Curriculum design of joint madrasah system in Islamic education in Singapore

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Abstract

To accept the increasing modernization and globalization wave, Majelis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS) which is responsible for Islamic education in Singapore, introduced the Joint Madrasah System (JMS) to assist madrasahs in improving teachers' skills, enhancing the curriculum, and optimizing the strengths of each madrasah holistically. The JMS system was implemented in three full-time madrasahs, namely Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri Al-Islamiah, Madrasah Aljunied Al-Islamiah, and Madrasah Al-Arabiah Al-Islamiah. This article aims to describe the curriculum design implemented in the Joint Madrasah Singapore. The research method used in this article is a qualitative method with a combined qualitative approach between library research and field research. Data and information were collected from one of the madrasahs appointed by MUIS as part of JMS, namely Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri Al-Islamiah, in the form of documents, archives, observations, and interviews. The type of research is descriptive qualitative, a form of research that aims to collect and compile data and try to analyze with interpretation or interpretation of these data. Furthermore, in analyzing the data, the author uses two methods, namely the content analysis method and the descriptive analysis method, especially educational analysis. The results show that the curriculum design applied in JMS is an integrative curriculum that eliminates the boundaries between various religious and scientific materials, and presents various subject matter in the form of units or wholes. This was a response from MUIS to improve the quality of the madrasa curriculum to be on par with the national curriculum.

Keywords: Curriculum; Islamic Education; Madrasah; Singapore.

Abstrak

Untuk mengikuti arus modernisasi dan globalisasi yang begitu cepat, Majelis Ugama Islam Singapore sebagai penanggung jawab pendidikan Islam di Singapura memperkenalkan Joint Madrasah System (JMS) untuk membantu madrasah dalam meningkatkan kemampuan guru, meningkatkan kurikulum, dan mengoptimalkan kekuatan yang ada di setiap madrasah secara holistik. Sistem JMS ini diimplementasikan pada tiga madrasah sepenuh masa, yaitu Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri Al-Islamiah, Madrasah Aljunied Al-Islamiah dan Madrasah Al-Arabiah Al-Islamiah. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan desain kurikulum yang diterapkan dalam Joint Madrasah Singapore. Metode penelitian yang digunakan dalam artikel ini adalah metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan kualitatif gabungan antara library research dan field research. Data dan informasi

dikumpulkan dari salah satu madrasah yang ditunjuk oleh MUIS sebagai bagian dari JMS, yaitu Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri Al-Islamiah, berupa dokumen, arsip, observasi, dan wawancara. Jenis penelitiannya adalah deskriptif kualitatif, yaitu bentuk penelitian yang bertujuan mengumpulkan dan menyusun data serta mengusahakan dengan analisis secara interpretasi atau penafsiran terhadap data-data tersebut. Selanjutnya dalam menganalisa data, penulis menggunakan dua metode, yaitu metode analisis isi (content analisys) dan metode deskriptif analisis, khususnya analisis kependidikan. Hasilnya didapat bahwa desain kurikulum yang diterapkan dalam JMS adalah kurikulum integratif yang meniadakan batas-batas antara berbagai materi keilmuan agama dan sains, serta menyajikan berbagai bahan pelajaran dalam bentuk unit atau keseluruhan. Hal ini dilakukan sebagai respon MUIS untuk meningkatkan kualitas kurikulum madrasah agar setara dengan kurikulum nasional.

Kata kunci: Kurikulum; Madrasah; Pendidikan Islam; Singapura.

Introduction

Muslim religious practices in Singapore are significantly shaped by madrasah. The term "madrasah" typically refers to religious institutions for children and youth that provide primary, secondary, and pre-university education from the perspective of Singapore's Muslim population (MUIS, 2021). Additionally, there are what are known as part-time madrasahs, which provide religious instruction. Students who also attend public schools can receive additional instruction at this kind of madrasah, which is connected to a mosque (Syafri, Maya, & Sarkiman, 2022). Both formal and informal forms of Islamic education exist today (Rahman, Warsah, & Murfi, 2019). Full-time madrasahs offer formal religious education. While mosques and other religious education organizations known as IECPs (Islamic Education Centers and Providers) provide formal religious instruction, informal religious education is more commonly referred to as part-time madrasahs (Hashim, 2014).

