

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION THROUGH AN INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

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Abstract

Islamic education today has to enrich its graduates not only with religious knowledge and comprehension of doctrines, but also equip them for the twenty first century society. The development of the integrated curriculum addresses this problem as it merges several disciplines while relating religious education to real-life situations. A literature study approach was employed in examining the issue under consideration. The findings indicate that an integrated curriculum approach can enhance active and constructive engagement of learners in the teachings of Islam which can create a relevant education that meets the expectations of contemporary society. However, the integration of an interdisciplinary curriculum does not bear fruits easily as there are some barriers such as lack of willingness to embrace change, scarcity of funds and the proper evaluation of students rated. Therefore, some strategies to overcome these challenges include effective training programmes, investment in resource development and improved coordination among stakeholders.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Integrated Curriculum.

Introduction

Islamic education has a vital role in shaping a Muslim generation that is knowledgeable, noble, and able to face the challenges of the times. Islamic education is a process of guidance and optimal development of human potential, both physically and spiritually, based on Islamic teachings sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith (Sitopu et al., 2024); (Guna et al., 2024). The main goal is to form individuals who have a

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comprehensive Muslim personality, including intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social aspects. Islamic education does not only focus on the transfer of religious knowledge, but also emphasises character building, skill development, and instilling Islamic values in every aspect of life (Syah et al., 2023). Thus, Islamic education aims to create human beings who are not only academically intelligent, but also have noble morals, piety to Allah SWT, and the ability to contribute positively in society in accordance with Islamic teachings.

In the current era of modernisation, Islamic education has a very crucial role. In the midst of globalisation and rapid technological advances, Islamic education is a strong moral and spiritual fortress for Muslims. The modern era brings various challenges and temptations that can erode Islamic values, such as materialism, hedonism, and secularism (Fawait et al., 2024); (Hairiyanto et al., 2024). In this context, Islamic education acts as a guide that helps individuals to stick to religious teachings while adapting to the times. Through Islamic education, the younger generation is equipped with a deep understanding of religion, so that they can filter information and negative influences coming from various sources (Syakhrani & Aslan, 2024).

Furthermore, Islamic education in the era of modernisation serves as a bridge between tradition and progress. Islamic education not only teaches traditional religious values, but also encourages Muslims to become productive and innovative individuals in facing the challenges of the times (Purwanti et al., 2024). By combining religious knowledge and modern science, Islamic education prepares a generation of Muslims who are able to contribute positively to the development of society and civilisation. This is important to maintain the relevance of Islam in a global context and prove that Islamic teachings are in line with scientific and technological advances (Lafrarchi, 2020). Thus, Islamic education is key in shaping Muslims who are faithful, knowledgeable, and able to compete in the international arena without losing their Islamic identity.

However, in its development, Islamic education faces various problems that affect its quality. Some of the problems that are often faced include; 1) Dichotomy of knowledge: There is a separation between religious and general sciences which results in an imbalance in the understanding and practice of Islamic teachings. 2) Ineffective learning methods: The dominance of conventional learning methods that tend to be monotonous and do not involve the active participation of students. 3) Lack of integration of Islamic values: In general science learning, often Islamic values are not well integrated, so that students have difficulty linking the knowledge learnt with religious teachings. 4) Low quality of graduates: Many Islamic education graduates have not been able to compete in the world of work and contribute optimally to society. 5) Irrelevant curriculum: The Islamic education curriculum is often not in line with the times and the needs of modern society (Hanafi & Suyadi, 2024); (Syamsiah & Hamami, 2022); (Judijanto et al., 2024).

Facing these problems, an approach is needed that can integrate various aspects of Islamic education holistically. One solution that can be applied is through the implementation of an integrated curriculum.

An integrated curriculum is an approach that combines various disciplines, both religious and general sciences, into a unified whole. This approach aims to eliminate the barriers between various fields of science and present more meaningful learning for students (Rumainur et al., 2022).

