Cambridge system implements an evaluation after one syllabus ends, with the exam time generally falling in June. Mock Tests are held every semester, while A Level exams are held at the end of grade 12. In addition, students are also required to complete group assignments every time a chapter of learning based on Cambridge standards is completed. There are significant differences in the evaluation system between the Cambridge Curriculum and the National Curriculum. In the National Curriculum, the evaluation process is entirely the responsibility of the school, where the school organizes the test. Meanwhile, in the Cambridge Curriculum, evaluation is carried out directly by the Cambridge institution, while schools are only tasked with managing formative assessments to monitor student development.

The success of the Cambridge Curriculum implementation is influenced by several main factors that support each other (Rezat et al., 2021). Schools need to continue to

update information and follow the development of the curriculum which is refined every year, and be ready to face new programs from Cambridge (Jones, 2023). Teachers must have high fighting spirit and creativity in helping students overcome difficulties (Evimalinda et al., 2022). On the other hand, students need to have good English skills and be proactive in improving their skills, such as by taking additional lessons or increasing reading and listening practice (Terzioğlu & Kurt, 2022). Education is the foundation for building a better society. With education, individuals can gain more knowledge and experience (Adewale & Moyo, 2025). In this condition, evaluation of the use of the curriculum is very important to increase opportunities for learning. In Indonesia, education is regulated with minimum requirements in understanding the school system. The implementation of Cambridge in Indonesia is the main focus for integrating local and international learning systems. Cambridge curriculum is effective in making students understand learning (Ameliya et al., 2024). The inclusion of religious studies in the Cambridge curriculum is a form of learning that can support other subjects. In this regard, Cambridge religious studies will teach about religion and become a subject of increasing interest among the public. When learning is fun and accessible, students will find it more enjoyable (Yamin & Astutik, 2023). According to (Simanjuntak et al., 2022), the Cambridge curriculum is used to support the national curriculum. National education includes an understanding of religion, so the addition of Cambridge will clarify national curriculum learning.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum at ABBS Surakarta High School

One of the supporting factors for the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum for students is the existence of previous experience that forms readiness and comfort in following the system.

"I feel that in the Cambridge system, every answer process is more appreciated. Even though there are mistakes, there are still marks given that are not immediately considered wrong". (Interview with Aqila Najwani).

Meanwhile, the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum at SMA ABBS Surakarta experienced several obstacles, such as variations in students' English language ability levels, difficulties in aligning the national curriculum with Cambridge, and limited facilities and infrastructure.

"The main challenge we face is the differences in student abilities that need to be adjusted with appropriate teaching methods, facilities and infrastructure, and adjusting the curriculum." (Interview with Ms. Nurma S.Pd).

"The challenge is that sometimes friends are left behind." (Interview with Aqila Najwani).

To overcome the challenges, the school has taken a number of strategies, including providing more adequate facilities, regular training for teachers, and special programs to improve students' English language skills. In addition, regular evaluations and Cambridge assessment system training are also carried out to ensure compliance with applicable standards.

"I have actually conveyed the strategy that we are implementing at the beginning, but in general, the main thing is the mandatory evaluation process that is carried out periodically and the improvement of infrastructure." (Interview with Mr. Achrudin, S.Pd., Gr).

From the results of the interviews that have been conducted, it can be seen that the Cambridge system in SMA ABBS Surakarta is implemented with better planning and evaluation systems. SMA ABBS shows readiness to implement the Cambridge curriculum by providing teachers who are more competent with international standards. In this case,

SMA ABBS Surakarta is able to increase efforts to improve the quality of teaching. The quality of teaching carried out involves external and internal training in order to adapt to change. SMA ABBS Surakarta has prepared educators by presenting the ASTC program which is used as a forum for discussion and collaboration between teachers and students. SMA ABBS Surakarta provides Cambridge guidelines with a comprehensive assessment form where teachers design an independent assessment model. From the results found, SMA ABBS Surakarta has facilities that meet Cambridge standards in terms of completeness, security and operational governance. The facilities and infrastructure provided have supported learning activities with adequate tools and practical materials. Not only that, SMA ABBS Surakarta also applies digital technology in the teaching and learning process, such as Canva which is effective as a tool for providing interesting materials. The implementation of the Cambridge curriculum at SMA ABBS Surakarta often experiences several obstacles due to the limited use of English, so SMA ABBS Surakarta added an English curriculum to help improve the use of English.

