

International Curriculum Implementation Strategy: IB PYP Framework and Cambridge at Primary School

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the strategic management of implementing two concurrent international curricula at Madania School: the inquiry-based International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB PYP) for primary education and the structured Cambridge curriculum for secondary education. Faced with the demands of global competition, the school successfully integrated these distinct pedagogical frameworks through meticulous, systematic planning and phased stakeholder socialization. Utilizing a qualitative phenomenological approach, this research identifies key adaptive strategies deployed by management, including integrated curriculum mapping, internal professional development programs, community-based resource optimization, and differentiated learning protocols to address student diversity. The findings demonstrate that this dual-curriculum model effectively bridges the transdisciplinary philosophy of the IB framework with the academic rigor of the Cambridge system. Consequently, the implementation has significantly transformed students into resilient, independent thinkers and analytical problem-solvers with a global outlook, as evidenced by the high success rate of alumni in gaining admission to top-tier international universities. Ultimately, this study posits that the synergy between integrated governance and adaptive leadership at Madania School serves as a highly viable and inspiring blueprint for other educational institutions in Indonesia seeking to elevate their standards to a global level.

Keywords: *Cambridge Curriculum, IB Framework, Inklusi, Inquiry*

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INTRODUCTION

As we enter the era of 21st-century globalisation, the world of education is faced with a new reality characterised by boundless connectivity and increasingly intense global competition (Anindya & Pamungkas, 2023 : 2) (Supriyanto et al., 2025 : 18), and the complexity of cross-border challenges, ranging from climate change to technological disruption. This condition directly demands the availability of human resources who are not only academically superior, but also have a global set of competencies such as critical thinking skills, adaptive problem-solving, and communication skills and cross-cultural collaboration. Therefore, the need for the implementation of an international curriculum is urgently needed to prepare students with sufficient competencies to face the complex global challenges of today. In this case, the researcher glanced at two international curricula, namely IB (*International Baccalaureate*) and Cambridge which are applied in several internationally accredited schools.

This is supported by evidence produced from a study from (Shukur, 2023) which shows that in the long term, the three programs in the IB (*International Baccalaureate*) curriculum, namely PYP (Primary Years Programme), MYP (*Middle Years Programme*) and DP (*Diploma Programme*), have a positive and significant impact on improving academic achievement among students. For R-Square's achievement in these three programs, it shows a figure of 54.6%. In addition, the three programs can increase the skill needs and cognitive level of each student. And coupled with research (Mukhlisah & Sholihah, 2024) shows that the implementation of the Cambridge curriculum has made students successful in achieving existing achievements, both nationally and internationally.

Departing from these proven advantages, educational institutions in Indonesia have begun to adopt international curricula strategically, one of which is Madania School. Interestingly, Madania did not choose one of the curricula alone, but applied the two strengths of the two systems according to their level of development. For the elementary school (SD) level, Madania implements the IB (International Baccalaureate) Framework because of its concept-based nature. This approach is considered very effective for fostering curiosity, encouraging exploration and inquiry, and laying the foundation for strong character formation in children. For junior high and high school levels, Madania switched to the Cambridge curriculum which was more content-specific. This choice is based on the consideration that the Cambridge system is more academic, exam-oriented, and capable of training students. Thus, students are not only prepared to get used to facing different levels of exams, but also produce a formal certificate that is globally recognized as an entry point into higher education.

To understand this choice more deeply, it is important to look at the essence of the IB Framework itself which is that the IB curriculum introduced in 1960 originated in Geneva, Switzerland (Adilah et al., 2023 : 50). Fundamentally, the philosophical principle of the IB Framework is 'international-mindedness'. This principle is used in the formation of holistic education that focuses on fostering physical, emotional, intellectual, personal and social growth. Which is aligned with six themes about world issues that enable students to achieve what they aim for (Zeng, 2024 : 2-5). Meanwhile, in the Cambridge curriculum, which has three strong principles in its learning concept, namely *deep subject knowledge*, *conceptual understanding* and *higher order thinking skills*. For this reason, the Cambridge curriculum is used to applying that every student must study each material in depth (Fadil et al., 2023 : 5). For this reason, the two curricula are combined in one institution to maximize the results of the expectations set by each party.