For Muslim students in Singapore, six madrasahs offer full-time Islamic education. The six madrasahs, which are Al-Arabiah Al-Islamiyah, Irsyad Zuhri Al-Islamiyah, Aljunied Al-Islamiyah, Al-Maarif Al-Islamiyah, Al-Sagoff Al-Arabiyah, and Wak Tanjong Al-Islamiyah, are run in a modern and professional manner with good equipment, particularly the most recent technological systems. MUIS runs these six madrasahs and has an educational program that mixes religious studies with general studies. In addition to teaching national subjects, madrasahs also teach Islamic education (*diniyah*) and Arabic (Hj Siren, Majid & Aljunied, 2014; Mohd Nor, 2017).

Madrasahs have a long history in Singapore as centers of Islamic religious education, dating back to a time well before the Republic of Singapore was ever

founded. The Singapore government was concerned at the time because madrasas solely provided religious (*diniyah*) education, and there was talk of closing them as early as 1999 (Mutalib, 2015). The government feared that graduates from madrasahs wouldn't be able to compete with those from national schools (Helmiati, 2021). However, there are very few jobs available in the religious sector. This is due to the minority status of Singapore's Malay/Islamic population. On May 2, 2002, Goh Chok Tong, who was the prime minister at the time, made the following remarks on Labor Day:

> Issue not about madrasah's future, but the future of Muslim children ... 'Do you want them to grow up all being religious teachers and religious preachers, or do you want them to be trained in IT, to be engineers, doctors, architects, professionals? If the madrasahs were training 100 or 200 students a year, I think we can live with that. But if you are training 400, 500, 1000, 2000 in full-time madrasahs or full-time religious education supplemented by some secular subjects, what will be the future of the Malay community? ... I cannot say, however, that some madrasahs may not close because we want to have standards (Strait Times, 2002).

The Association of Islamic Religious Scholars and Teachers of Singapore (PERGAS), in reaction to the discussion around the closure of madrasahs, held a news conference that included ten points of view and suggestions for the government, the third of which is as follows:

> PERGAS rejects this suggestion, in its existing form, to implement compulsory education in case it would lead to the closure of schools at the lower levels of the madrassas, which PERGAS considers, similar to the gradual closure towards the permanent closure of the madrassas is inevitable, although without intending to do so (PERGAS, 2007).

In 2008, the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS), the highest authority for Singapore's Muslim community, introduced the Joint Madrasah System (JMS) management, involving three madrasahs: Aljunied Al-Islamiah madrasah, Al-Arabiyah Al-Islamiah madrasah, and Irsyad Zuhri Al-Islamiah madrasah (Tan & Abbas, 2017).
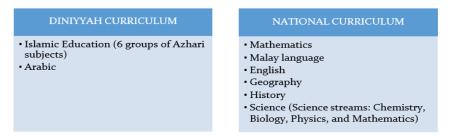
Madrasah	Joint Madrasah System
• Madrasah al-Maarif al-Islamiah • Madrasah Wak Tanjong al-Islamiah • Madrasah al-Sagoff	• Madrasah al-Irsyad al-Islamiah • Madrasah Aljunied al-Islamiah • Madrasah al-Arabiah al-Islamiah

Source: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam, 8(2), December 2019
Picture 1. Management System of Singapore Madrasah

Figure 1 illustrates how the two types of madrasah management are divided by MUIS's madrasah management arrangements. Only Irsyad Zuhri Madrasah is permitted to admit pupils at the primary level under this management structure. Aljunied Madrasah and Al-Arabiyah Madrasah, on the other hand, are only permitted to admit students at the secondary level, with Aljunied Madrasah's specialization division concentrating on *ukhrawi* education and Al-Arabiah Madrasah's division concentrating on worldly education (Rahman, Warsah & Murfi, 2019).