An integrated curriculum integrates different disciplines, skills and values in a coherent whole, enabling students to see the connections between different subjects and their applications in real life (Lathif, 2023). This approach promotes a deeper and more comprehensive understanding, as students not only learn concepts in isolation, but also understand how they are interrelated and relevant to the world around them. This increases learning motivation, as students can see the relevance and practical use of what they are learning (Bendriyanti et al., 2022).

Furthermore, an integrated curriculum improves critical reasoning, inventiveness and problem-solving skills which are very essential in the present world. S. E. Shaker argues that she has students work on the integrated curriculum in projects in which various knowledge is utilized not only to solve problems but also to train students to integrate knowledge in many relationships. This strategy is also closer to the cognitive processes that human beings use, which is actively searching for the interconnections of information. Wiggins further argues that integrated curriculum helps the students prepare for the multifaceted realities that often require some form of integration (Alkouatli, 2021). Thus, the introduction and integration of the problem-based curricula will not compromise the objectives of the school, but bring greater levels of focus to how learning is facilitated in order to achieve objectives sought after.

Even so, the delivery of an integrated curriculum in Islamic education is still a work in progress which requires more exploration. The study argues that there is a “gap” where a lot have been said or written about learning through the integrated curriculum of Islamic education without emphasis on how this can actually be done. Because of the above reasons, this study aims in so a manner the efforts by others have not been made to improve the quality of Islamic education using the integrated curriculum.

Research Method

In this study, researchers used the literature research method. This method is a research method that focuses on collecting and analysing data from existing written sources. (Firman, 2018); (Suyitno, 2021); (Jelahut, 2022).

Results and Discussion

Current Condition of Islamic Education

Islamic education, in this regard, can be alluded to as an organized and intended procedure of helping each person reach their fullest self development or progress stemming from the Islamic traditions. It aims at creating the individual who has a well-rounded development and which could handle the responsibility of a support system introduced by Allah on this earth (Irwan et al., 2024); (Tubagus et al., 2023). Instructional Islam is not purely a transfer of Islamic religious doctrines for acquisition of knowledge, it also seeks characteristics development, skill development and integration of Islam into all aspects of living. In this way, Islamic education seeks to create an educated society in which, people are able to think and solve problems of the world in a rightful way which is within the bounds of Islam or submissive to Allah SWT (Aslan & Shiong, 2023).

Islamic education at large endeavors to create a model citizen also referred to as insan kamil. Which includes the all-around development of the individual's talents and capabilities which encompasses spiritual, intellectual, emotional as well as physical sits a. The objectives of Islamic education will be instilling sincere love and belief to Allaah subhanahu wa ta'aala, building good personality based on the teachings of the Qur'aan and the Sunnah, enhancing the ability to think critically and analytically, equipping the students with necessary knowledge and skills for this life and the hereafter, and motivating them to be agents of positive social change (Nasution et al., 2022). In addition, Islamic education also has an objective of equipping learners with the capacity to fulfill their duty as apart of the khalifah of Allah on earth which is to cultivate the earth, and administer justice according to noble dictates of Islam. For this reason, the paramount target of Islamic education is to attain sa'adatuddarain in which a person will be successful in all aspects of life in the world as well as in the life after death through absolute submission and obedience to Allah SWT (Qadri et al., 2024).

There are many features of Islamic education which are unique and lessons can be drawn from other systems of education. Firstly, it includes everything and is about the wholeness of a person both in this world and in the hereafter. Secondly, it draws most of the knowledge from God's word (the Qur'an) and the practices of Prophet Muhammad SAW. Thirdly, it is the education where the cognitive, the spiritual, and the ethical are all given due attention. Fourthly, it is a comprehensive education system as it is available to all people irrespective of their ethnicity, and class (Hidayat et al., 2022). Fifth, such an education also has two objectives – achieving success in the temporal world as well as success in the hereafter. Sixth, it appreciates the role of science and technology but does not cross the boundary of Islamic ethos. Seventh, there is mother and child education, there is Islamic education and there is general education, there is no iceberg. Eighth, it also upholds the importance of inculcating values, character ethics, and behavior as part of the education system and delivery. Finally, it is an education

which is lifelong, going on through all the ages without being confined to formal education only (Ulum & Mun'im, 2023).