For this reason, the advantages of the Cambridge curriculum with a holistic approach to the emphasis on deep understanding and the application of knowledge in a real context. The goal is to focus on developing talents and interests. If students are not interested and not talented in this field, of course they will not be able to understand in depth. This is a special concern for schools that use this curriculum, which is to make the learning atmosphere comfortable and fun (Adilah et al., 2023 : 49-50). This is commensurate with the IB Framework implemented at Madania because the approach used is balanced, comprehensive and aims at the development of students as responsible global citizens. This curriculum teaches students to think creatively, good emotional intelligence, intellectual and social skills, and a sense of responsibility and concern for others and the environment. The IB Framework is designed to provide a learning experience and make students lifelong learners (Pumanti, 2025). The combination of these two curricula is an interesting combination if it occurs in one school institution and this happens in Madania schools.

In fact, in the application of the curriculum in an educational institution, especially the application of two curricula at once in one institution faces several significant challenges (Mulkan & Zunnun, 2024 : 113-114). Among them are the state of human resources, the availability of facilities, the condition of students as well as several factors in the curriculum itself such as complexity, unclear implementation instructions and lack of support from stakeholders. Some of these things are challenges that must be faced by every educational institution. In this case, Madania schools apply two international curricula at once, both of which are quite different in substance and practice. For this reason, the researcher wants to study more deeply to find out about the management of the curriculum implementation strategy implemented in Madania School for the 2025-2026 school year.

Nonetheless, the majority of the current international education literature tends to discuss the implementation of a single curriculum in isolation. There are still very limited studies that comprehensively examine how two fundamentally different philosophies of education, namely the IB PYP transdisciplinary inquiry approach and the Cambridge structured approach, are implemented in a single educational institution. Therefore, this study is here to fill this gap by dissecting adaptive management strategies that are able to harmonize

the two curricula without sacrificing the quality of school inclusivity. The management strategy implemented by Madania School is very crucial because this institution puts itself in a unique position by applying the IB Framework at the primary education level and Cambridge at the secondary level. The main focus of this study is to examine how the application of inquiry-based approaches and the development of soft skills instilled through the IB Framework at the basic level can strengthen the learning independence and in-depth analytical skills that are the main demands of the Cambridge curriculum at the advanced level.

In summary, this study is not just a comprehensive study of the application of two international curricula in one school institution, but a case study rich in practical and theoretical implications. The results can be a guide for Madania School to continue to improve its education model, as well as a source of inspiration and learning for other education stakeholders in Indonesia in their efforts to improve the quality of education. Research on the IB Framework and Cambridge models at Madania School makes an essential theoretical and practical contribution to the global education literature on the effectiveness of international curriculum implementation strategies. Thus, this research not only enriches the understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each curriculum, but also offers in-depth insights into how adaptation, integration, and innovation are key variables in determining the success of international curriculum implementation in diverse socio-cultural environments.

METHOD

In this qualitative study, the primary research instrument is the researchers themselves, supported by carefully structured in-depth interview guides and comprehensive observation protocols. The sampling technique in this study uses *the purposive sampling* method. The selection of research subjects is determined deliberately (purposively) based on the fundamental principle that the chosen subjects must be individuals who understand the information in depth and have direct practical involvement with the research object, as defined by the limitations defined by the (Bungin, 2015). Consequently, the instruments were specifically tailored to elicit rich, firsthand data from the designated key informants: the school principal, the teacher in charge of the program, the teachers of IB and Cambridge subjects, and the students. These tools were meticulously designed to capture the authentic lived experiences and unique perspectives of each group regarding the daily operationalization of the dual-curriculum framework.

The research procedures were systematically carried out through an in-depth phenomenological approach, as supported by (Nasir et al., 2023), allowing the researchers to directly observe and immerse themselves in the true phenomena found in the field. The process involved extensive fieldwork at Madania School to thoroughly explore the complex phenomena related to the curriculum implementation. Through direct, sustained engagement with the school environment, researchers systematically documented the practical nuances, structural advantages, and contextual weaknesses that occur during the implementation of the curricula. The qualitative data collection procedures relied heavily on detailed field notes and active interactions, ensuring that the experiences of the principal, teachers, and students were accurately and holistically captured in their natural educational setting.

