

DISCOURSE OF CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC EDUCATION: DICHOTOMY, ISLAMIZATION, AND INTEGRATION OF SCIENCE

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Abstract

This study examines the discourse of contemporary Islamic education in facing the challenges of the dichotomy of science, the Islamization movement, and the paradigm of scientific integration. Using a qualitative-descriptive approach with the library research method, data was obtained from secondary sources such as books, journal articles, and other relevant documents. The research location is conceptual, based on the study of the scientific literature. The data collection technique is carried out through documentation, then analyzed with content analysis techniques to identify the main themes and build a conceptual construction. The results of the study show that the dichotomy between religious science and general science is a historical problem that has caused dualism in the Islamic education system. The Islamization movement emerged as a reaction to secularism, but faced challenges in its application. As a more applicable response, the integration paradigm has begun to be applied in a number of Islamic universities in Indonesia, such as UIN and IAIN, in the form of an integrated curriculum and institutional restructuring. Although promising, the implementation of science integration faces obstacles such as academic resistance, lack of integrative training, and a scientific culture that has not yet been supportive. This study concludes that contemporary Islamic education needs to be integrative, transformative, and adaptive to the times. Systemic and sustained efforts are needed to strengthen the paradigm of integration in all aspects of Islamic education.

Keywords

Contemporary Education, Dichotomy, Islamization, Integration, Science.



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INTRODUCTION

Islamic education has played a historically significant role in shaping the civilization of the Islamic world, especially when science and religion are integrated into one intact epistemological system. The golden era of Islamic civilization, such as the time of the Abbasid Dynasty, witnessed the successful integration of religious and general sciences, which produced Muslim scholars such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Al-Ghazali. However, this glory slowly faded along with the intervention of colonialism, the dominance of secular thought, and changes in the internal politics of Muslims. Since the 12th century, the Islamic world has witnessed the emergence of a dichotomy between religious science and general science, resulting in the division of the education system and the birth of dualism in educational institutions (Syarif, 2020). This condition continues into the modern era, including in Indonesia, where institutions such as madrasas, pesantren, and public schools stand in separate systems and are often not integrated conceptually or structurally.

This problem of educational dichotomy gives rise to various intellectual and practical responses. One of the responses that is quite prominent is the idea of the Islamization of science, which emerged in the late 20th century, pioneered by thinkers such as Ismail Raji al-Faruqi and Syed Naquib al-Attas. This movement aims to restore knowledge to the basis of monotheism and Islamic values and correct the dominance of secular Western epistemology in the Muslim education system. However, the Islamization of science cannot be separated from criticism because of its overly philosophical orientation and its difficulties in practical application in educational institutions (Al Illahiyah et al., 2025; Yaacob & Haron, 2024). In response to the limitations of this approach, the idea of integration of knowledge was born, which seeks to unite religious and general sciences in an integrated, applicative, and contextual system. The integration of knowledge is the meeting point between normative and practical approaches in formulating a new paradigm of Islamic education that meets the demands of the times.

Several previous studies have made important contributions to mapping this discourse. It highlights the importance of integrating knowledge in overcoming the epistemological crisis of Muslims and emphasizes the philosophical aspect of education. (Akrim, 2023; Kosim et al., 2023; Saada, 2022) Review the dynamics of educational dichotomy and suggest the role of Islamic higher education institutions in encouraging paradigm shifts. (Rosyidin & Arifin, 2021; Suban et al., 2021; Sumiati & Tekke, 2024) Researched the integration implementation at UIN Sunan Kalijaga and found challenges in academic culture and institutional resistance. (Bahri & Suparto, 2025; Dewi & Alam,

2020; Rahimi & Oh, 2024) Added the perspective that scientific integration also touches on aspects of the curriculum and character development of students facing globalization's challenges. Although conceptually rich, most of these studies are still limited to normative aspects or institution-specific case studies, and have not yet elaborated a comprehensive and systemic integrative approach.

In this context, a research gap needs to be bridged, namely the need for a comprehensive study that not only examines philosophical and historical aspects but also highlights the dynamics of implementation, practical challenges, and the direction of reform of Islamic education in Indonesia more broadly. The novelty of this research lies in its approach that brings together three main issues at once—dichotomy, Islamization, and integration—in one evaluative, conceptual, and applicative framework. This research discusses the big idea of science integration and evaluates how the paradigm has national implications for the curriculum, institutions, and orientation of contemporary Islamic education.