Implementation of Integrated Curriculum in Islamic Education

The implementation of Integrated Curriculum in Islamic Education is a holistic approach that aims to integrate Islamic values into all aspects of learning. This approach combines general science with Islamic teachings, so that there is no dichotomy between religious and worldly sciences (Basri & Abdullah, 2024). In its implementation, this integrated curriculum aligns subject matter with Islamic principles, integrates cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects in the learning process, and develops teaching methods that are in accordance with Islamic values (Muslim & Firdausia, 2021).

At the planning level, implementing an integrated curriculum involves developing syllabi and lesson plans that integrate Islamic concepts into general subjects. For example, in science lessons, teachers can relate scientific theories to relevant Qur'anic verses, showing the harmony between modern science and Islamic teachings. In history lessons, Islamic perspectives can be incorporated to provide a more comprehensive point of view. This planning also includes developing teaching materials that reflect the integration of Islamic values and general knowledge (Moslimany et al., 2024).

At the implementation stage, teachers play a key role in implementing an integrated curriculum. They are required to have a deep understanding of Islam and the subjects being taught, as well as the ability to integrate the two effectively (Khasanah, 2024). The teaching methods used should be varied and interactive, such as group discussions, collaborative projects and problem-based learning, all of which are underpinned by Islamic values. Teachers also need to create a supportive learning environment, where students can explore the relationship between science and Islamic teachings critically and creatively (Nurdiana et al., 2023).

Evaluation in the implementation of an integrated curriculum does not only focus on academic aspects, but also on students' character development and spiritual understanding. Assessment can include various forms, such as written tests, projects, portfolios and behavioural observations. It is important to assess the extent to which students can integrate general knowledge with Islamic values in their daily lives (Muharrom et al., 2023). Evaluation should also be conducted on the effectiveness of the curriculum itself, involving feedback from teachers, students and parents, for continuous improvement. With this comprehensive approach, the implementation of an integrated curriculum in Islamic education is expected to produce graduates who not only excel academically, but also have a strong Islamic character and are able to apply Islamic values in various aspects of life (Tandos, 2020).

In addition to the aspects previously mentioned, the implementation of an integrated curriculum in Islamic education also requires comprehensive system support.

This includes continuous professional development of teachers, provision of adequate learning resources and creation of a school culture that supports the integration of Islamic values (Isnawati et al., 2022). Schools need to organise regular training for teachers to improve their ability to integrate Islamic teachings with general subjects. In addition, school libraries should be equipped with books and learning materials that support this integrated curriculum (Salmon et al., 2024).

Parental and community involvement is also an important factor in the successful implementation of an integrated curriculum. Schools need to establish good communication with parents, explain the concept and objectives of the integrated curriculum, and involve them in the education process (Firdaus & Mardiana, 2024). This can be done through regular meetings, workshops or joint activities that enable parents to understand and support this learning approach. Community involvement, including religious leaders and professionals in various fields, can enrich students' learning experience through mentoring programmes, field trips or guest lectures (Sarmila et al., 2023); (Haddar et al., 2023).

The challenges in implementing an integrated curriculum cannot be ignored. One of the main challenges is the need for qualified human resources, especially teachers who have a deep understanding of Islam and are able to integrate it with general subjects. Other challenges include resistance to change from the traditional education system, limited financial resources to develop new curricula and learning materials, and the need to balance academic demands with spiritual development. Overcoming these challenges requires long-term commitment, careful planning and support from various stakeholders (Rochman, 2020).

In conclusion, the implementation of an integrated curriculum in Islamic education is a complex yet crucial endeavour to create a holistic and meaningful education system. This approach aims to produce a generation of Muslims who not only excel in knowledge and skills, but also have a strong Islamic character and are able to face the challenges of the modern world. The success of this implementation depends on close co-operation between various parties, including policy makers, school administrators, teachers, parents and communities. With a strong commitment and consistent implementation, an integrated curriculum in Islamic education can be an effective educational model in preparing a generation of Muslims who are qualified, have noble character, and are ready to contribute positively in a global society.