Discussion

Our findings demonstrate for the first time that the Cambridge curriculum can be contextualized with Islamic values while maintaining international standards. In this regard, SMA ABBS Surakarta, as an Islamic school, implements the Cambridge Curriculum to provide understanding and education to students. The implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum has had a positive impact on students. Implementation can be further enhanced by making the Cambridge Curriculum and the national curriculum two well-formed programs. This result is in line with (Abdulloh & Makruf, 2023) that showed Islamic School can implement Cambridge Learning and National Curriculum in order to improve student quality. The implementation was successful, but there were some shortcomings, as students still struggled to understand the English language learning. This is a crucial aspect of the Cambridge program that needs to be addressed during integration.

The implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum at SMA ABBS Surakarta is carried out through careful planning, especially in preparing educational resources. The school implements a strict recruitment process with international competency standards, including English language skills of at least level B2, and holds regular internal and external training. Supporting facilities such as science laboratories and exam document storage rooms have met Cambridge standards, although some facilities such as the hall still need improvement. The learning media used combines conventional teaching materials with digital technology, with an emphasis on the suitability of the media to the learning materials (Suhartanta et al., 2024).

This is in accordance with what Busro & Siskandar (2017) said regarding the scope of curriculum implementation planning including: 1) availability of curriculum documents and completeness of their instrumentation such as implementing regulations, guidelines, and standard operating procedures (SOPs), 2) socialization planning related to understanding the curriculum to be implemented. 3) planning of supporting systems such as facilities and infrastructure and human resources. According to Batubara (2021) curriculum planning must be based on the basis, principles, and functions of the curriculum, as well as in educational learning curriculum planning. A significant advancement in education is that the goals and materials are designed to give students skills rather than just information (Uyar 2017 in Wulandari et al., 2023). According to Kayen et al., (2025), the consistency and success of a program is influenced by governance and gaps in educational resources.

In its implementation, this curriculum faces significant challenges related to student readiness and harmonization with the national curriculum. Many students have difficulty adapting to English-based learning, so schools hold supporting programs such as English Camp. The teaching method emphasizes more on practical approaches and group discussions, in contrast to the national curriculum which tends to be theoretical. The discussion method can increase students' enthusiasm for learning through social interaction, critical thinking, communication skills development, material relevance, and a challenging learning atmosphere. Through discussion, students feel more motivated to learn and actively participate in the learning process (Ridwan et al., 2023). Through discussion, students can see different perspectives and new ideas. This encourages critical thinking and stimulates students' curiosity. They become more involved in learning because they actively participate in debating, analyzing arguments, and questioning information (Guo et al., 2023). According to Efendi et al., (2024) learning techniques that stress experimentation, problem solving, and cooperation build critical and creative thinking abilities organically. A placement exam that emphasizes English language proficiency is used to choose students, and formative and summative evaluations utilizing sample and previous papers are part of the rigorous Cambridge criteria for learning evaluation. Numerous elements pertaining to a learner's first, second, or other language have an effect on how further language acquisition takes place in the classroom (Karabassova & San Isidro, 2023). According to Banjal et al., (2025), challenges faced by teachers are the shiftment of environment in educational policy. Some schools have limited resources and problems with the effectiveness of implementation and difficulties in aligning the syllabus. Furthermore, learning can create lack understanding and less optimal information throughout activities (Wahjusaputri et al., 2024).