DINIYYAH CURRICULUM	NATIONAL CURRICULUM
• Islamic Education (6 groups of Azhari subjects) • Arabic	• Mathematics • Malay language • English • Geography • History • Science (Science streams: Chemistry, Biology, Physics, and Mathematics)

Source: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam, 8(2), December 2019
Picture 2. Singapore Madrasah Curriculum

This affects other madrasahs' curriculum. While al-Maarif, Wak Tanjong, and al-Sagoff madrasas have full control over developing their curricula, including the hiring of teachers, the madrasas managed by JMS are subject to MUIS' management, including the training of their teachers by educators trained at the National Institute of Education (NIE) in collaboration with MUIS Academy (Rahman, Warsah, & Murfi, 2019). Al-Arabiah Madrasah's curriculum focuses on the national curriculum to produce Muslim scholars. As a result, learning the Quran by heart is part of the core curriculum along with pure science courses. Aljunied madrasah's curriculum focuses on a select group of important national disciplines like science, math, and English. Regarding the Irsyad Zuhri madrasah, it makes use of the MUIS curriculum (Mohd Nor, 2017).

It may be claimed that the Irsyad Zuhri madrasah evolved into a basic education pilot madrasah project. This is so because, after Singapore introduced compulsory education legislation in 2003, Irsyad Zuhri Madrasah was the first madrasah to implement an integrated religious curriculum for primary schools. MUIS used the English language of instruction in the development and production of this curriculum. This inspired the author to look into the madrasah's curriculum design after that.

There are lots of articles that go over how madrasahs have grown in Singapore. By comparing the perspectives of instructors and students in mainstream schools with those of *asatizahs*, or religious teachers, and students in

madrasahs, Mokhtar (2010), for instance, presents an overview of madrasas in Singapore and examines their role, significance, and resources. Siren, Majid, and Aljunied (2014) outlined the madrasah management practices used in Singapore to maintain Muslims' access to Islamic education. In their 2019 article, Radzi, Sari, and Irwandi explain how Islamic education has evolved in Singapore, focusing in particular on the madrasah Al-Juneid Al-Islamiyah's curriculum development and upcoming difficulties.

The Majlis Ugama Islam (MUIS) Singapore is also examined as a curriculum manager and monitor who plays a significant role in the development of Islamic education in Singapore (Rahman, Warsah, & Murfi, 2019). According to Adawiyah (2018), there are three different types of Islamic education in Singapore: full-time madrasah education, part-time madrasah education, and Islamic study programs offered to the general public. According to Mutalib (1996), the curriculum provided by Singapore madrasahs is founded on the requirement to embrace a comprehensive understanding of Islamic knowledge that encompasses both *fardhu kifayah* and *fardhu 'ain*. However, Othman & Yusof (2019) also criticized the Islamic education system in Singapore for lacking resources to inform neighborhood Muslims about the history of Islamic education in Singapore.

Despite these hurdles, they feel that Singaporean Muslims have a unique chance to demonstrate that they are sincere, steadfast, and able to improve Islamic education for the better (Othman, 2018). Because of their distinctive secular nature, they can intelligently balance their religious and civic commitments as Muslims and Singaporeans (Helmiati, 2021). In the case of this Muslim community in Singapore, secularization has never happened and has even acted as a catalyst for a religious revival (Helmiati, 2013).

These articles thoroughly study Singapore's Islamic educational system, covering its administration, curriculum, and difficulties. They also look at the debate in Islamic education between tradition and modernity and the applicability of Islamic education in a secular state. The article-to-be-written differs from it in that the problem-to-be-studied is more specifically defined. A goal of the author's analysis of the Irsyad Zuhri Al-Islamiah madrasah curriculum, one of the madrasahs that joined JMS, is to determine how religion and science are infused into a comprehensive curriculum design.

In the end, the JMS developed into a program that was in charge of not only maintaining madrasahs but also bringing their educational system in line with the public system (Tan, 2009). Academic courses were included in the madrasa curriculum, and the requirement that students pass national exams to graduate

afforded them the same preparedness for the challenges of the working world as their peers in national schools. The Compulsory Education Act, which governs Singapore's national education system, is noteworthy because, even though only three of the remaining six madrasahs participate in the JMS program (Othman & Yusof, 2016), the national examination requirements must be fulfilled by the three madrasahs that are not a part of the JMS program as well (Tan, 2009).

Given that the Singaporean government prohibited the inclusion of religious education in the national school curriculum in 1989, the JMS program also indirectly supports the continuation of efforts to merge science and Islam in Singapore (Gopinathan, 2001). The Muslim population in Singapore now has the chance to learn about the integration of religion and science, just like Muslim communities in other nations, particularly those that make up the majority, like those in Indonesia and Malaysia. If science and Islam may coexist in these majority nations' public schools, it is not possible for Singapore, a secular nation with a small Muslim population, to teach the idea of science and religion coexisting.

