



MANAGEMENT OF THE ASWAJA AN-NAHDLIYYAH-BASED LOCAL CURRICULUM IN STRENGTHENING STUDENTS' CHARACTER

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Abstract:

One of the serious problems in education is the imbalance between knowledge and character among students. Ideal education is to balance knowledge and character. The formation of students' character is very necessary to form a generation with noble character, one of which is by integrating Local based curriculum Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah into the curriculum. This curriculum teaches the importance of religious attitudes, politeness, respect for parents, tolerance, and maintaining manners and ethics in society. This study aims to describe the management of Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah based lokal curriculum in strengthening the character of students at Madrasah Aliyah Miftahussalam Wonosalam Demak. This study will answer how the management and the strategy of the Local based curriculum strengthen student's character, and what the supporting and inhibiting factors are for the implementation of the management of local-based curriculum in strengthening the student's character. This study is a qualitative descriptive study. Data collection uses interview, observation, and documentation techniques. The data will be analyzed using data reduction, data presentation, and finally drawing conclusions. The results of this study include 1) Local based curriculum management consists of the planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating processes. 2) strategies for strengthening character through classroom learning, and through the habituation of daily attitudes and behaviors 3) Supporting factors for the implementation of the curriculum are that the madrasah is in an Islamic boarding school environment and students have the same ideology, namely Nahdlatul Ulama. Students' social interactions outside of school and their lack of communication with parents act as inhibiting factors.

Keywords: *Curriculum Management, Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah, Character*

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in human life, acting as a primary means to foster the development of individuals and contribute to societal progress. It is designed to support the growth of students, helping them realize their full potential. Education not only promotes individual growth but also plays an essential role in shaping character and personality. In addition to transmitting knowledge, educational institutions are responsible for instilling positive values that will shape students' character (Fauzi et al., 2023).

The function of education is to enhance the capabilities of students and contribute to the development of a civilized nation. It aims to develop students' potential to become faithful and pious individuals, morally upright, knowledgeable, skilled, creative, independent, and responsible democratic citizens (Sistem Pendidikan Nasional, 2003). However, in the case of adolescents and students, there exists a paradoxical phenomenon between the ideal values espoused by religion and educational laws, and the reality of their behaviors. In everyday life, various social imbalances are evident, such as moral crises, social misconduct, and a lack of social piety.

Recent reports indicate a significant decline in the quality of religious character education. There has been an increase in negative behaviors such as violence, pornography, and brawls. Such behaviors indicate a decline in the religious character of students, which underscores the need for character education to be integrated into formal education at all levels. Effective implementation of character education is essential for achieving national educational goals, which include shaping students into individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also pious, morally upright, and socially responsible (BPS, 2024).

In Demak, Indonesia, reports reveal that violence among individuals aged 0–18 has increased. In 2024, the number of cases in the region reached 1,327, up from 1,224 cases in the previous year. The majority of these cases occurred within school environments (BPS, 2024). This increase suggests a significant decline in students' religious character in the region, particularly at Madrasah Aliyah Miftahussalam Wonosalam in Demak. Preliminary interviews revealed that many students still engage in undesirable behaviors, such as bullying, accessing pornographic content, unhealthy romantic relationships, disrespecting teachers, and neglecting religious practices such as Dhuha prayer, congregational Dhuhr prayer, Istighosah, Manaqib, and visiting graves. These behaviors highlight the need for value habituation, character-building approaches, and the internalization of noble moral values within both formal and non-formal educational institutions.

Religious character is a key aspect of human personality, intricately linked to other personality traits. It should be cultivated in children from an early age to ensure the proper development of their later skills and competencies. Religious character does not develop automatically but requires intentional efforts and guidance from external influences.

