

Transforming Islamic Education: Curriculum Changes at Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki Over Five Decades

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ABSTRACT

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Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki was established to educate students and shape them into a generation of Muslims who are ready to accept and practice Islam in its entirety (*kaffah*). However, Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki is often labeled as a radical pesantren that teaches exclusive and intolerant religious beliefs, especially after the 2002 Bali bombing. The negative stigmas associated with this pesantren have caused issues for its organizers, especially since the institution is often linked to its founders. The negative accusations published by the media have also been highlighted by various parties on various occasions. Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki's curriculum has been accused of teaching terrorism and bomb assembly, and is still often labeled as a radical pesantren that produces terrorists. Therefore, this study will investigate the curriculum dynamics of Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki to determine whether these accusations are supported by evidence. The researchers employed a qualitative research method with a historical approach, which contains four steps: heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The results of this study reveal that the curriculum at Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki is an integrated curriculum that combines the national curriculum from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, with the pesantren curriculum. This curriculum aims to produce Muslim scholars and intellectuals, with a focus on Islamic religious education followed by general knowledge, science, and technology.

Keywords: *Al-Mukmin Ngruki; Organizational Culture; Pesantren Based-Schools; Pesantren Curriculum; Pesantren Effectiveness.*

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INTRODUCTION

Pesantren play a crucial role in preparing the next generation of Muslims to face this challenging era (Andriana et al., 2025). From a historical context, the primary objective of a *pesantren* and its various forms is to produce future ulama and religious experts. This function is maintained to this day (Siregar & Prasetyo, 2023). *Pesantren* play a crucial role in providing religious education in addition to realizing national education goals through the teaching and learning process (Madjid, 1997). Therefore, the provision of primary education and teaching in *pesantren* remains a fundamental component (Hanafi et al., 2021). The Islamic education must encompass knowledge acquisition, value instillation, attitude and character formation, as well as talent development (Ihsan & Abdullah, 2021; Mas'ud et al., 2019). The curriculum must be optimal, balanced, and allow for the appropriate development of the students' intellectual, physical, and spiritual potential in accordance with the demands of the times (Maemonah et al., 2023; Wildan, 2013).

Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki was established to educate students and shape them into a generation of Muslims who are ready to accept and practice Islam in its entirety (Nugroho et al., 2022). However, Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki is often labeled as a radical *pesantren* that teaches exclusive and intolerant religious beliefs, especially after the 2002 Bali bombing (Murtadlo, 2017). The negative stigmas associated with this *pesantren* have caused issues for its organizers (Maskhrukhin, 2022).

Curriculum Changes at Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki Over Five Decades" suggests a comprehensive historical analysis of how Islamic educational curricula have evolved within this institution. However, the existing literature on *pesantren* education often centers on religious teachings, neglecting nuanced curricular adaptations that respond to socio-political (Prasetyo et al., 2024), technological (Zafi et al., 2021), Ecology (Sudarsono & Muaddin, 2024) and pedagogical shifts (Anshori & Pohl, 2022) over extended periods. This study fills the gap by critically examining longitudinal curriculum changes in relation to external influences and internal schooling dynamics that have shaped educational practices at Al-Mukmin Ngruki. Understanding this transformation is significant for advancing Islamic educational theory, providing insight into how traditional religious schools negotiate modern demands while preserving core values.

The school is often associated with the attitudes of its founders, particularly Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, who is often considered to be at odds with the government, through refusing flag ceremonies, opposing the sole principle of *pancasila*, and forbidding democracy (Abdullah et al., 2019; Ramasari & Azani, 2023.; Susylowati et al., 2019). The negative news coverage and image associated with Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki led to a drastic decline in the institution's student enrollment from 2003 to 2025 (Sirin,

2021). However, the administrators and alumni of Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki have conducted various efforts to restore the school's reputation (Suryono et al., 2021).

Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki has received various negative accusations from media outlets, as well as negative views from various parties. These outlets typically highlight the pesantren's curriculum, where they are often accused of teaching terrorism and bomb-making (Rahmawati, 2024). The school is often labeled as a radical pesantren that produces terrorists and hardliners (Murtadlo, 2017). Meanwhile, various alumni of Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki have made positive contributions to the environment and communities they serve (Musthafa, 2021). The alumni of Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki also have a forum to facilitate all alumni's aspirations to work towards the success accomplished by their alma mater.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative method with a historical approach. The historical research method is a systematic process of examining and critically analyzing records and relics to form a narrative or argument that answers the research question. The data collected would then be used to form an integrated perspective based on the analysis of the events, people, space, and the time period. Then, the analysis considers how these elements interact with various ideas, movements, and intuitions that lived in their time (Sulasman, 2014). Historical research on education involves studying past educational practices and theories to understand their development and obtain an accurate depiction of several aspects of the past related to educational institutions or schools (Cresswell, 2012) (Fraenkel, 2012). This research followed the four stages of the historical method: heuristics, criticism or verification, interpretation, and historiography (Dudung, 2007), to answer the research question.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The researchers analyzed the curriculum changes that occurred at *Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki* during three periods: 1972-1975, 1976-2003, and 2004-2025.

Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki's Curriculum from 1972 to 1975

Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki was established in 1972 as a single educational unit under the *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin Al-Islamiyah* (KMI), offering a six-year course focused on Islamic studies to prepare missionary graduates. At that time, accreditation and participation in national examinations were not mandatory. In 1974, following its relocation to Dusun Ngruki Sukoharjo, the pesantren enhanced its infrastructure, learning system, and curriculum, largely modeling them after *Pesantren Darussalam Gontor*. This influence stems from many key figures, including

founders Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, Yoyok Rasywadi, and Abdul Qohar Haji Daeng Matase, as well as several teachers, who are alumni of Darussalam Gontor (Hayati, 2010).

In addition to adopting the learning system and curriculum from Darusslam Gontor, Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki also integrates the learning system and curriculum from Persis Bangil (Doki Hermanto, 2023). From *Pesantren* Darusslam Gontor, Al-Mukmin Ngruki adopts language and discipline instruction, while from Pesantren Persis Bangil, it incorporates fiqh studies. Consequently, the alumni network of Pesantren Darusslam Gontor plays a significant role in strengthening Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki.

In its early stages, Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki curriculum focused on religious studies, even deepening the study of classical texts (*kitab kuning*). General studies were merely supplementary. Pesantren primary goal was to produce scholars who would strive in the path of Allah and to shape a generation of Muslims prepared to accept and practice Islam in its entirety (*kaffah*). Therefore, the material provided includes: *'Aqidah al-Islamiyyah, Tafsir, 'Ulum al-Quran, Sharia, Usul Fiqh, al-Faraid, Qawa'id al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah, Balaghah, Hadith, 'Ulum al-Hadis, Tarbiyah al-Ta'lim, Tarikh al-Islam, nizam al-hukmi, Muqaranah al-Adyan wa al-Saqafah al-Islamiyyah, algebra* and *'Ilmu al-Ijtima'i* (Sociology) (Noor, 2007). Thus, the learning curriculum provided in this period was largely focused on religious sciences, while general science was only complementary.

Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki's Curriculum from 1976 to 2003: Implementation of SKB Tiga Menteri of 1975 and the Issuance of Law No. 2 of 1989

After Pesantren Al-Mukmin relocated from Gading Kidul to Dusun Ngruki, the institution's curriculum, which was initially limited to Islamic religious studies, was gradually reorganized to incorporate the national curriculum. The curriculum for the first to fourth years of pesantren students focused on Islamic religious studies, and in the fifth year, the pesantren began to provide supplemental general education material. The curriculum comprised 70% religious education (pesantren materials) and 30% non-pesantren materials, and combined the learning systems of Pesantren Darussalam Gontor (language and discipline) and Pesantren Persis Bangil (sharia or fiqh).

Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki was also influenced by the learning approaches applied at the Islamic University of Medina. At Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki, the faith lessons at a higher level use the book *al-Tauhid*, by Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, and its commentary, such as *al-Ta'liq al-Mukhtasar al-Mufid 'ala Kitab al-Tauhid* by Shalih Fauzan and *Fath al-Majid li Syarh Kitab al-Tauhid* by Abdurrahman bin Hasan Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab (Zakariya, 2018). These books were introduced by alumni who studied in the Middle East, then taught at Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki. Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, as the founder of this pesantren, had also provided a unique approach to instilling faith. The arrival of alumni teachers from the

Middle East further strengthened this identity, leading Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki to become known as an institution dedicated to instilling faith in its students.