The Impact of the Integrated Curriculum on the Quality of Islamic Education

The effect the Integrated Curriculum has on the quality of Islamic Education can be appreciated in terms of four perspectives:

Firstly, Increased Holistic Understanding. The greatest influence the integrated curriculum has on students' comprehension lies in their retention and more acceptable holistic understanding. The majority of the students are able to apply Islamic values as

a way of life in diverse disciplines of learning. They begin to comprehend that Islam is not only about performance but about everything else. Consequently, students have wider views in which they are able to implement Islamic teachings in wider dimensions such as science and technology and other social areas (Anwar et al., 2023).

Secondly, Enhancement of Personality and Ethics. Through the use of integrated curriculum approach, students character and moral education is effectively reinforced. Values of Islam are integrated not only into learning but also into encouraging students to internalize appropriate patterns of relating towards education. In this manner, a generation that is not only book smart but possesses high moral and ethical intelligence is nurtured among the Muslims. There is observable influence on how students conduct themselves both in school and in the society (Putra & Aslan, 2019).

Third, Improving Relevance and Usefulness. The relevant scope of Islamic education enhances with the integrated curriculum. Students do not regard religious studies as an isolated subject and rather, they view it as an essential part of life. They get to understand how Islam is relevant in daily activities and in various occupations. This helps the students develop the interest to learn since they have the reason that whatever they are learning has purpose. Moreover, this strategy also equips students to meet the requirements of contemporary society without abandoning the Islamic religion (Anwar et al., 2023).

Fourth, Secure and Foster One's Self-Identity. The other positive effect of an integrated curriculum is the promotion of Muslim identity as well as the improvement of students' self-esteem. Such students take pride in their Islamic identity because they know how Islam is relevant and can be practiced along with the current science (Arvisais & Guidère, 2020). They acquire new appreciation of their religion and are actively able to interact with others through their faith. This is particularly pertinent in the age of globalization where Muslim students should be rooted in their identities yet remain constructive and proactive in the new and often foreign cultures with which they come into contact (Piri & Avarsin, 2022).

Fifth, Further Competences in Critical Thinking. The pedagogic praxis of such an approach promotes the acquisition of higher order thinking skills among the students. It is realized that by infusing the Islamic worldview into other subjects, the students are forced to synthesize, analyse and evaluate information from varying perspectives. This makes the students to develop higher order thinking skills suitable for the appreciation of the complex nature of problems at hand and tackling them in ways which are Islamically conforming. As a result there is a graduate from Islamic education who is relatively more capable of surviving the intellectual and moral aspects of the modern world (Mu'ammam & Muchtar, 2024).

Sixth, Advances in Interdisciplinary Cooperation. The incorporation of an integrated curriculum promotes an efficient cooperation of the teachers across the various subjects taught in the institutions. It makes the education system more flexible

and innovative. Teachers of both religious and general subjects cooperate in composing integrated teaching learning materials for the students which augments their learning. In addition, this collaboration works to balance the religious and secular aspects of science education rather effectively (Sulistiono et al., 2022).

Seventh, A Relevance to the Present. An integrated curriculum increases the relevance of Islamic education within the social context. Using integrative and flexible means gives way for the amendments of the curriculum to modern issues and technologies to be more seamless. This implies that Islamic education will always remain relevant and be able to keep up with changing needs of the technological and globalization era but still be central to Islam (Fauzi & Hamami, 2022).

Consequently, the effect of the integrated curriculum on the quality of Islamic education is both, important and one that encompasses many facets. This approach does not only promote overall comprehension and improve the character of the students, but also promote the importance of Islamic education in the present day society. A properly designed curriculum in Islamic education would cultivate a generation of Muslims who are well grounded in their identity, knowledgeable in the principles of the religion and competent to practice and uphold Islamic culture in different settings.