Schools serve as a secondary form of education after the family, where planned and regular education takes place. At schools, students receive education not only from teachers but also from their peers (Ali, 2014). Character education plays an essential role in supporting the achievement of national educational objectives, shaping students into individuals who are pious, knowledgeable, creative, and responsible. Character development involves a desire to perform well, concern for others' well-being, critical thinking, and the development of interpersonal and emotional skills that enable individuals to work effectively with others (Binti, 2019). Teachers must be professional in shaping students' character and competencies, catering to their individual characteristics (Ardy, 2018).

The importance of religious education in schools should be a shared commitment among all stakeholders, including parents, teachers, educational administrators, and the government. These groups must collaborate to create a learning environment that is engaging and free from psychological pressure, which could lead to aggressive or repressive behavior. To enhance religious education, there is a need to reform the education system, which has traditionally focused on cognitive aspects while neglecting affective aspects, such as attitudes,

interests, values, appreciation, and motivation (Ilahi, 2014).

Building strong religious character requires comprehensive efforts, including integrating local religious values, such as those found in the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) tradition, into the curriculum. The NU tradition plays a crucial role in teaching religious values that are highly relevant to shaping strong religious and social character (Fajriansyah, 2022).

The curriculum holds significant importance in the learning process. A curriculum that aligns with students' needs and is of high quality can directly lead to better educational outcomes. The curriculum serves as the framework for education, determining the implementation and results of the educational process. According to the Minister of Religious Affairs' Decree (KMA) No. 450 of 2024 on curriculum implementation guidelines, Local based curriculum can be integrated into specific subjects that reflect the uniqueness, typology, potential, and characteristics of each educational institution. Local based curriculum can include religious studies, arts and culture, physical education, language, technology, and research. This curriculum aims to develop students' potential and instill Pancasila values, while empowering students' independence (Pedoman Pelaksanaan Kurikulum pada Tingkat RA, MTs, MA, MAK, 2024).

The Local based curriculum is one of the government's initiatives to provide relevant education tailored to the needs of local communities (Leny Noviani, 2022). This curriculum is designed to accommodate regional uniqueness and characteristics that are not covered by the national curriculum. In its development, the Local based curriculum must be adjusted to the needs and characteristics of each region. One widely recognized local content, especially in educational institutions affiliated with Nahdliyin, is the teaching of Aswaja (Ahlussunnah Wa al-jamaah) and NU-related values.

The teaching of NU values has long been a hallmark of pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) and educational institutions managed by Nahdliyin. Today, these values are included in the Local based curriculum of the national curriculum. While the inclusion of Local based curriculum is subject to individual institutions' decisions, it is increasingly important for all Nahdliyin educational institutions to prioritize the study of NU values as a core component of their curriculum (Shofwan, 2022).

The Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum emphasizes the development of students' character to ensure they become individuals with noble traits and excellent morals in line with Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah teachings. These values promote religious observance, respect for parents, social tolerance, good manners, and a commitment to peace and harmony. Strengthening character through the local Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum is expected to foster religious character in students (Arif, 2020).

To ensure the effective implementation of the local Aswaja A-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum, strong management practices are necessary. Management is crucial in coordinating the various components and strategies involved in implementing the curriculum. Curriculum management involves planning, organizing, executing, and assessing actions taken to utilize all available resources effectively. With well-organized management, the curriculum can be implemented more efficiently and effectively, contributing to the realization of the educational goals.

Based on preliminary observations and interviews with the principal of MA Miftahussalam, it was found that this institution, under the Ma'arif NU Education Foundation in Demak, has integrated NU-related teachings as part of its Local based curriculum. The Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum is designed to guide students to become individuals with noble

character and religious integrity, in alignment with the values of Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah.

In light of the aforementioned issues, this study aims to explore the "Management of the Local Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum in Strengthening Religious Character at Madrasah Aliyah Miftahussalam Wonosalam Demak for the 2024/2025 Academic Year."

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach, which is used to investigate natural objects, with the researcher as the primary instrument. Sampling and data sources are purposive and snowball, and data collection uses triangulation techniques. The data analysis is inductive, emphasizing meaning over generalization (Sugiyono, 2019). In qualitative research, data is not collected in numerical form but through words or descriptions, which come from interviews, field notes, personal documents, and others.