Upon the completion of the data collection phase, the data analysis was carried out comprehensively and qualitatively to deeply interpret the raw findings. This analytical process strictly follows the interactive data analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and (Saldana et al., 2014), which systematically helps researchers organize, process, and interpret vast amounts of complex data. The interconnected stages involved rigorous data condensation to filter essential information, data reduction to categorize the core themes, and finally, drawing well-grounded conclusions. Furthermore, to establish high trustworthiness and ensure the validity of data in this qualitative research, the researchers applied several rigorous techniques as recommended by (Sugiyono, 2023). Specifically, the accuracy of the data and interpretation was heavily safeguarded through the triangulation of data sources, member checking to allow participants to verify their transcribed statements, and maintaining

comprehensive audit trails throughout the research timeline. These integrated steps significantly increased the overall confidence, reliability, and precision of the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Cambridge Curriculum Management and Socialization Strategy and IB Framework

Socialization is the process of social interaction in which an individual absorbs, acquires, and instills concepts, values, ideas, norms, or behaviors from one generation to another in order to participate effectively in a group or institution (Anisah & Aksari, 2025). At Madania School, the process of instilling the concept of an international dual-curriculum is the main focus that is carried out before the first day of school starts, precisely when the teachers have entered after the holidays are over. The flow of information dissemination regarding the annual targets of the curriculum is designed vertically and in stages, starting from the leadership level (*Principal/Headmaster*), was handed down to departments, passed on to teachers, conveyed to students during the orientation period, until finally socialized to students' parents.

This process requires socialization media as a forum for individuals to learn to know, understand, and adapt to their social world. The use of early year coordination meetings, draft lesson plans, student orientation activities, and parent meeting forums serves as the main socialization media to instill awareness from an early age about program planning. Through this interactive communication strategy, each individual is taught the role that should be played (*role theory*), thereby minimizing potential barriers to adaptation in the school environment.

On the other hand, the success of the value instilling process must be supported by the planning management function (*Planning*) that is mature. Planning itself is a process or framework that involves directing a group of people towards an organized goal or goal (Irawan et al., 2023). both for the short, medium and long term. The planning function at Madania School is implemented systematically through an annual cycle that starts from the end of the previous school year. A thorough evaluation of the running system was carried out around the 28th at the end of the school year through a Management Review mechanism that reviews ISO standards to school education standards. The results of this survey are the main inputs for *Strategic Meeting* in order to determine the direction of program policies in the next school year. Operationally, the dual-curriculum planning at the beginning of the school year is specifically defined; at the IB PYP (Primary) level *Collaborative Planning Meeting* To map Theme Units 1 to 6, the summative assessment form (*Learning Celebration*), and the format of the report to parents. Meanwhile, at the Cambridge (Secondary) level, it was carried out a syllabus review which is directly translated into lesson plans or Teaching Modules for teachers.

Strong integration between effective socialization and systematic planning is a key variable in determining the success of curriculum governance at Madania School. Through the function of periodic control and evaluation at the end of the school year, the management can find out what problems the organization is facing so that the improvement of the work program always runs continuously. The alignment between macro planning and multi-level socialization is able to equalize perceptions and build good accountability among all school stakeholders. Thus, the complexity of the inquiry-based IB PYP framework and the content-based Cambridge curriculum can transform into transparent, accountable, effective, and efficient operational targets when implemented directly in the field.

Strategies in Dealing with Managerial Obstacles Taken by Schools

The simultaneous implementation of two international curriculum frameworks, the *International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme* (IB PYP) for elementary school and Cambridge for junior high school/high school levels puts Madania School in front of multidimensional managerial obstacles, along with several strategies implemented by Madania School, including:

Curriculum Implementation Strategy with Integrated Planning and Content Integration

Obstacles to alignment of the IB PYP philosophy (Transdisciplinary inquiry) and Cambridge (structured academics) are addressed through strategic separation: IBs at the basic level for character building (IB Learner Profile) and Cambridge at the advanced level for cognitive targets. Operationally, class integration is carried out through Adaptive curriculum mapping that practically blends intersecting material and maintains specific material independently (stand-alone). The entire process is coordinated centrally through Management Review and Collaborative Planning Meeting cross-level. This adaptive mapping strategy indicates that improving the quality of education requires a structured strategic management cycle (Setia & Nasrudin, 2020), as well as leadership that is able to adapt situationally to the diversity of contexts (Rukanda & Nurhayati, 2023).