In the 1980s, Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki developed and established several educational units, including the *Kulliyatul Mu'allimat* (KMT), *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MTs), *Madrasah Aliyah Al-Mukmin* (MAAM), and *Takhasus* (Tks) to adapt to society's needs. The emergence of other educational units, such as *Tsanawiyah Madrasah* (MTs), *Mutawasithah Madrasah* (MMT), and *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA), is an effort to comply with the Surat Keputusan Bersama (SKB) of Tiga Menteri of 1975 and the Issuance of Law No. 2 of 1989 concerning the National Education System.

Furthermore, although the KMI educational unit's objectives have always been oriented toward deepening students' religious knowledge by teaching them how to be reliable preachers, students wishing to participate in the EBTA (Evaluasi Belajar Tahap Akhir) or EBTANAS (Evaluasi Belajar Tahap Akhir Nasional) can register through the Madrasah Aliyah Al-Mukmin (MAAM) (Khotimah et al., 2018). Upon graduation, they will receive a *Madrasah Aliyah Negeri* (MAN) diploma after completing a one-year *Wiyata Bakti* program. As the flagship educational unit and main program of Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki, KMI graduates have been able to obtain a diploma equivalency (*muadalah*) from the Islamic University of Medina, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, since 1995 (Fuaduddin, 2004). Pesantren administrators have also sought to obtain *muadalah* from various other universities abroad.

The emergence of KMT and Takhasus units led to a restructuring of the pesantren education system. In 1978, the KMI curriculum was standardized with KMT's, divided into mandatory, core, and supplementary components. In 1981, KMI's six-year course was shortened to three years and merged into the Ngruki *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MTs). The Takhasus curriculum focused on deepening Arabic and English skills and boarding support. Although institutionally separate, Takhasus operated under KMI's responsibility, sharing educators and learning spaces, thus maintaining a unified educational environment (Noor, 2007).

Meanwhile, the *Takhasus* (Tks) educational unit's curriculum focused on deepening the students' Arabic and English skills, and on providing boarding school resources so students can further their education. Additionally, although the *Takhasus* (Tks) and KMI were institutionally separate, the Tks' implementation was under the responsibility of the KMI, where the educators, ustadz, and supervisors generally had a background as KMI graduates. The Tks' learning activity room was also integrated with the KMI learning room, so that the educational and cultural environment resembles the KMI unit.

Table 1. Distribution of *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin/Mu'allimat* (KMI/KMT) curriculum

Curriculum's Content	Subject
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<i>Al-Manhaj al-Ijbari</i> (Compulsory Curriculum),	<i>'Aqidah (Aqidah), Tafsir al-Quran, Al-Syari'ah, Al-Nahwu wa al-Saraf, Al-Insya', Al-Lughah al-Indunisiya</i> (Indonesian Language), <i>and Al-Tarbiyah wa al-Ta'lim</i> (Education and teaching).
<i>Al-Manhaj al-Asasi</i> (Core Curriculum)	<i>'Ilmu al-Tafsir</i> (The Science of Interpretation), <i>'Ilmu al-Hadist</i> (The Science of Hadith), <i>Usul al-Fiqh</i> (The Principles of Jurisprudence), <i>Tarikh al-Tasyri'</i> (The History of Islamic Legal Legislation), <i>Al-Tahfiz al-Quran</i> (Memorization of the Quran), <i>Nizam al-Hukmi</i> (State Administration), <i>Al-Mutala'ah, Al-Tamrinat, Al-Balaghah, Al-Hisab</i> (mathematic), <i>Al-Lughah al-Injiliziya</i> (English Language), <i>Ilmu al-Ijtima'</i> (Sociology), <i>Al-Biyulujiya</i> (Biology), and <i>'Ilmu al-Faraidh</i> (Science of Inheritance).
<i>Al-Manhaj al-Idhafi</i> (Additional Curriculum)	<i>Al-Mantiq</i> (Science of Logic), <i>Tarikh al-Islam</i> (Islamic History), <i>Al-Mahduzat</i> (Words of Wisdom), <i>Al-Tarjamah</i> (Translation), <i>Al-Imla', Fannul-Khatt</i> (Calligraphy), <i>Muqaranah al-Adyan</i> (Comparative Religion), <i>Al-Jufrafiya</i> (Geography), <i>Tarikh al-Adab</i> (History of Literature), <i>Al-Riyadhah al-Badaniyah</i> (Self-Defense), <i>Kasbu al-Maharah</i> (Skills), <i>Al-Bahst</i> (scientific research), <i>'Amaliyah al-Tadris</i> (Teaching Practice), <i>and Al-Khitabah</i> (Lectures).