The primary purpose of this study is to formulate the direction of the development of contemporary Islamic education that is integrative, transformative, and adaptive to the realities of the times. This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to developing a holistic Islamic education paradigm and provide a practical reference for Islamic educational institutions at various levels in building a curriculum and governance that synergizes between Islamic values and the development of modern science. With this approach, Islamic education can emerge as a transformative force that not only preserves the Islamic scientific heritage but also forms a generation of competent, critical, and globally minded Muslims.

METHOD

This research uses qualitative research with a descriptive approach, which aims to deeply understand the phenomenon of dichotomy, Islamization, and integration of science in the context of contemporary Islamic education (Zed, 2014). This approach was chosen because it can contextualize and interpret phenomena based on textual and conceptual data. The primary method used is *library research*, which allows researchers to search, record, and analyze various ideas and dynamics of scientific thought from authoritative written sources.

The data sources in this study consist of secondary data collected from various scientific references, such as academic books, national and international journal articles, previous research results, and other electronic documents relevant to the dichotomy issue of science, the Islamization

movement, and the model of scientific integration. Data were obtained through a systematic and thematic document search process, considering the relationship between the substance of the literature and the focus of the research study.

The data analysis technique is carried out using *the content analysis method*, which includes the stages of data reduction to filter relevant information, thematic categorization to group key concepts, presentation of data in the form of structured narratives, and drawing conclusions based on the relationships and patterns between concepts found in the literature. Through this approach, the research is expected to compile a complete conceptual construction regarding the direction, challenges, and implications of integrating science in contemporary Islamic education theoretically and practically (Purwono et al., 2019).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The historical journey of Islamic education is not linear, but full of complex and layered dynamics. One of the most significant aspects is the paradigm shift in viewing the relationship between religious science and general science. The three major concepts that emerged in the discourse of contemporary Islamic education—namely dichotomies, Islamization, and the integration of knowledge—represent historical phases that became turning points in the evolution of Islamic educational thought and practice, especially in Indonesia. To understand this development systematically, the following summarizes the evolution of Islamic educational discourse based on its aspects, historical periods, and characteristics.

Table 1. The Evolution of Contemporary Islamic Education Discourse

No	Aspects	Historical Stages	Ciri Khas
1	Dichotomy	Post-12th century	Separation of religious and scientific sciences; Dominance of a purely secular or religious curriculum
2	Islamization	Early 20th century	The idea of Muslim figures in uniting knowledge and faith as a reaction to secularism
3	Integration	The Reform Era to the Present	Integrated curriculum paradigm at UIN/IAIN; Synthesis of Religious and General Sciences

Remarks: This table shows the stages of the evolution of Islamic educational thought from segregation to scientific synthesis.

The dichotomy phase began after the 12th century, when religious and general sciences began to be strictly separated in the Islamic education system. This separation was reinforced by the

influence of colonialism and secularism, which imposed the dominance of secular Western curricula in the formal education system. As a result, two types of graduates were born who tended to be isolated: scholars unfamiliar with science and modern scientists detached from Islamic spirituality values. This dualism is an epistemological challenge firmly rooted in the body of Islamic education today.

In response to this fragmentation, a movement for the Islamization of science emerged in the early 20th century. Figures such as Ismail Raji al-Faruqi and Syed Naquib al-Attas pioneered this concept to restore knowledge to the roots of Islamic values and the balance between faith and reason. The idea of Islamization offers a new reading of science that is not just free of value, but is bound by the principles of monotheism. Although theoretically rich, the Islamization of science faces challenges in its practical implementation, especially in developing a curriculum and learning system that is truly applicable.

It was only in the Reform era that the discourse on the integration of knowledge began to find a place in the institutional realm of Islamic higher education, especially at the State Islamic University (UIN) and the State Islamic Institute (IAIN). This integration paradigm theoretically unites religious and general science and begins to be implemented in curriculum, institutional structure, and pedagogical approaches. UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, and UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang are pioneers in implementing an integrated curriculum model, where the synthesis between modern science and Islam is no longer limited to discourse but becomes the basis of contextual and transformative education.