Research Method

This article's research was conducted using a qualitative approach, which requires researchers who can relate to the topic and empathize with what they go through daily. By providing a thorough and in-depth account of the conditions in a natural context (natural setting), regarding what occurs in the study field, this qualitative research aims to comprehend the state of an issue (Fadli, 2021). The strategy is descriptive qualitative research, a type of study that tries to gather and accumulate data before attempting to evaluate and explain it (Noor, 2012).

This type of research combines library and field research, with data and information being gathered from one of the madrasas selected by MUIS to be a part of the Joint Madrasah System, specifically Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri Al-Islamiah, before being analyzed and described following the problem to be studied. The three categories of research data—primary data, secondary data, and tertiary data—are separated after collection and analysis. Documentation in the form of official booklets published by the Singapore Islamic Religious Council (MUIS) serves as the study's main data source. While the data linked to the direction of the madrasah policy, the researcher emailed MUIS, who was in charge of the madrasah, with inquiries. Journal articles, academic studies, and books about madrasah education in Singapore are examples of secondary data.

The tertiary data or supporting data in this study are data that are inextricably linked to Singapore's Joint Madrasah System and madrasah education.

Additionally, the author applies two approaches for data analysis: the content analysis method and the descriptive analysis method, particularly for educational analysis. To make the data that will be presented in this study simple to grasp and interpret objectively, rationally, and proportionately, the author conducts various processes while carrying out both. One of these stages is summarizing all the data that has been collected. Additionally, the information can be linked to and carried over into other discussions. Researchers attempt to infer numerous patterns, themes, and subjects from the data they have gathered from the many readings and reviews they have carried out. They also make an effort to be relevant to the problems they have previously built.

Analyzing is a challenging task. It calls for a lot of effort, inventiveness, and intellectual prowess. Each researcher must choose a method that he or she feels is suited to the nature of their research because no set procedure must be followed to do the analysis. Various researchers may assign various classifications to the same material (Sugiyono, 2013). Also, in this investigation. According to the sources consulted the data is presented exactly as it is. There are both direct and indirect methods for describing this data. Directly, that is, without any modification to the original quote, the data that researchers discover. It continues with a synthesis (conclusion), followed by a development analysis (generalization). Indirectly, meaning that the writer changes the concept of the quote, as long as it does not change the meaning of the source, followed by analysis and synthesis.

Result and Discussion

A. Joint Madrasah System and Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri Al-Islamiah

The Joint Madrasah System is a result of the Singapore government's policy discourse, including the plans to shut down madrasahs in 1999, which caused the Muslim community to "feel surprised" and concerned (Mutalib, 2015). Their surprise is understandable given that the madrasah serves more than just Islamic instruction for the Muslim population in Singapore. Additionally, the madrasah institution has a long history of struggle and sacrifice on the part of its forebears to establish and maintain the madrasah school system, especially because madrasahs have existed for a very long time and even predate the founding of this republic. For this reason, they insist that madrasahs as a form of Islamic education tradition in these schools must be preserved and excluded from the

renewal program in the education system designed by the government (Mokhtar, 2010).

On the other hand, the government has its reasons for this policy. At the Singapore National Day commemoration in the same year, Goh Chok Tong, who was then the Prime Minister of Singapore, in his speech expressed two government concerns about the future of madrasa graduates; first, the government was worried about the ability of madrasa graduates to face competition in the world of work. As a country that holds the principle of meritocracy, competition in the world of work is very tough and requires adequate skills. In addition, the fact that madrassas only accept students who are exclusively Muslim is feared to be an obstacle to integration efforts among Singaporeans (Mokhtar. 2010).

Madrasahs were exclusive, independent Islamic educational institutions at the outset of their existence. The government found it challenging to reform the madrasahs as a result. To support and coordinate the many forms of Islamic education provided in the various madrasahs, the government established the Majelis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS) as one of its first measures (Mohd Nor, 2017). This placed all madrasahs under MUIS's control. The Administration of Islamic Law (No. 27) Act of 1966 created the MUIS, a statutory entity that operates under the Ministry of Youth, Community, and Sports. But MUIS also works with the Ministry of the Environment to coordinate educational topics (Tan, 2009; Steiner, 2011; Rahman, Warsah & Murfi, 2019).