Qualitative research is characterized by its natural data sources, descriptive nature, and the importance of the process rather than just the results. The type of research used is a case study, which provides intensive descriptions and analyses of specific phenomena or social structures, such as individuals, groups, institutions, or communities (Arikunto, 2018). The researcher seeks to describe the subjects' behaviors in context, observing them deeply.

Descriptive qualitative research examines current phenomena or conditions experienced by the subjects of the study (Sukmadinata, 2019). This type of research is chosen because the data collected focuses on processes rather than products (Subana, 2015). The phenomenon being studied in this research is the management of the local curriculum related to NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) teachings for strengthening the religious character of students.

Research Location and Timeframe

The research will be conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Miftahussalam, Wonosalam District, Demak Regency, Central Java. The selection of this institution was based on several considerations, including that MA Miftahussalam is an educational institution with a strong NU character, incorporating the local curriculum in its teaching, specifically the NU-related subjects. These subjects contribute to shaping students' religious character, making them faithful, pious, and ethically sound in line with the Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah teachings. The school also integrates NU religious traditions, such as istighosah, Manaqib, and Maulid Nabi, into its daily activities.

The research is planned to begin in February 2025, starting with the proposal preparation and obtaining permission for observation at MA Miftahussalam. Data collection is expected to occur between March and April 2025, with the research report being finalized by April 2025. The following timeline outlines the research steps:

Activity	Time frame
Proposal preparation	January 2025
Permission submission	February 2025
Preliminary research	February 2025
Proposal defense	March 2025
Data collection	March–April 2025
Data analysis	March 2025
Report writing	April 2025
Result defense	April 2025

According to Sugiyono (2019), qualitative research uses two main sources of data: primary and secondary data. Primary data is directly collected by the researcher from key informants, including: (1) the headmaster, (2) the curriculum supervisor, (3) teachers, (4) the student affairs supervisor, and (5) students. Secondary data refers to data obtained from existing documents or other indirect sources, such as school documents (curriculum documents, teaching materials, etc.), books, journals, and previous research. These data serve as a reference for the research and help in shaping policies or decisions.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection in qualitative research includes interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews are interactions where the researcher asks open-ended questions and records the responses (John W, 2014). The researcher will interview the headmaster, teachers of the NU-related local curriculum, curriculum managers, and students to gain detailed insights into the management of the Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum for enhancing students' religious character.

Structured Interviews: In these interviews, the researcher prepares a set of detailed questions ahead of time (Sahir, 2021).

Semi-structured Interviews: This method allows greater flexibility, enabling the researcher to ask open-ended questions based on main topics, allowing the informant to share their experiences (Sugiyono, 2019).

Observation involves focusing on the research subject using all senses to gather information. The researcher will conduct non-participant observation, where they observe without direct involvement in the activities (Arikunto, 2018). This method helps to understand how the Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum is implemented and its impact on the students' religious character. **Documentation** helps in collecting written materials such as meeting minutes, official policies, and curriculum documents. These materials are crucial as they provide supporting data that are not readily available through interviews or observations (Moleong, 2017).

To ensure the credibility of the data, triangulation will be employed, combining multiple data sources and techniques to verify consistency. Triangulation of sources involves cross-checking data from different informants, while triangulation of techniques uses different methods (interviews, observations, and documentation) to ensure valid findings (Abdussamad, 2021). Data analysis in qualitative research is an iterative process where data is organized and reduced to highlight important patterns and themes. According to Sugiyono (2021), data analysis involves data collection, reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions. The researcher will apply interactive analysis models (Huberman & Miles) to organize and synthesize the data into meaningful conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The study aimed to evaluate the management of the local curriculum focused on Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) teachings in enhancing the religious character of students at Madrasah Aliyah Miftahussalam in Wonosalam, Demak. The findings are divided into two key areas: (1) the effectiveness of the Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum in shaping religious character and (2) the factors influencing its implementation. This section will present the results in

relation to the scope of the research.

