



Reconstructing the Paradigm of Multicultural Islamic Education: Assessing the Relevance of Equality Values in the Contemporary Curriculum

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Abstract

Amid globalization and increasing social polarization, Islamic education faces the challenge of not only focusing on ritual-formal aspects but also fulfilling its social function in responding to the reality of diversity. An exclusive paradigm of Islamic education is considered insufficient to address the demands of multicultural societies. This study aims to reconstruct the paradigm of Islamic education through a multicultural perspective by examining the relevance and integration of the values of equality, justice, and inclusivity within contemporary curricula. The research adopts a qualitative approach using library research methods, drawing on analyses of classical and modern Islamic education literature, curriculum policies, and theories of multicultural education. Data were analyzed through content analysis and discourse criticism. The findings indicate the need to shift learning approaches from dogmatic models toward dialogical-critical ones. While the value of equality in Islam has a strong theological foundation, its implementation remains constrained by narrow textual interpretations. Future research is recommended to investigate the empirical application of multicultural Islamic education paradigms in educational institutions.

Keywords: Islamic Education; Multiculturalism; Curriculum; Equality.

Abstrak

Di tengah globalisasi dan meningkatnya polarisasi sosial, pendidikan Islam dihadapkan pada tantangan untuk tidak hanya berfokus pada aspek ritual-formal, tetapi juga menjalankan fungsi sosialnya dalam merespons realitas keberagaman. Paradigma pendidikan Islam yang cenderung eksklusif dinilai kurang memadai dalam menjawab tuntutan masyarakat multikultural. Penelitian ini bertujuan merekonstruksi paradigma pendidikan Islam melalui perspektif multikulturalisme dengan menelaah relevansi dan integrasi nilai kesetaraan, keadilan, dan inklusivitas dalam kurikulum kontemporer. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi pustaka melalui analisis literatur pendidikan Islam klasik dan modern, kebijakan kurikulum, serta teori pendidikan multikultural. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis isi dan kritik wacana. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan perlunya pergeseran pendekatan pembelajaran dari model dogmatis menuju dialogis-kritis. Nilai kesetaraan dalam Islam memiliki dasar teologis yang kuat, namun implementasinya masih terkendala interpretasi teksual. Penelitian selanjutnya disarankan mengkaji penerapan empiris paradigma pendidikan Islam multikultural di lembaga pendidikan.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan Islam; Multikulturalisme; Kurikulum; Kesetaraan.

Introduction

Islamic education in the contemporary era is at a crossroads between upholding dogmatic traditions and responding to the demands of an increasingly diverse global society. As a value system, Islam essentially carries a universal message (rahmatan lil 'alamin), yet in practice, Islamic educational institutions often fall into an exclusivist approach that limits the space for dialectical exchange with diversity. Amidst a global reality marked by migration flows, the digital revolution, and intense cross-cultural encounters, narrow religious understandings have the potential to trigger social segregation and even radicalism.(Fastmadhi, Fastmadhi, & Fasmadhy, 2024)Therefore, the urgency to review or reconstruct the paradigm of Islamic education is an inevitability that cannot be postponed.

The main issue that arises is the gap between the ideals of Islamic teachings regarding human equality and the reality of the curriculum, which is often doctrinaire and provides little room for recognition of the "other." Islamic education tends to focus on strengthening internal group identities (in-group feelings), but sometimes neglects the development of multicultural intelligence, which is essential for national and state life.(Muqoyyidin & Widyaningsih, 2021). In fact, the history of classical Islamic civilization has proven that scientific progress and social stability were achieved through openness to various ethnic backgrounds, cultures, and ideas.

Reconstructing the paradigm of multicultural Islamic education does not mean changing the creed or sharia, but rather reforming the worldview in conveying these teachings. The values of equality (al-musawah) contained in the Qur'an need to be re-introduced into a more applicable curriculum structure. This includes transformations in teaching materials, more dialogical instructional methods, and more democratic teacher-student relationships. The contemporary curriculum should not be merely a cognitive pile of religious law, but must transform into an instrument of liberation that respects human dignity regardless of primordial differences.(Nasri, 2024).

This study argues that without systematic reconstruction efforts, Islamic

education will lose its social relevance and be deemed a failure in preparing a generation that is adaptive to plurality. The relevance of the value of equality in the contemporary curriculum must be measured by the extent to which such education can produce individuals who are not only ritually pious but also socially pious, namely those who are able to collaborate across differences for the common good.