The madrasah curriculum was revised to incorporate broader Ministry of Education efforts, such as the use of information technology and the establishment of national education, under the close supervision of MUIS. A plan for national madrasah education brought them together in their commitment to national integration as well (Rahman, 2006). The purpose of including national education in the curriculum is to help students develop a sense of national identity and to emphasize the value of national integration (Norruddin & Jamil, 2017). To promote communication and integration, it is necessary to employ English as the language of instruction.

To further raise the caliber of madrasah education, MUIS decided to introduce the Joint Madrasah System, an integrative and comprehensive madrasah management program. The strain madrasahs faced in preparing for the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) as a result of the Compulsory Education (CE) policy in 2003 was a factor in the development of this curriculum. The CE policy mandates that all Singaporean children between the ages of 6 and 15 attend primary education at the national level. Madrasahs can no longer accept

primary-level pupils by this guideline (PERGAS, 2017). The Muslim community in Singapore has reacted negatively to the government's policies. Some of them perceived this as an attempt to shut down madrasahs and saw it as a sort of government meddling in their religious affairs. The government "relented" in response to the Singaporean Muslim community's outcry, and had many discussions behind closed doors with community leaders to try and solve the issue (Mutalib, 2015).

It was decided that the madrasahs would not be shut down but rather that madrasah students would be required to take the PSLE (Primary School Leaving Examinations) and obtain the minimum eligibility score established by the Ministry of Education (MoE) following several discussions behind closed doors between the Singapore government and leaders of Singapore's Islamic community (Mutalib, 2015). As a result, the madrasahs were forced to make sure that the academic courses they taught their students followed the same curriculum as the national schools.

To raise the standard of the madrasah curriculum and bring it in line with the national curriculum, MUIS developed the Joint Madrasah System (JMS). The JMS was first announced by the minister in charge of Islamic affairs in October 2007 (Steiner, 2011), but it wasn't until 2009 that it was put into practice as a collaboration between MUIS and three full-time madrasahs. All six full-time madrasahs were first given access to the JMS program. Only three madrasahs, Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiah (renamed Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri Al-Islamiah in 2015), Aljunied Al-Islamiah, and Al-Arabiah Al-Islamiah, were open to joining. Madrasah Al-Ma'arif Al-Islamiah, Madrasah Al-Sagoff Al-Islamiah, and Madrasah Wak Tanjong Al-Islamiah are the other three madrasahs that are unwilling to participate in the program. Bagi Any madrasah that decides not to join the JMS is obligated to make sure that all of its students pass the PSLE final. The Ministry of Education (MoE) sanctioned madrasahs that failed the PSLE by preventing them from enrolling students in Grade 1 for three consecutive years (Tan & Abbas, 2017). Facilities in the three madrasahs run by JMS were upgraded to support this project (Mokhtar, 2010).

As a result, beginning in 2009, it was planned for the three madrasahs run by JMS to offer various educational pathways, including academic and *ukhrawi* (MUIS, 2009). Madrasah Al-Junied and Madrasah Al-Arabiyah were combined under the new system to form Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri. This indicates that Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri only offers basic education and no longer accepts new secondary students. While solely offering secondary education, Madrasah Aljunied and Madrasah Al-Arabiah do not accept new students at the elementary

level. For the secondary level, Madrasah Aljunied focuses on producing religious teachers and scholars for the community and has a specialization in religious education. Although Madrasah Al-Arabiah will focus on providing academic instruction in a religious setting (MUIS, 2020).

The three madrasahs' distinguished curriculum have been reviewed by MUIS, which has then provided an integrated alternative curriculum that will reconcile them efficiently and coherently. The JMS curriculum aims to create a thorough and balanced space for Islamic and modern sciences with the help of this method. Its methodology incorporates problem-based learning and inquiry-based learning within a collaborative classroom environment (MUIS, 2020).