In addition, it also promotes critical and analytical thinking skills, supports cross disciplinary cooperation and broadens the scope of Islamic education accommodating development in the modern world. The outcome is that the provision of Islamic education becomes such that it is proactive, fits into the contemporary issues facing the globe and is beneficial to the learners while remaining within the boundaries of Islam.

As a result, the integrated curriculum will focus on addressing the existing challenges within Islamic education, in particular, helping graduates remain not only deeply religious, but also possess and be capable of utilizing knowledge and skills required in a fast-paced modern world and contribute in a productive way.

Challenges and Solutions in Implementing the Integrated Curriculum

The implementation of an integrated curriculum in Islamic education faces several significant challenges. One of the main challenges is resistance to change from educators and administrators who are used to the traditional system. Many teachers feel unprepared or reluctant to adopt new approaches that require integration across disciplines (Jamil et al., 2024). In addition, a lack of understanding of the concepts and benefits of an integrated curriculum may hinder its acceptance. To address this, a comprehensive training and professional development programme for educators is needed. Workshops and seminars can be organised to demonstrate the effectiveness of the integrated curriculum and provide practical guidance on its implementation (Alfarizi & Khozin, 2024).

Another significant challenge is limited resources, both in terms of integrated learning materials and supporting infrastructure. Many Islamic educational institutions, especially in less developed areas, may lack access to modern technology and teaching materials necessary for effective implementation of an integrated curriculum. The solution to this problem involves investing in the development of customised learning materials and improved technology infrastructure. Collaboration with educational publishers and digital content developers can help in creating resources that meet the needs of an integrated curriculum (Febriyenti & Jamilus, 2023).

The third challenge relates to assessment and evaluation. Traditional assessment systems are often not suitable for measuring the learning outcomes of an integrated curriculum that emphasises holistic understanding and application of knowledge across disciplines. It requires the development of new assessment methods that can measure not only factual knowledge, but also critical thinking skills, creativity and the ability to apply Islamic concepts in a broader context. The solution involves designing comprehensive assessment rubrics, implementing project-based assessment, and using student portfolios to capture various aspects of learning (Nemati et al., 2021).

Finally, the challenge of coordination and synchronisation among various stakeholders in the Islamic education system also needs to be addressed. This includes aligning expectations between educational institutions, religious authorities, governments and communities. The solution to this involves establishing cross-sectoral working groups that can facilitate dialogue and collaboration between the various parties (Achsin et al., 2021). The development of national guidelines for integrated curriculum implementation that are flexible and adaptable to local contexts can also help in creating alignment and consistency in its implementation across different Islamic education institutions (Faizah, 2023).

Thus, the implementation of an integrated curriculum in Islamic education does face various challenges, but these challenges can be overcome with a strategic and collaborative approach. Resistance to change can be overcome through effective training programmes. Limited resources can be overcome with appropriate investment and co-operation with various parties. Assessment systems can be updated to better reflect the objectives of the integrated curriculum. And coordination among stakeholders can be improved through dialogue and the development of common guidelines.

By implementing these solutions, Islamic education can move towards more effective implementation of an integrated curriculum that will produce graduates who have a holistic understanding of Islam and the ability to apply their knowledge in complex real-world contexts. While this process may require significant time and effort, the results will be invaluable in preparing a generation of Muslims who can face the challenges of the 21st century with a strong Islamic foundation and comprehensive understanding.

Conclusion

An integrated curriculum is a holistic model of education that has a lot of promise in enhancing the performance of Islamic education. An integrated curriculum capitalizes on different subject areas and relevant real-life situations to create a better understanding of Islam through religious studies. It also stimulates critical thinking, problem-solving and creative skills among learners which are very important in the modern world.

This notwithstanding, the paradigm shift towards the incorporation of cross-cutting issues in Islamic education faces a lot of hurdles, such as limited time and inertia among teachers, however these limitations can be addressed with proper planning. Islamic educational establishments can transition to the integrated model of syllabus design through proper training, proper funding, enhanced relevant mechanisms for assessment and good collaborations. In this way even the Islamic system of education can produce graduates with competent understanding of the ways of Islam and with skills of applying it in the developed world where there is coexistence of various cultures and traditions.

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