However, the analysis results show that although the integration paradigm has been institutionally adopted, its implementation still faces various challenges. Problems such as lecturer resistance, lack of integrative training, and the dominance of traditional approaches in teaching are still real obstacles. Not all study programs can translate integration into the syllabus and learning methods. Therefore, although integration is considered the most progressive phase in the evolution of contemporary Islamic education, its success remains highly dependent on policy support, the quality of human resources, and the reconstruction of an integrative academic culture.

Discussion

The scientific dichotomy in Islamic education represents a deep-rooted epistemological issue that has persisted for centuries. The rigid separation between religious sciences and general sciences has led to fragmentation within the educational system, resulting in two largely disconnected

intellectual communities: religious scholars who often lack sufficient understanding of science and technology, and scientists who operate without a grounding in Islamic spiritual and ethical values. This divide has been further intensified by the enduring impact of colonialism and the widespread adoption of secular Western education models in many Muslim-majority countries, including Indonesia. These systems tend to marginalize the role of religion in academic discourse and knowledge production. Consequently, Islamic education has been pushed to the periphery, losing its historical role as a holistic source of integrated knowledge, faith, and ethical practice—a role it prominently held during the golden age of classical Islamic civilization, when knowledge was pursued in unity with divine guidance and moral purpose (Afriyanto, 2023, 2023; Ismail, 2022).

In response to this fragmentation between revelation and reason, prominent Muslim scholars such as Ismail Raji al-Faruqi and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas initiated the movement for the Islamization of science. This intellectual project seeks to restore the intrinsic harmony between divine revelation and human reason, which has been increasingly separated in the modern secular paradigm. The Islamization of science is not an attempt to reject modern scientific advancements or rational inquiry, but rather to realign scientific knowledge and methodologies with the ethical, metaphysical, and spiritual principles rooted in tawhid (the concept of divine unity). Within the educational context, this movement aspires to reformulate scientific epistemology to remain faithful to the Islamic worldview while engaging critically and constructively with contemporary scientific thought. It envisions an integrated knowledge system that upholds both intellectual rigor and moral responsibility, aiming to produce scholars and practitioners who are scientifically competent, spiritually conscious, and ethically guided (Bhat & Bisati, 2025; Fouz Mohamed Zacky & Moniruzzaman, 2024; Habibi, 2024). Despite having a strong philosophical foundation, this approach is considered too normative and challenging to translate into an operational and flexible curriculum in the modern academic world.

Therefore, the paradigm of science integration is a more applicable conceptual offer in answering the dichotomy problem. Integration speaks of the harmonization of values and touches on the structural and curricular dimensions of education. State Islamic University (UIN) Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta are pioneers in implementing this paradigm. Their curriculum and curriculum structure integrate Islamic studies with the social sciences, humanities, and sciences. However, as revealed, (Mutebi, 2019; Shields & Hesbol, 2020; Simpungwe, 2024) integration implementation faces serious obstacles regarding lecturer human

resource readiness, academic resistance to paradigm changes, and the lack of a scientific culture that supports epistemological synthesis.

Theoretically, integrating science within the Islamic tradition involves the synthesis of two major epistemological domains: *bayani* (knowledge derived from revelation) and *burhani* (knowledge derived from reason), as articulated by scholars such as Muhammad Abed al-Jabiri. This integrative model rejects the two domains' complete segregation and uncritical fusion. Instead, it emphasizes the complementary relationship between revelation and reason, wherein each enriches and supports the other to form a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of reality. This theoretical foundation necessitates a curriculum beyond compartmentalized or thematic courses in academic practice. It calls for an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach that facilitates genuine conceptual dialogue between Islamic sciences and contemporary scientific disciplines. Such an approach aims to cultivate scholars capable of navigating both religious and scientific realms with intellectual depth and ethical awareness (Hakim et al., 2025; Ilaina et al., 2022; Rusli, 2023).