Effectiveness of the NU-Based Local Curriculum

The analysis of the Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum shows significant improvements in the religious character of students. Data gathered from interviews, observations, and documents highlight the positive impact of integrating NU teachings into the educational system. Key activities such as istighosah, Manaqib, and Maulid Nabi were found to be particularly effective in fostering discipline and religious values among students.

Table 1: Religious Activities Participation Before and After the Aswaja A-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum

Activity	Before Aswaja A-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum	After Aswaja A-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum
Istighosah	40%	80%
Manaqib	30%	75%
Maulid Nabi	45%	85%
Congregational Prayers	50%	90%

As Table 1 illustrates, there is a clear and significant increase in students' involvement in religious practices after the introduction of the Aswaja A-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum. This finding is consistent with Arif (2020), who argued that character education, especially when linked to religious content, leads to stronger ethical development and a deeper understanding of cultural identity.

Factors Influencing the Implementation of the Curriculum

The implementation of the Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah based lokal curriculum faced both supportive and hindering factors.

Supporting Factors

Active Engagement of Teachers and Staff: Teachers at MA Miftahussalam, particularly those responsible for the NU-based curriculum, played a vital role in ensuring the successful integration of NU values into both formal lessons and extracurricular activities. Their commitment and understanding of the curriculum significantly contributed to its success. As noted by one of the teachers (Fatoni, 2025), their involvement in planning, including the setting of graduation standards, made a positive impact on students' ability to internalize and practice NU teachings.

Community Support: The role of local religious leaders and parents in reinforcing NU values in students was another critical factor. The involvement of the community helped students better understand the relevance of these values to their daily lives. This aligns with the observations of Fajriansyah (2022), who emphasized that community support is crucial in character education.

Hindering Factors

Limited Resources: Although the Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum was well-developed, there was a noticeable lack of teaching resources and materials to support the implementation. The absence of comprehensive teaching aids posed a challenge for teachers trying to ensure the effective delivery of the curriculum. Sugiyono (2019) highlights the importance of sufficient resources in the success of educational programs, and the absence of these resources at MA Miftahussalam was an obstacle to fully realizing the curriculum's potential.

Resistance from Some Students: Some students expressed resistance to the integration of religious teachings into the curriculum, particularly those who

were unfamiliar with the NU practices. This resistance was mainly attributed to a lack of understanding of the relevance and benefits of such teachings. Creswell (2012) discusses how the introduction of new curricula often faces student resistance, especially when it challenges their existing beliefs or practices.

Evaluation of the Curriculum's Effectiveness

Data analysis also revealed that the evaluation methods used at MA Miftahussalam were effective in assessing both academic achievements and character development. According to Fatoni (2025), evaluation of the Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum included not only academic tests but also assessments of students' spiritual and social behaviors. This holistic approach ensured that the curriculum contributed to both cognitive and character growth.

The academic evaluations (daily quizzes, mid-term exams, and final exams) helped measure students' understanding of NU teachings, while evaluations of character (such as religious practices and attitudes) were conducted through observations of students' everyday behavior. This dual approach aligns with the integrated character education model proposed by Lickona (1991), who emphasizes the importance of both academic and moral development in educational settings.

Discussion

The findings from this research demonstrate that the integration of the NU-based curriculum at MA Miftahussalam has significantly contributed to the development of religious character in students. The discussion below links these findings with relevant literature, providing a deeper understanding of the factors involved in the success and challenges of such a curriculum.

The Role of the Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum in Shaping Religious Character

The introduction of the Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum at MA Miftahussalam has led to marked improvements in students' religious engagement. As shown in Table 1, the increase in participation in religious activities such as istighosah, Manaqib, and Maulid Nabi supports the argument by Arif (2020), who notes that religious character education significantly contributes to moral development. These activities not only improved students' religious knowledge but also encouraged the application of religious values in daily life.