Through this study, the author aims to explore in depth how the concept of multiculturalism can be organically integrated into Islamic education. Using a literature review approach, this article will analyze the challenges of integrating equality values into the current curriculum and offer a new conceptual framework for a more inclusive and humanistic Islamic education. This reconstruction is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of Islamic education that aligns with the spirit of the times, without uprooting the values of monotheism that serve as its primary foundation.

Research methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a library research approach. Given that the study focuses on paradigm reconstruction and value analysis, the primary data sources were explored through a search of relevant and credible literature. Primary data sources include authoritative texts on Islamic educational philosophy, contemporary Islamic education curriculum policy documents, and fundamental works on multicultural education theory. Secondary sources were obtained from scientific journal articles, books, and previous research findings that discuss the dialectic between religion and pluralism.(Baker, 2019).

Data collection techniques were conducted through documentation using systematic literature methods, namely identifying, classifying, and mapping key ideas related to the research variables. After the data was collected, the analysis process was carried out using content analysis and descriptive-philosophical analysis techniques.(Haryono, 2020)The researcher dissects normative Islamic concepts regarding equality and then juxtaposes them with the principles of

multicultural education to find common ground and a space for reconstruction. Deductive and inductive approaches are used interchangeably to draw comprehensive conclusions. Through this procedure, the research aims to produce a robust theoretical synthesis regarding the relevance of equality values within the structure of the Islamic education curriculum without neglecting the transcendental aspects of religious teachings.

Results and Discussion

Redefining the Paradigm of Islamic Education

Redefining the paradigm is a fundamental step to change the "perspective" of educational institutions and practitioners regarding the nature of religious teaching.(Munawaroh, 2025)In a multicultural context, this redefinition encompasses several essential shifts: First, from exclusivism to inclusivism-humanism. Islamic education has often been trapped in an exclusive "individual salvation" paradigm, where the primary focus is on distinguishing between one's own group (in-group) and other groups (out-group). This redefinition demands a shift in the perspective that Islamic education is an instrument for human dignity (humanism). Islam is no longer taught merely as a doctrine of a single truth that turns a blind eye to the existence of other beliefs, but rather as a teaching that respects the dignity of every human being as a caliph on earth.

Second, Education as a Consciousness of Plurality (Sunnatullah). The new paradigm views diversity (ethnicity, culture, religion) not as a threat to faith, but as God's decree (sunnatullah) that must be accepted and managed. Islamic education is redefined as a process to understand the wisdom behind these differences, in accordance with the spirit of Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13, namely to get to know each other (li-ta'arafu). Third, Transformation from Transfer of Knowledge to Transfer of Values. This redefinition shifts the focus of education from only accumulating memorization of religious texts (cognitive aspect) to internalizing universal values (affective and psychomotor aspects). Islamic

education must be able to transform values such as justice ('adl), equality (musawah), and compassion (rahmah) into students' real behavior when interacting with a pluralistic society. Fourth, Positioning Islam as a Dialogic Subject. In the old paradigm, Islam was often positioned as a static subject. Through this redefinition, Islamic education is positioned as a dialogic entity and open to developments in the times. This means that Islamic education is not allergic to democratic values, human rights and multiculturalism, but is able to absorb these positive values without losing its monotheistic identity.(Hidayat, Nafi'a, Hajam, Rozak, & Akbar, 2025).

This paradigm redefinition serves as a foundation for a curriculum that is no longer rigid. With an inclusive perspective, Islamic education will be able to produce a generation with both spiritual depth and social breadth.

Theological Roots of Equality (Al-Musawah) in the Curriculum

Theological roots are an effort to explore normative values from the primary sources of Islam (the Qur'an and Hadith) to serve as strong legitimacy in the development of an equitable curriculum. First, Tawhid as the Foundation of Human Equality. In Islamic theology, the concept of Tawhid (belief in the oneness of God) is not merely a statement about the oneness of God, but also a statement about human equality. Philosophically, if only God is Almighty, then all humans are automatically equal before Him. In the curriculum, this principle must be translated into the elimination of social hierarchy, racism, and gender discrimination. No one group should feel primordially "noble" over another.(Inayati et al., 2025)Second, the concept of Al-Musawah (Equality). The term Al-Musawah refers to the equal rights and dignity of every individual. This theological root refers to the word of God in QS. Al-Hujurat: 13, which emphasizes that differences in ethnicity and nation were created for mutual understanding (li-ta'arafu), not for mutual domination. The Islamic education curriculum must make this verse the spirit of the teaching material, so that students understand that the only measure of nobility is piety, which is substantial-spiritual,