Human Resource Empowerment Strategy

Barriers related to high costs and limited time for teacher professional development (IB certification) are overcome through the establishment of a Research & Development / Professional Development Department (R&D/PD) internally. Together with the PYP Coordinator, the department has developed a multi-layered training that combines periodic external agendas, self-exploration, and a culture of sharing between teachers (*Peer Sharing*). This strategy not only reduces operational constraints, but successfully builds professional autonomy (*Teacher ownership*) where teachers are able to solve class dynamics independently. This adaptive approach confirms the effectiveness of collaboration-based Sustainable Professional Development (Nurjaman, 2023), while proving that integration In-House Training and Peer Learning Community both in improving the competence of educators contextually (Rukanda & Nurhayati, 2023).

Internal Resource Optimization Strategy and External Network

This creative step continues to handle the next obstacle, namely the limitation of digital facility updates, where schools carry out managerial maneuvers that do not solely rely on the procurement of internal facilities. As an alternative solution, schools actively empower external networks by collaborating with students' parents to become guest practitioners in the classroom. At the same time, the physical facilities that are already available are also optimized for maximum utilization. Facilities such as science laboratories, for example, are opened to access beyond class hours for luxury for independent research needs and preparation for the Olympics for students. In addition, the school library is also optimized in function and positioned as the heart of the school to fully support the research process and independent inquiry activities of the students. This synergy between the use of internal resources and external involvement is a tangible manifestation of adaptive transformational leadership in formulating solutions in the midst of limitations (Setia & Nasrudin, 2020). This step also confirms that community networks are a very potential strategic instrument to support the operationalization of school-based management.

Differentiated Learning Strategies and Heterogeneous Grouping

The next challenge is rooted in the inclusion policy without strict academic selection, which has an impact on the widening range of student competencies. The school responded by implementing *differentiated learning* which is adjusted per level. Differentiation at the elementary level is focused on modifying the process and difficulty of assignments to accommodate students with special needs (*special needs*). Meanwhile, the advanced level emphasizes more on the flexibility of the target and *heterogeneous grouping* to spark *Peer Tutoring*. Interestingly, this strategy is effective in minimizing stigma thanks to an inclusive climate that has developed a strong culture. In order to level the academic readiness of international standards, the school also routinely schedules *Cambridge Drilling* into the daily schedule. This responsive and highly customized diversity handling pattern is in line with the

principles of education HR management (Nurjaman, 2023), as well as proving the running of the principal's supervisory function in ensuring the execution of differentiation in the field

Two-Way Learning Strategies and Active Engagement

In line with handling this diversity, schools also design specific interventions at each level to deal with obstacles in the form of fluctuations in student learning motivation. Student involvement at the upper advanced level is spurred through the application of interactive methods such as gamification (game-based learning) and two-way discussions to stimulate analytical thinking. In contrast to lower secondary level, which prioritizes the creation of a supportive learning climate through providing rational assignment deadlines and minimizing the threat of punishment. Meanwhile, at the elementary school level, interventions are focused on fostering students' intrinsic motivation from an early age through conceptual understanding approaches and inquiry-based learning that are directly aligned with children's natural interests.

The success of maintaining motivation through a low-pressure learning environment emphasizes the urgency of supportive work and Learning environment (Nurjaman, 2023). This also proves that a collaborative and reflective approach is crucial in boosting active student involvement (Rukanda & Nurhayati, 2023).