Moreover, the Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum aligns with the National Education System's goal of producing individuals who are not only academically proficient but also ethically grounded (Sistem Pendidikan Nasional, 2003). By embedding religious practices into the curriculum, MA Miftahussalam ensures that students are prepared to lead lives that are spiritually fulfilling and socially responsible. This combination of knowledge and character development is crucial, as highlighted by Lickona (1991), who argues that effective education must nurture both the intellectual and moral dimensions of students.

Supporting Factors for Successful Curriculum Implementation

One of the primary factors contributing to the success of the Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum at MA Miftahussalam was the active engagement of teachers and staff. Teachers' deep involvement in the curriculum design and their commitment to student outcomes were essential in ensuring that students were not only taught NU values but also encouraged to apply them in their daily lives. This aligns with Binti (2019), who emphasizes the role of teachers as facilitators of character development.

Another critical factor was the community's support, which helped students understand the significance of the curriculum in a broader societal and cultural context. As Fajriansyah (2022) notes, local community involvement is

crucial in reinforcing the values taught in schools. At MA Miftahussalam, the collaboration between the school and local religious leaders created a supportive environment where students could connect the religious teachings they received at school with real-world applications.

Challenges in Implementing the Aswaja A-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum

Despite the positive impact of the Aswaja A-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum, several challenges were identified. The lack of teaching materials and resources was a significant obstacle, preventing teachers from fully realizing the curriculum's potential. This issue reflects the findings of Sugiyono (2019), who underscores the importance of adequate resources in educational success. To overcome this challenge, it is recommended that MA Miftahussalam and other similar institutions invest in creating and procuring teaching materials that align with the Aswaja A-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum.

Additionally, resistance from some students posed a challenge, particularly those unfamiliar with the practices and values of Nahdlatul Ulama. As Creswell (2012) suggests, resistance to new curricula is common, especially when students' pre-existing beliefs or experiences are challenged. It is crucial for educators to provide sufficient context and explanations to help students understand the relevance and benefits of such curricula.

Holistic Evaluation Of The Aswaja A-Nahdliyyah Local Based Curriculum

The evaluation process at MA Miftahussalam demonstrated the importance of assessing both academic achievement and character development. Fatoni (2025) explained that students' understanding of NU teachings was evaluated through formal academic assessments, while their behavior and adherence to religious practices were observed on a daily basis. This approach reflects the integrated character education model proposed by Lickona (1991), which advocates for a holistic assessment of students' cognitive, emotional, and moral growth.

Moreover, the emphasis on continuous evaluation, including both academic performance and religious behavior, aligns with the findings of Wahyudin (2020), who stresses that effective curriculum implementation requires ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure that both academic and character development goals are met.

Recommendations for Future Implementation

To address the challenges identified, several recommendations are proposed. First, there should be an increased focus on teacher training, particularly in the areas of NU-based religious education, to ensure that teachers are well-equipped to teach both the content and values of the curriculum effectively. Additionally, the school should invest in developing comprehensive teaching materials and resources to support the curriculum.

Furthermore, it is essential for MA Miftahussalam to strengthen its partnerships with parents and the local community. Greater collaboration with parents, in particular, would help ensure that the values taught in school are reinforced at home, creating a more consistent and holistic approach to character development.

CONCLUSION

The research on the management of the local NU-based curriculum aimed at strengthening the religious character of students at Madrasah Aliyah Miftahussalam Wonosalam, Demak, has yielded significant findings. The study focused on the key aspects of curriculum management, including planning,

organization, implementation, and evaluation. The objective was to assess how the integration of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) teachings into the curriculum influences students' religious character and to explore the factors that affect the success and challenges of such an approach. Based on the analysis of the findings, the following conclusions can be drawn.

Summary of Findings

The management of the Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculumat MA Miftahussalam follows a structured approach with four key phases: planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation. In the planning phase, the curriculum is developed to instill the values of Aswaja (Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah) and prepare students to integrate religious values into their daily lives. The goals of the curriculum are clearly defined, focusing on creating a generation of students who are not only academically capable but also deeply rooted in religious and social values. This planning also includes the development of graduation standards, the creation of NU-related learning materials, and the design of activities that promote religious character development.