The role of the teacher will change as a result of this transformation. In addition to instructing the students in the classroom, the teacher also serves as a facilitator and trainer for them. By supporting several teachers to continue their education at Edith Cowan University in Australia and Singapore's National Institute of Education, MUIS has ensured that madrasah teachers who teach academic subjects can meet the standard criteria expected by the Ministry of Education (MoE) (The Strait Times, 2007). From 2003 to 2014, MUIS sponsored 193 teachers to advance their academic credentials in education at both universities (MUIS, 2014). Additionally, MUIS tries to empower instructors and provide them with the required pedagogical skills through year-round discussion forums, workshops, seminars, and ongoing courses and pieces of training (MUIS, 2014).

As of 2012, seven hundred instructors had received pedagogy training, according to MUIS (MUIS, 2012). Ninety-four percent of the six madrasah teachers had formal teacher training by 2013 (MUIS, 2013). Madrasahs in Singapore have changed their teaching methods and approaches in the modern period to include problem-based learning, cooperative learning, observation, reasoning, critical thinking, communicative, applicable, experiential learning modeling, and e-learning (Aljunied, 2021).

In the process, Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri, which only focuses on primary education, will act as a feeder school for the other two madrasahs. The pupils in this madrasa have received the necessary preparation to proceed to the secondary level. In this instance, Irsyad Zuhri Madrasah has been accommodative in adapting its curriculum to address the difficulties of primary school instruction. Irsyad Zuhri Madrasah, for instance, altered its curriculum in 1993 to better balance national and religious studies. Additionally, it has embraced a new curriculum created by MUIS to help students get ready for the PSLE exams, as well as the general curriculum from Singapore's Ministry of

Education (MoE). Since the madrasah's first level, Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri has also switched the language of instruction for religious topics from Arabic to Malay and for national studies from Arabic to English (Simon, 2002).

With more than 300 kids joining since the late 1990s, Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri has become fairly popular. Demand nevertheless outstripped availability even as enrollment fell to an average of just over 100 kids per year in the early 2000s. In 2006, fewer than 70 kids out of more than 100 were admitted to the primary level. There are around 75% female pupils and 25% male students. It is not surprising that there are more female students than male students at this madrasah because traditionally, there have been more female students in madrasahs in Singapore. Another explanation could be that Muslim parents favor their daughters wearing the headscarf, which is a requirement for attendance at madrasahs (Tan & Kasmuri, 2007).

Initially, Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri Al-Islamiah urged its graduates to continue developing themselves into prospective *da'i* and ulama capable of making a difference in the reality of the modern world, secular state, and pluralistic society. This is because it is an Islamic educational institution. The madrasah's goals, which center on educating students to become religious instructors and leaders for the Muslim community (https://irsyad.sg/), make this clear. But this objective is evolving. When examining the alumni data for the years 2002 to 2005, it becomes clear that many of its GCE 'O' graduates opt to attend polytechnics and universities rather than continue their education at Islamic institutions (Tan & Kasmuri, 2007). As a result, the madrasa announced its new mission in 2005: to offer a balanced education that lets students choose between careers as teachers and religious leaders or as professional Muslims. That is educators and/or spiritual leaders who are knowledgeable and skillful in both religious and secular topics, fluent in English and Arabic, technologically savvy, and who also support social cohesion among non-Muslims in Singapore (https://irsyad.sg/).

Source: www.irsyad.sg.
Picture 3. Curriculum Features of Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri Al-Islamiah

Significantly, Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri made the alterations to establish a model madrasah that other madrasahs may adopt. At first, the madrasah attempted to provide a minimum of 10 years of secular education that closely resembled the curricula created by the Ministry of Education. However, this objective was not successful. However, the Irsyad Zuhri Madrasah has become a model for other madrasahs in Singapore thanks to the revised curriculum fusing secular and religious studies (Steiner, 2011).

While this has been happening, the secondary education programs at the other two JMS madrasahs have grown more robust. Due to its strong connections with foreign higher education institutions like al-Azhar University in Cairo, one of the most prominent colleges in the Islamic world, Madrasah Aljunied enjoys a solid reputation at the international level for its secondary education program (Abu Bakar, 2006). Even though only 30% of the subjects provided at the primary school level were secular in the late 1990s, madrasah Al-Arabiah has been successful in getting its pupils to sit for O (Ordinary) and A (Advanced) level exams (Rahman, 2006). The secondary level enrollment at this madrasah is balanced between madrasahs despite having a relatively low enrollment due to its feeder role in the JMS system.

Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri accepted 204 elementary school students annually on average in 2014 (Channel NewsAsia, 2015). A pilot batch of students preparing for the international baccalaureate (IB) diploma will enroll in 2019 whereas the first cohort of secondary-level madrasah students admitted to Madrasah Aljunied and Madrasah Al-Arabiah under JMS will appear for O-Level examinations in 2018 (Mokhtar, 2013). It is also unclear whether the specialization of secondary education will be able to maintain the continuity of Islamic religious education because it will be divided into preparation for modern vocations or Islamic religious careers.

According to this scheme, it appears that Singapore's madrasahs will specialize in either primary or secondary education. However, the issues with madrasah education at the primary level will continue. Madrasahs will need to live up to the demands of teaching both religious and secular courses, in contrast to secular modern schools that can only spend their time and resources teaching subjects that will be examined in the PSLE. The pupils will also be under a lot of pressure because they will have a larger learning load, in addition to the madrassas (Steiner, 2011).

B. Curriculum Design of Joint Madrasah System in Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri Al-Islamiah

The Conceptual Design of Madrasah Curriculum (CDMC), which was introduced by MUIS in 2002, has only been fully embraced by Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri Al-Islamiah. After extensive investigation and collaboration with existing madrasahs, the CDMC was created. The new curriculum intends to equip madrasah students with the skills necessary to thrive in a cutthroat environment and develop them into progressive religious leaders or professionals in other sectors of their choice (Tan & Kasmuri, 2007). The Irsyad Zuhri Madrasah integrated religious and secular science content into its existing curriculum when it joined the Join Madrasah System, where learning is specialized at the Primary Level exclusively.

The revised curriculum includes three key adjustments. First, English is used as the primary language of teaching for Primary levels 1-6 in all disciplines (apart from Arabic). Except for English and Malay, Arabic was the previous language of instruction in the educational process. In a knowledge-based economy, English is the language of science and technology, therefore this adjustment was made to give students a strong foundation in it. This is consistent with the madrasah's mission to train future religious leaders and teachers for the contemporary world. Graduates who are fluent in religious English will be better able to absorb their faith and spread it in English with ease and assurance.

Table 1. Curriculum of Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri Al-Islamiah

	Primary 1	Primary 2	Primary 3	Primary 4	Primary 5	Primary 6
Academic Subject	English Language Malay Language Mathematics	English Language Malay Language Mathematics	English Language Malay Language Mathematics Science	English Language Malay Language Mathematics Science	English Language Malay Language Mathematics Science	English Language Malay Language Mathematics Science
Ukhrawi Subjects	Arabic Language Al-Quran Tarbiyah (English)	Arabic Language Al-Quran Tarbiyah (English)	Arabic Language Al-Quran Tarbiyah (English)	Arabic Language Al-Quran Tarbiyah (English) Tarbiyah (Arabic)	Arabic Language Al-Quran Tarbiyah (English) Tarbiyah (Arabic)	Arabic Language Al-Quran Tarbiyah (English) Tarbiyah (Arabic)
Others	Physical Education (in Arabic)	Physical Education (in Arabic)	Physical Education (in Arabic)	Physical Education (in Arabic)		

Whitespace (Rotated Progs)	ICT (Touch Typing) Art Gymnastics	ICT (Touch Typing) Art Martial Arts	ICT (Presentation) Tahsin Qura Khat Calligraphy Martial Arts	ICT (Spreadsheet) Tahsin Quran Traditional Art Tinkering Prog	ICT (Coding) Tahsin Quran Archery Fitness Prog Entrepreneurship	ICT (3D Modelling & Augmented Reality) Tahsin Quran Art Archery

Source: www.irsyad.sg.

According to Table 4, academic courses receive roughly 60% of the curriculum's time, while religious subjects receive 40%. The 60-40 split was changed to fully promote academic disciplines. For grades 1 through 4, roughly 45% of the curriculum is dedicated to academics and 55% to religion. A few examples of religious disciplines (Ukhrawi subjects) are Arabic, Qur'anic Studies, History, and Hadith. English, mathematics, and science are the academic subjects. All madrasa students take internal exams that are designed by the madrasa faculty as an official means of evaluation. Exams at the middle and end of the school year as well as ongoing evaluation are examples of these. All pupils will take the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE), exams for Arabic, and tests for religious knowledge after Primary 6.