In addition to instilling a strong faith in students, Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki emphasizes the importance of understanding state governance. The teaching of state governance (*nizam al-hukmi*) at Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki uses the textbook "al-Islam" by Said Hawwa. The subject of state governance (*nizam al-hukmi*) explores the discourse of an Islamic state (*Daulah al-Islamiyah*). The material taught is classical material concerning the government of the khalifah and views and ideas about the state (*wathan*) (Ramasari & Azani, 2023.). This discourse was then further developed by intellectual figures at Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki, who explored the enforcement of Islamic sharia in a state, as Islamic sharia cannot be implemented in its entirety (*kaffah*) without the state's support.

In the 1990s, religious studies dominated the KMI and *Kulliyatul Mu'allimat* (KMT) curricula, comprising 85%, while general subjects and science accounted for 15%. Each unit focused on its specialization: KMI/KMT emphasized religious education, whereas *Madrasah Aliyah Al-Mukmin* (MAAM) concentrated on general and science subjects, following the national curriculum and religious education guidelines since 1997. The curricula were designed to align with national education goals and adapted to the region's characteristics and student needs. Although curriculum content varied across KMI, KMT, Takhasus, MTs, and MAAM units, they all operated within a unified educational system encompassing formal and non-formal elements (Maskhrukhin, 2022). Thus, the educational system employed by *Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki* was a combination of formal and non-formal approaches, with the formal system being implemented six days a week.

Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki's Curriculum from 2004 to 2021

The emergence of various educational units at Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki represents a response by pesantren to maintain its existence by keeping up with current developments and recognizing the needs of the community. Furthermore, the transformation of *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin* (KMI) educational institution from a six-year course to a three-year course in 1981, following the adjustment and merger of former KMI classes I, II, and III into Ngruki *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MTs) educational unit. The emergence of several educational units at Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki, such as *Tsanawiyah Madrasah* (MTs), *Mutawasithah Madrasah* (MMT), and *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA), is an effort to comply with *Surat Keputusan Bersama* (SKB) of *Tiga Menteri* of 1975 and Issuance of Law No. 2 of 1989 concerning the National Education System.

The various educational units at Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki represent the institution's response to stay current with developments and address the needs of the community. The curriculum was changed in 2004 to the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK). Thus, the *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* and *Madrasah Aliyah* at Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki immediately implemented this curriculum. Then, in 2006, it changed to the School Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP), and finally to the 2013 Curriculum (K13). The *Madrasah* at Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki has continued to adopt these changes accordingly.

The curriculum enforced in 2004 have not undergone significant changes, except for a reduction in teaching hours. This reduction in teaching hours is due to the large number of subjects from the implementation of two curricula. In its early days, Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki taught more religious studies than general studies. However, this situation changed after the issuance of *Surat Keputusan Bersama* (SKB) by *Tiga Menteri* (Ministers of Religious Affairs, Education and Culture, and Home Affairs). The regulation stated that Islamic educational institutions (*madrasah*) must change their curriculum to comprise 70% general studies and 30% religious studies. Although this was implemented in public *madrasahs*, its implementation in private *madrasahs* varied, with some adopting the Joint Decree, which included 40% general studies and 60% religious studies (Nugroho et al., 2022). This regulation was created to ensure that diplomas from Islamic educational institutions had the same value as public schools, or civil effect, so that graduates of *madrasahs* and pesantren could continue their education in higher-level public schools.