Phased Bilingual Strategies and Remedial Reinforcement

In addition to managing motivational fluctuations, the school also pays special attention to the next challenge centered on the widening gap in students' English language competencies in meeting the high standards of the Cambridge curriculum. In order to bridge the distance (Gap) competencies, management implements layered interventions that begin adaptively through a bilingual system with educational consequences from the elementary school level. Entering the upper secondary level, schools enforce academic grouping gradually, in the form of strengthening the foundation in grades 10–11 which then continue to majoring in the IGCSE or AS Level pathway in grade 12. Operationally in the classroom, the process of accelerating language skills is fully supported by the integration of remedial programs and methods Peer Tutoring as a form scaffolding organic. This comprehensive handling ecosystem does not only patch up students' linguistic lags, but is also effective in triggering independent learning initiatives (self-directed learning) that align with the IB and Cambridge learner profiles. This achievement directly affirms Nurjaman's thesis (2023) that synergistic collaboration between institutions, educators, and students in a participatory climate is an absolute prerequisite for the successful implementation of the international standard curriculum

The Real Impact of Curriculum and Education Implementation on Students' Academic Readiness

The application of the dual curriculum model (IB and Cambridge) has a very significant impact on the development of character as well as the academic capacity of students. The conclusion regarding the real impact of the application of the dual curriculum model (IB and Cambridge) on students includes the following points of competitive advantage

Character Building and Independence: The most significant impact seen is on student character building. This curriculum has succeeded in changing the habits of students who were initially used to being served at home (small emperors) into independent children, such as orderly queuing, doing toilet training independently, and having personal responsibilities.

Logic and Decision Making Skills: Students grow and develop into good problem solvers and decision makers.

Academic and Cognitive Acuity: From the academic aspect, the students' inquisitive powers (curiosity and analytical thinking skills) develop into very sharp.

Global Perspective and Internationally Recognized: Students have a very broad global awareness. This excellence is concretely proven by the large number of school alumni who have been successfully accepted into world-renowned universities, such as in Toronto and Groningen.

Creating an Inclusive Environment: The implementation of this curriculum system also has a positive impact on the social climate of schools, making the learning environment in schools grow to be very inclusive.

This is in line with Nuryanti Siregar's research (Siregar et al., 2024) which shows that the instillation of values instilled through the implementation of the curriculum has a positive impact. The implementation of a flexible curriculum has been proven to be able to provide a wider space for students to explore themselves, become more active, creative, and critical through participatory learning methods such as group discussions and *Project-based learning* (Feni et al., 2025). This kind of curriculum approach has a real impact on increasing independence, critical thinking skills in solving problems, and the ability to collaborate (gotong royong) which ultimately creates an inclusive and positive school social environment.

Overall, the implementation of the dual curriculum (IB PYP and Cambridge) at Madania School proves that the complexity of international standard education can be effectively managed through the synergy between integrated planning, structured socialization, and adaptive leadership.

The school not only implements two different educational philosophies, the transdisciplinary inquiry of the IB Framework and the cognitive academic structure of the Cambridge Curriculum, but also demonstrates shrewdness in the face of various managerial obstacles. Through a careful curriculum mapping strategy, sustainable teacher empowerment, optimization of internal and external ecosystems, and the implementation of differentiated learning, Madania School has succeeded in creating an inclusive and supportive educational climate. In the end, the success of this strategic management comes down to a real transformation of students. This holistic approach has succeeded in printing a comprehensive graduate profile, with the following characteristics K

Independent and Characterful: Changing from a child who is used to being served to a resilient and responsible individual

Problem Solver: Has a sharp sense of reason and logic to make decisions

Critical and Analytical: Have curiosity (inquiry) that sparks critical thinking

Global Awareness: Proven to have competitiveness recognized by well-known universities in the world

The success of Madania School can be a blueprint for other educational institutions. This emphasizes that high-quality education is not only born from a quality curriculum, but from a collaborative ecosystem where school management, educators, parents, and students move together in harmony to realize a transformative educational vision.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, this study highlights how Madania School synchronizes two distinct pedagogical frameworks through adaptive management and integrated planning. The implementation of the dual curriculum specifically the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB PYP) at the elementary level and the Cambridge curriculum at the secondary level demonstrates its educational management. This integration was achieved through systematic planning that was translated into practical steps. By utilizing a staged socialization process, the school management ensured that stakeholders, ranging from educational staff to students and parents, shared a unified vision. This vertical alignment minimized potential friction and built a foundation of accountability and mutual understanding across the school community.

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