There are four advantages to the Irsyad Zuhri madrasah curriculum. Starting with active learning. Students are motivated to learn at higher levels by highly engaging education. An engaging and productive learning environment is guaranteed by the student-centered approach using games, experiential learning, and technology. Next, a balanced curriculum. For students to become multi-disciplinary and open-minded while also learning to value and respect cultural diversity, a well-rounded curriculum is required. Third, character growth. The goal of madrasah education is to mold students into decent citizens and role models for others. The fourth is holistic education. The learning process focuses on the child's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development through academic, sporting, and artistic activities to develop the full student and recognize the unique intrinsic brilliance of each individual. And finally, 21st Century Skills. In the current technology age, having comprehensive skills means being able to think critically, solve problems, and be aware of the world around you (https://irsyad.sg/).

Teachers participate in a variety of training programs and seminars to complement the curriculum and to better prepare them to use the Ministry of Education's (MoE) syllabi and resources. At Irsyad Zuhri madrasah, out of a total of forty-four teachers, more than fifty percent have at least a bachelor's degree

and roughly a third have professional training. The majority of them hold diplomas from Edith Cowen University (Australia) and Singapore's National Institute of Education (NIE), respectively, in education and English, mathematics, and science. The Vice Principals and Department Heads have also participated in NIE's leadership development programs. These trainings were all paid for by MUIS. Most teachers also continue to enhance their knowledge and skills by attending various professional courses such as the Guidance and Counseling Course organized by NIE; English Writing Skills by the British Council; Teaching Science and Mathematics through Stories by the National Book Development Council of Singapore; Character, Discipline and Basic Skills Development for Novice Teachers by the National Book Development Council of Singapore; Character, Discipline and Basic Skills Development for Teachers by the Teachers Union of Singapore (PERGAS) (Tan & Kasmuri, 2007).

This justification demonstrates how the Irsyad Zuhri madrasah's curriculum, which is used as a component of the Joint Madrasah System, is an integrative curriculum that removes the boundaries between various religious and scientific materials and presents various subject matter in the form of units or wholes. The plan incorporates the English, Math, and Science curricula from the Ministry of Education and Culture, allowing students to catch up to those in national schools.

Conclusion

The Madrasah education system in Singapore has been standardized and modernized due to the Join Madrasah System program. In Singapore, which is known as a secular nation, the integration of science and Islam is more likely to be realized under the JMS program. This is so that both courses can be taught in the same curriculum, something only madrasahs can do. In contrast to Singapore's national schools, where it is forbidden to include religious teaching in the curriculum, this is unquestionably different.

The three madrasahs participating in the program each have a unique approach to implementing the integrative curriculum design employed in the Joint Madrasah System. Irsyad Zuhri Madrasah is a specialized madrasah for primary school students (*ibtida'iyah*) inside the JMS. Since its establishment, this madrasah has realized the merger of science and Islam. Although there are two categories of subjects: academic subjects and *ukhrawi* subjects. The pedagogy used at Madrasah Irsyad is intended to encourage students to seek further education. Science and Islam are integrated at the secondary school level by Aljunied Madrasah. Although the Aljunied madrasah was designed to accommodate JMS madrasah students who are more interested in *ukhrawi*

knowledge, this madrasah can demonstrate that religious educational institutions can also compete with secular educational institutions, as shown by its inclusion in the IB (International Baccalaureate) program. Madrasah AlArabiah Al-Islamiah, a madrasah created to serve JMS madrasah secondary school students who are more interested in *ukhrawi* sciences, implements the iSTEM program, which stands for Islamic - Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, which integrates science and Islam.

In the earlier conclusion, the author argues that there needs to be a separate model for the implementation of science integration that is suitable to be applied in a secular country whose Muslim population is a minority in the country, such as Singapore. If Indonesia has a State Islamic University (UIN) that has its science integration model, then the author hopes that there is a higher education institution with an integration model that can be realized according to the character of a Muslim minority country like Singapore.

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