Integrating Islamic values into science learning helps students maintain and strengthen their spiritual and moral awareness. Every individual needs to understand what happens in life. Science teaches students to gain an understanding of their environment. Integrating Islamic values with science is a crucial element in facing global challenges. Science is constantly evolving and inseparable from spiritual values. Therefore, integrating Islamic values into science helps improve schools' strategies in providing intellectual, moral, and spiritual learning to students. Religious education materials are related to science, as seen from learning aspects of ontology, epistemology, and axiology, which will link values, culture, and morality (Sutiana & Nugraha, 2025). The Cambridge curriculum aligns with quality assurance for religious education because teachers have undergone training in accordance with international learning standards. Cambridge curriculum standards require each teacher to have experience and training. Therefore, the quality of religious education ensures the foundation of teaching provided to students (Phillips, 2021).

The Ministry of Religious Affairs has demonstrated some characteristics of student problems, such as heterogeneous student abilities, limited lesson time, excellent student interest in other subjects, and limited IRE facilities. In this regard, the Ministry of Religious Affairs' role is to help students obtain a better education, especially at the Cambridge level (Habibah et al., 2023). If Islamic boarding schools also implement Cambridge learning, it can be seen that Islamic religious education has the opportunity to become one of the religious learning programs. The quality of education is determined by the government, and in this case, Islamic learning is determined by the quality of Islamic educational institutions. Several Islamic schools have implemented the Cambridge Curriculum using different approaches. Teaching in Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah helps students develop stronger character by emphasizing national values. Despite various challenges, MI Muslimat NU Pucang Sidoarjo continues to implement the Cambridge curriculum. The implementation of the Cambridge curriculum in Islamic schools fosters critical thinking

and creativity through the provision of training for each teacher (Mabarroh et al., 2025). Some challenges faced in the learning process Cambridge is about different student abilities, adapting to the curriculum and facilities provided. Not all children can understand the lessons given because they are in English. However, to address this, teachers must understand how Cambridge applies to learning. Every teacher needs appropriate training to teach Cambridge effectively.

According to (Maisyaroh et al., 2023), Cambridge curriculum adopted from Cambridge International Examinations that makes it easier for teacher to carry their duties. Cambridge's curriculum design brings value by implementing religious instruction. Each individual can develop a better character through the values taught, such as character, nationalism, and mutual cooperation. The design of the curriculum demonstrates that this research aligns with religious character education. Every individual needs character development to become a better person. Islamic religious education is implemented to engage the Muslim community, encouraging them to study the Cambridge curriculum while still upholding Islamic teachings. This helps individuals avoid being influenced by and forgetting Islamic teachings. The involvement of religious teachers (ustad) in teaching Islamic religious education is crucial for reinforcing the material. This is because ustads possess different understanding and experience than teachers. The ustads involved must have a sound Islamic background to be able to teach students.

Supporting factors for success included high commitment from teachers and ongoing development programs, while major barriers included disparities in students' English proficiency and the complexity of integrating the two curricula. The school responded to these challenges through strategies such as ASTC (teacher collaboration forum), regular training, and special programs to improve language skills. As Sachyani & Gal (2025) states, program teachers shift from simply imparting knowledge to acting as mentors and advisors, helping students take advantage of new technologies. Time management (self-management), effective student participation in the learning process (relationship skills), and teachers' constructive handling of student conduct and dispute resolution (social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making) are all components of classroom organization. Teachers' use of instruction and activities that incorporate higher-order thinking abilities, particularly perspective-taking and analysis, as well as reasoning (social awareness, interpersonal skills, and responsible decision-making), are examples of instructional assistance. Another sign of instructional support is the high standards that teachers have for their pupils (social awareness) (Thierry et al., 2020). Collaboration among teachers is essential to school improvement, which benefits professional and social capital. In addition to providing teachers with the opportunity to take on additional duties within their schools, collaborative assistance also helps to professionalize teaching (García-Martínez et al., 2021).