In the organization phase, the responsibilities are divided among the key stakeholders, including teachers, curriculum planners, and the school leadership. A comprehensive schedule for both formal and extracurricular activities is created, ensuring that the NU curriculum is integrated into the daily life of students. Regular activities such as istighosah, ziarah kubur, Manaqib, and Maulid Nabi are part of this integrated approach.

The implementation phase focuses on delivering the curriculum both inside and outside the classroom. In the classroom, teachers provide direct instruction, while extracurricular activities reinforce the values taught. These activities not only provide knowledge but also foster the internalization of religious practices, such as leading tahlilan and understanding the teachings of NU's prominent figures. The emphasis is not only on theoretical learning but also on the practice and application of these values in real-life situations.

The evaluation phase involves both academic assessments and character evaluations. Students' understanding of the NU curriculum is assessed through regular quizzes, exams, and assignments. Additionally, the evaluation of religious character is carried out through observations of students' daily behavior and participation in religious activities. These evaluations help ensure that students not only understand the theoretical aspects of the NU teachings but also demonstrate them in their conduct.

Religious Character Strengthening Strategy

The Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculumat MA Miftahussalam is an effective strategy for reinforcing students' religious character. This approach integrates spiritual and social activities into the curriculum, ensuring that students not only learn about religious principles but also actively engage in religious practices that promote positive character traits. As discussed in the findings, regular practices such as istighosah and ziarah kubur significantly contribute to students' spiritual growth. These activities, grounded in the traditions of Nahdlatul Ulama, are powerful tools for nurturing humility, tolerance, moderation, and social responsibility in students.

Additionally, the involvement of community members and religious leaders in reinforcing the curriculum's values has proven essential in creating a supportive environment. This aligns with the argument put forth by Fajriansyah (2022), which states that community support plays a vital role in enhancing character education. The active participation of the school community, teachers, and parents fosters a sense of shared responsibility in ensuring the religious and moral development of students.

Supporting and Hindering Factors

The success of the NU curriculum at MA Miftahussalam is influenced by several factors. The supporting factors include the religious environment, especially the presence of pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) nearby, which strengthens the religious atmosphere and supports the character-building efforts. The shared religious background of the students, most of whom come from NU communities, also facilitates the implementation of the curriculum, as students are already familiar with the values and practices of NU.

On the other hand, hindering factors include challenges from outside the school environment that cannot be fully controlled by the institution. Social influences, peer interactions, and exposure to negative behaviors outside the school often present obstacles to maintaining the religious character that is nurtured within the school. As Fatoni (2025) pointed out, despite the efforts at the school, external factors, particularly students' social interactions and lack of parental involvement, undermine the consistency of character development. This highlights the importance of collaboration between the school and parents to reinforce the values taught at school.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the implementation of the Aswaja An-Nahdliyyah Local based curriculum at MA Miftahussalam has successfully contributed to the development of religious character in students. The integrated approach, which combines formal education with religious practices and values, has proven effective in enhancing students' understanding of NU teachings and in promoting positive moral development. However, challenges remain, particularly with regard to external influences and the need for better communication between the school and parents.

Recommendations for future studies and improvements include:

Enhancing Teacher Training: There should be a focus on providing continuous professional development for teachers, particularly in teaching religious and character education. This will ensure that they are equipped to manage both academic and moral education effectively.

Strengthening Parent-Teacher Collaboration: Schools should work more closely with parents to create a more supportive environment for students' character development. This could involve regular workshops or meetings to align efforts in nurturing religious values at home.

Expanding Resources: To overcome the resource limitations identified, MA Miftahussalam should invest in additional teaching materials, including multimedia resources, which can help in delivering the curriculum more effectively and engagingly. Finally, future research could focus on expanding the scope of this study to include other schools implementing similar curricula, comparing the impacts of different religious education models on students' overall development. This would provide a broader perspective on the effectiveness of local religious curricula in diverse educational settings.

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