not physical aspects or outward identity.(Jafar et al., 2025). Third, Respect for Human Existence (Karamah Basariyah). The next theological principle is Karamah Basariyah or human nobility. Islam views that every human child is born in a state of fitrah and is given honor by God (QS. Al-Isra: 70). In curriculum implementation, this means: a. Inclusiveness of Material: Providing space for the narrative that every individual, regardless of their background, has the same right to access knowledge and be treated fairly in the classroom. b. Gender Justice: Reviewing materials that are still gender biased and replacing them with a more equitable understanding of the roles of men and women in public and domestic spaces.(Arifian, nd)Fourth, Justice (Al-'Adl) as the Goal of Sharia. Equality cannot be separated from the value of justice. A curriculum based on the theological roots of al-musawah will always be oriented toward defending marginalized groups (mustad'afin). Islamic education must teach that being just is the religious commandment closest to piety, including being just to those with differing beliefs or political views.(MA, 2021)By placing Al-Musawah as the theological foundation, the Islamic education curriculum will no longer be discriminatory. Instead, it will become a transformative tool for developing individuals capable of viewing others as equal partners in humanity.

Integration of Multicultural Values in Teaching Materials

Integrating multicultural values into teaching materials does not mean adding new subjects, but rather restructuring and reorienting existing content. This aims to ensure that Islamic education materials are not merely theoretically exclusive but also responsive to diverse social realities. First, the Contributions Approach. At this stage, teaching materials begin to incorporate narratives about Muslim figures from various ethnic, cultural, and geographic backgrounds. For example, in the history of Islamic civilization, not only Arab figures are highlighted but also the role of scholars and scientists from the Indonesian archipelago, Africa, Persia, and even China. This instills in students an awareness that Islam belongs to the world (a global identity) and is built on cultural diversity.(MA, 2021)Second, the Additive Approach. Educators add literature,

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concepts, or themes about tolerance (tasamuh), peace (sulh), and moderation (wasathiyah) to the curriculum without changing its basic structure. For example, in Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh), a chapter is added on the ethics of interacting with non-Muslims (muamalah ma'a ghair al-muslimin) or the rights of citizens in a pluralistic society.(Indarwati et al., 2023)Third, the Transformation Approach. This is the deepest level of integration. Teaching materials are restructured to allow students to view issues, events, and themes from different perspectives. Students are not only taught a single theological perspective but are also encouraged to understand how Islam views diversity as a richness. For example, when discussing the "Medina Charter," students are invited to analyze how the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) established a just social contract for adherents of various faiths.(Huda et al., 2025)Fourth, Internalization of Global Ethical Values. Teaching materials are oriented to link Islamic values with global ethics, such as environmental justice, human rights, and gender equality. In this way, students learn that Islamic values are highly relevant in solving broad humanitarian problems, transcending religious boundaries.

This integration ensures that the curriculum is no longer rigid. Through multicultural materials, students learn not only about "what" they believe, but also "how" to coexist harmoniously with those of different faiths.(Al-Hasani, 2024).

Reconstruction of Learning Methods (Dialogical Pedagogy)

Reconstructing learning methods is a crucial step because an inclusive curriculum will be ineffective if delivered using authoritarian methods. In multicultural Islamic education, the learning paradigm must shift from a "banking" system of education to a dialogic pedagogy.(Apriliani et al., 2023)For example, first, replacing monologue with dialogue. In traditional methods, teachers are often considered the sole source of truth (monologue). Dialogic pedagogy positions teachers and students as partners in the search for truth. Teachers no longer simply dictate doctrine, but facilitate discussions where students are free to ask questions and express opinions regarding the reality of diversity around them. Second,