Evaluation results showed that the curriculum was successful in improving students' academic and English competencies, as well as opening up opportunities for overseas study, although adjustments were needed in time management and material priorities to optimize learning. Evaluation can provide credible information about the implementation of learning and student achievement. From this information, decisions are then made about the curriculum itself, learning improvements, obstacles and guidance efforts that need to be provided (Kusumawati, 2019). Curriculum evaluation has a very important position to improve the learning process in order to realize meaningful education (Indrawati, 2024). Teachers' strategies for implementing Cambridge Bridge learning include increasing student collaboration and participation. The application of Cambridge learning and Islamic religious education can influence the culture of worship

in each individual. In this way, each individual develops the understanding and awareness to continue learning while adhering to Islamic teachings.

This makes it possible to understand how to develop the emotional and cognitive abilities necessary for success in the current world. Additionally, student feedback shows that, in accordance with scientific literature, their school's educational system has been modernized, changed, and effective in reducing classroom boredom (Anggoro et al., 2024). The findings of the aforementioned study support Qomariyah & Khasanah (2023) findings that the following are included in the secondary school implementation of the Cambridge curriculum: Planning involves arranging meetings with all Cambridge instructors to create both short- and long-term plans, comprehending curricular frameworks, teacher training, and teacher guides, as well as knowing references and creating lesson plans, work schemes, and teacher resource books. Having content that includes discussion and presenting techniques, audio media, projectors, and learning activities (introduction, core activities, and closing) with an international focus. Assessments consisting of diagnostics in the form of development tests, achievement tests with formative and summative components, placement exams, and class assessments.

These findings have significant implications for schools implementing the Cambridge curriculum. In implementing the curriculum, careful preparation and planning are needed. In addition, this approach can contribute to implementing the curriculum according to the specified standards. This study opens up opportunities for further studies, namely the implementation of the Cambridge curriculum in Islamic boarding schools, curriculum comparison, and comparison of the implementation of the Cambridge curriculum in several schools. This study has several limitations, including a sample size limited to one high school and participants with only a few school residents. In addition, the qualitative approach used may not capture the full complexity of the issues studied. Further research with more comprehensive methods and a wider sample is needed to confirm these findings. Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that other schools consider a similar curriculum to form quality students. Furthermore, this result has implications for the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia's policy, which shows the importance of religious learning in schools.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum at SMA ABBS Surakarta reflects a strong institutional commitment to advancing educational quality aligned with international standards. Key findings show that the school has successfully met core requirements such as competent teacher qualifications (minimum CEFR B2), the use of student-centered, practice-based learning, and critical thinking-oriented approaches. These efforts have improved students' academic performance, English proficiency, and opportunities for further study abroad, while also strengthening character education grounded in Islamic values.

The findings carry several important implications. Practically, the case of SMA ABBS Surakarta demonstrates that Islamic schools can integrate international curricula without neglecting local cultural and religious contexts. For policymakers, particularly the Ministry of Religious Affairs, this study provides evidence to support policies that encourage equitable access to Cambridge or similar international curricula across Islamic schools. Theoretically, the research contributes to curriculum integration studies by illustrating how global models can be harmonized with religious education to produce graduates equipped for both national and global challenges.

Nevertheless, this study has certain limitations. The small sample size and single-site focus limit the generalizability of the findings, while issues such as limited facilities, curriculum alignment difficulties, and varied student readiness remain unresolved challenges. Future research should therefore adopt comparative and multi-site designs, contrasting Islamic and non-Islamic schools, to capture broader variations in international curriculum integration. Further studies could also investigate cost-effectiveness, long-term learning outcomes, and the role of teacher professional development in sustaining quality. By addressing these gaps, future research can contribute to a more comprehensive framework for integrating global curricula into Indonesia's diverse educational landscape.

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