The findings of this study corroborate the results of the studies of Wasilah (2020) and Durachman et al. (2021), which affirm that the renewal of Islamic education is not enough only on scientific content, but must also include a holistic and humanist pedagogic orientation. An integrative curriculum must ultimately aim at the holistic development of students, shaping individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also possess a strong sense of ethics, deep spiritual awareness, and genuine social responsibility. This comprehensive approach to education seeks to balance cognitive excellence with moral and emotional intelligence. Therefore, integrated Islamic education should be carefully designed to respond effectively to the complex challenges posed by globalization and the digital age, while maintaining its distinctive scientific and religious identity. Rather than being reactive or imitative, such an educational model should be proactive in cultivating future leaders who can navigate the modern world with critical thinking and a firm grounding in Islamic values (Jannah & Lestari, 2024; Ridwan & Maryati, 2024; Safira et al., 2023)(Ridwan & Maryati, 2024).

However, this study also highlights a critical response to earlier approaches that excessively emphasized textual Islamization, often neglecting the sociological and cultural contexts of the learners. In contrast, the paradigm of scientific integration offers a more adaptive and context-sensitive framework, as it allows for a dynamic and evolving interpretation of knowledge. This paradigm rejects both the absolutization of secular Western science and the rigid traditionalism of

an ahistorical Islamic worldview. Instead, it envisions integration not as a mere compromise, but as a constructive effort to reconstruct an epistemological foundation that bridges the legacy of the Islamic intellectual tradition with the demands of contemporary and future challenges. In this way, integrated knowledge becomes a means of revitalizing Islamic education, anchored in faith, yet responsive to the realities of the modern world (Rahman, 2025; Ritonga & Saputra, 2025; Ruhullah & Ushama, 2024).

One of the key points of these findings is the importance of reforming academic culture in Islamic educational institutions. Implementing science integration will not be successful only at the written curriculum level (Al Mahdiy in et al., n.d.; Arifin & Mufida, 2023; Khoeriyah, 2019). A comprehensive transformation in education cannot rely solely on changes to the curriculum; it must also be supported by a fundamental shift in learning methods, the development of lecturer capacities, and the creation of an academic environment that fosters dialogue between religious and general sciences. Learning methods should move toward more interactive, collaborative, and contextual approaches, integrating spiritual values with modern scientific knowledge. As key agents of change, Lecturers must be equipped with continuous training and capacity-building initiatives to facilitate interdisciplinary learning effectively. Moreover, the academic environment must encourage the establishment of open and critical spaces for dialogue, where the integration of religious and general sciences can occur constructively and harmoniously. Research methodologies should also evolve, combining contemporary scientific approaches based on data and rational analysis while remaining grounded in spiritual and ethical principles. In this way, an educational ecosystem can be built that produces intellectually capable graduates and individuals who possess strong moral and spiritual integrity.

Thus, this study affirms that integrating knowledge is the most realistic and strategic stage in answering the crisis of scientific dichotomy in contemporary Islamic education (Fitri et al., 2022; Junaedi & Wijaya, 2021; Nurdin, 2020). In contrast to the normative-philosophical Islamization approach, integration is more operational in the context of higher education. However, the success of this approach depends heavily on institutional political will, government policy support, and the courage of the Islamic academic community to get out of the comfort zone of scientific dualism. In this framework, integrating knowledge is not just an educational strategy, but a civilization project that demands a sincerity of vision and cross-disciplinary collaboration.

CONCLUSION

Contemporary Islamic education faces complex challenges in the form of globalization flows, scientific fragmentation, and paradigm crises that obscure the relationship between spiritual values and the development of modern science. In this context, an integrative approach emerged as a solution that could answer the historical problem of the dichotomy of science and became an important foundation for Islamic education reform. This approach not only requires a curriculum overhaul but also requires the presence of policies that support systemic and sustainable scientific integration at all levels of education, from madrassas to Islamic universities. Strengthening the capacity of lecturers and teachers in understanding and applying the integrative paradigm is also a crucial aspect so that change does not stop at the level of discourse, but is reflected in complete and meaningful learning practices. In line with that, curriculum development must be directed at the synthesis between Islamic values and modern science in a harmonious, contextual, and applicative manner. To enrich the empirical basis and implementation practice, follow-up studies need to be carried out with a comparative approach between Islamic educational institutions, so that the portrait of the success and challenges of science integration can be analyzed more deeply and relevant to their respective local contexts.

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