developing critical thinking. Dialogic pedagogy encourages students to analyze religious texts contextually. Students are encouraged to think critically: "How can the value of compassion in this verse be practiced when we interact with friends of different ethnicities or religions?" This trains students not to easily accept raw information or hate narratives that often appear in public spaces. Third, the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) method based on real cases. This method brings social issues into the classroom. For example, students are given a case study of a conflict in a region or an issue of discrimination, then they are asked to find a solution based on the principles of multicultural Islam. This trains empathy and conflict resolution skills from an early age. Fourth, creating a "safe space" for differences. This reconstruction of the method requires the classroom to be a space where differences of opinion are valued. Educators must be able to manage debates without ending them with justification for one side. The goal is not to equate all beliefs, but rather to build awareness that we can have different opinions but remain united in humanity. Fifth, Cooperative Learning Across Backgrounds. This method involves group work intentionally designed to mix students from different backgrounds (if possible within the school context). Through collaboration on tasks, students naturally learn about cooperation, negotiation, and respect for others' perspectives.(Harianto, 2020) Dialogic pedagogy transforms Islamic education from mere textual instruction to lived experience. Students not only learn about tolerance, but they also practice it through classroom interactions.

The Role of Teachers as Multicultural Role Models

In Islamic education, the teacher is not merely a teacher (mu'allim), but also a character educator (murabbi) and role model (uswah). Curriculum reconstruction will not address students' affective aspects unless it is accompanied by a transformation in teacher behavior in practicing multicultural values.(Abin, 2024). Among the values are: First, Teachers as Manifestations of Inclusivity. Teachers must be the first to demonstrate an open attitude towards differences. Before teaching tolerance to students, teachers must first rid themselves of prejudice against certain groups, sects, or ethnicities. When a teacher is able to

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appreciate differences of opinion in the classroom, students will see that inclusivity is a living value, not just a theory in a textbook. Second, Multicultural Competence of Educators. Teachers must have a high level of cultural awareness. This includes a. Knowledge: Understanding students' socio-cultural backgrounds. b. Skills: Being able to communicate effectively without offending students' primordial identities. c. Attitude: Demonstrating empathy and fairness in providing assessments without being influenced by students' personal backgrounds.(Light, 2022). Third, Moderation in Religious Interpretation. As role models, teachers play a crucial role in presenting moderate religious interpretations (wasathiyah). Teachers must be able to explain seemingly "harsh" religious texts using a contextual and historical approach, so that students do not misunderstand the concept of jihad or relations with non-Muslims. Teachers serve as filters to ensure that students' religious understanding remains within the corridors of humanity. Fourth, Creating a Democratic Class Ecosystem. Teachers are tasked with fostering an egalitarian classroom atmosphere. In every interaction, teachers must ensure that no student feels marginalized because of their social status or abilities. By treating all students as equal subjects, teachers are practically planting the seeds of equality (al-musawah). Fifth, Consistency Between Words and Actions. Exemplary behavior (uswah hasanah) requires consistency. If teachers teach about peace but display discriminatory attitudes or frequently make statements that demean other groups, the multicultural message in the curriculum will lose its legitimacy. Teachers who are successful as role models are those who are able to become a "bridge" for the various differences that exist.(Andriani & Natsir, 2019)Teachers are the "living curriculum." Without teachers with a multicultural spirit, even the most sophisticated curriculum will be merely an administrative document without the power to transform society.

Conclusion

Reconstructing the paradigm of Islamic education based on multiculturalism is a strategic step and an urgent need amidst the complexity of

today's global life. Based on the analysis that has been conducted, several key points can be concluded as follows: 1. Paradigm Transformation: Islamic education must shift from an exclusivist-dogmatic model to an inclusivist-humanist paradigm. Diversity is no longer seen as a threat, but rather as sunnatullah (God's decree) that must be managed for the common good. 2. Strong Theological Foundation: The value of equality (al-musawah) is firmly rooted in the concept of Tawhid. The awareness that humans are equal before God must be the spirit of every curriculum policy, which eliminates all forms of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, or social status. 3. Systematic Curriculum Integration: The integration of multicultural values is carried out not by changing creeds, but through a contribution approach, additives, and transformation of teaching materials. This allows students to understand Islam as a religion that accommodates cultural diversity and universal human values. 4. Changes in Methodology and the Role of Educators: The success of this reconstruction depends heavily on the implementation of dialogical pedagogy that encourages critical thinking and the role of teachers as role models. Teachers are "living curriculum" who must practice the values of tolerance in real life within the learning ecosystem. 5. With the implementation of this reconstruction, Islamic education will remain relevant in responding to the challenges of the times. It will not only produce individuals who are spiritually devout towards God, but also socially devout individuals, who are capable of becoming agents of peace in a pluralistic world society.

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