Then, in 2012, Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, the founder of the Pesantren, suggested merging the *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MTs), *Madrasah Aliyah Al-Mukmin* (MAAM), *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin* KMI, and *Kulliyatul Mu'allimat* (KMT) educational units. This suggestion was well received by Wahyudin, as the director of Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki at that time. Wahyudin wanted this change to be realized immediately. Thus, in a 2012 meeting, Wahyudin requested that the unification of the educational units

be implemented that year. This educational unit was led by one principal assisted by vice principals for junior high and senior high schools for boys and girls. Prior to this merger, each educational unit had its own principal. Nevertheless, the implementation of the PPIM posed a significant challenge for the ustaz (Islamic teachers) at Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki, as the decision to merge occurred with limited planning for implementation.

In recent developments, the pesantren education system has diverged into five types of pesantren. First, a pesantren that provides formal education through the national curriculum. Second, a pesantren that provides religious education in the form of madrasahs and teaches general education, but does not implement the national curriculum. Third, a pesantren that teaches only religious sciences in the form of *madrasah diniyah* (Islamic boarding schools). Fourth, a pesantren that serves solely as a place for religious study (*majelis ta'lim*). Fifth, Islamic boarding schools that provide dormitories for both male and female students (Arif, 2008).

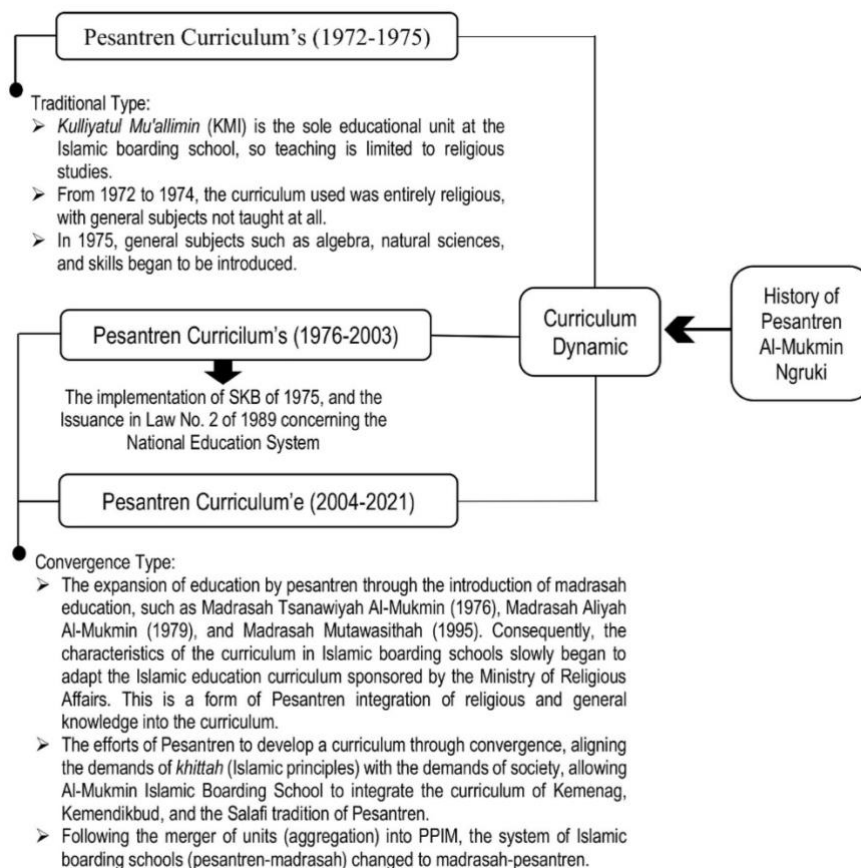


Figure 1: Curriculum Dynamics Scheme of Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki

In general, pesantren have undergone changes to the material or substance of the curriculum taught over time. This shift is understandable because maintaining existing material has been difficult due to the expansion of the national education system. Second, there have been changes to pesantren's educational and teaching methodologies (Nata, 2001). For example, pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki focuses on

language learning, and students are required to use Arabic and English as their daily languages. This approach was adopted from Pesantren Darussalam Gontor, one of the pesantren that excels in language discipline, which uses Arabic and English as its daily languages.

Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki, initially oriented towards traditional (*Salafiyah*) schools, has since developed and continuously improved, enabling it to meet the demands of the national education system (Anwar, 2025). During this period, Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki gradually began to adopt the Islamic education curriculum sponsored by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, as evidenced by the establishment of a madrasah (*Islamic junior high school*) within Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki. The curriculum developed at Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki also aligns with Islamic fundamental principles (*khittah*) and societal demands, as it has integrated the curricula of Ministry of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Education and Culture, and Salafi pesantren traditions.

Meanwhile, Islamic boarding schools have also implemented changes in response to the expansion of the education system. First, they have revised their curriculum to include more general subjects and general skills. Second, educational institutions have opened up their facilities to the interests of general education. These changes are evident in how Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki incorporated algebra, natural sciences, and skills into its curriculum in 1974.

Following the merger of the educational units, Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki has implemented numerous changes and developed its education system and curriculum, thereby increasing public trust. This trust was primarily earned by the institution's implementation of the madrasah-pesantren system. Madrasahs within pesantren have their own curricula and unique approaches to Islamic religious studies. The developed curriculum is the result of modifications by the administrators, with a greater emphasis on religion than in the general curriculum. However, general subjects are also adapted to MAN for grades IV to VI of Pendidikan Pesantren Islam Al-Mukmin (PPIM) Ngruki, and to MTsN for grades I to III of the PPIM. Thus, students in grades III of the PPIM can take the State Madrasah Tsanawiyah exam, and those in grades VI of the PPIM can take the State Madrasah Aliyah exam.

The curriculum at Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki has also incorporated the Islamic education curriculum sponsored by the Ministry of Religious Affairs through madrasahs, where the pesantren-specific curriculum is provided along with the national education curriculum (Syamsuri et al., 2023). Another unique aspect of the curriculum is the division of study time, where students allocate time to focus on the curriculum at the madrasah and use the remaining time, from morning to night, to study Islamic knowledge typical of pesantren. Thus, providing general education

through formal madrasahs in pesantren and teaching classical texts demonstrates these institutions' efforts to produce ulama and intellectuals who are ready to accept and practice Islam in its entirety (*kaffah*).



Figure 1: The Curriculum Dynamics of Pesantren Al Mukmin Ngruki Surakarta

Figure 1 shows that the curriculum dynamics of Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki reflect an adaptive historical transformation responsive to external pressures and internal needs. Initially, the curriculum followed a traditional (salafiyah) model focused on Islamic sciences. Due to state regulations, globalization, and social stigmas, the curriculum transitioned by integrating general knowledge with religious studies, reconstructing the epistemological relationship between these disciplines.

The convergence phase marks the integration of national, Ministry of Religious Affairs, and pesantren curricula into a unified, holistic 24-hour learning system. This hybrid educational model combines formal and nonformal elements to develop religious, intellectual, and social competencies simultaneously (Nugroho et al., 2022). Conceptually, this “convergent pesantren curriculum” paradigm strengthens institutional legitimacy and positions pesantren as agents of sustainable social transformation, bridging tradition and modernity (Suryono et al., 2021). The model contributes theoretically to innovation and integration in studies of the Islamic education curriculum.

CONCLUSION

The curriculum of Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki has transformed according to two patterns: the traditional pattern and the convergence pattern. Since its inception (1972), the pesantren curriculum focused on religious subjects, while general subjects were almost not studied at all (1974). However, along with the demands of the times, pesantren began to include general subjects into their curriculum, starting with the emergence of Madrasah Tsanawiyah, Madrasah Aliyah, and Madrasah Mutawasithah within the pesantren. These madrasahs demonstrate the pesantren's efforts in integrating general knowledge into its curriculum. In addition, the pesantren's curriculum also seeks to equip its students with various life skills to prepare them for life in society. Since the aggregation of all educational units in 2012, Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki has also integrated the Ministry of Religious Affairs curriculum with the local pesantren curriculum. This curriculum integration represents a convergence learning model, which influences the 24-hour learning process implemented at Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki, encompassing the students' curricular, co-curricular, extracurricular activities, and other flagship programs.

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