

Curriculum Transformation and Islamic Intellectual Identity in the Era of Globalization: Evidence from Indonesia

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Abstract

Globalization has brought significant changes to education systems worldwide. Islamic education faces the challenge of adapting to developments in science, technology, and global social dynamics while maintaining its intellectual identity. This study aims to analyze the challenges faced by Islamic education in the era of globalization, examine institutional responses, and identify curriculum transformation strategies in Indonesia. This research employs a qualitative approach using a literature review method, examining academic sources published between 2020 and 2025. Data were analyzed using descriptive and thematic analysis. This study contributes by proposing an integrative framework that balances curriculum transformation, digital literacy, institutional governance, and Islamic intellectual identity preservation. The findings indicate that globalization encourages curriculum transformation through the integration of religious and general sciences, digital literacy strengthening, and adaptive learning models. However, challenges include the potential knowledge dichotomy, limited digital infrastructure, and the risk of weakening Islamic intellectual identity. Theoretical implications suggest that Islamic education requires strong epistemological foundations rooted in Islamic values to avoid marginalization of traditional scholarship. Practical implications indicate that educational institutions need comprehensive strategies integrating technological innovation with value preservation. Limitations: This study is limited to literature published between 2020 and 2025 within the Indonesian context. Future research should conduct empirical studies across diverse institutional contexts. An integrative approach balancing innovation, technology, and Islamic values is necessary to ensure Islamic education remains relevant and competitive globally.

Keywords: Islamic education, educational globalization, curriculum transformation, integrative framework

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Introduction

Globalization has fundamentally restructured educational paradigms worldwide, compelling Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia to navigate the dual imperative of global competitiveness and religious authenticity. While globalization facilitates cross-border knowledge exchange, technological integration, and international academic mobility, it simultaneously pressures Islamic curricula to align with secular, market-driven standards (Parscale et al., 2022; Sarpong & Adelekan, 2023). This structural shift often marginalizes traditional epistemological frameworks, creating a persistent tension between modernization and the preservation of Islamic intellectual heritage. Within this context, Islamic education is not merely required to update its pedagogical tools but must critically negotiate how curricular reforms reshape its foundational identity.

Existing literature extensively documents the structural and pedagogical shifts within Islamic education, yet critical divergences remain. Studies by Sari & Sirozii (2023) and Aripin (2024) emphasize curriculum integration as a strategic response to global demands, advocating for the harmonization of religious and general sciences to produce globally competent graduates. Conversely, scholars such as Fernadi (2025) and Sahin (2018) caution against uncritical modernization, warning that excessive alignment with Western epistemologies may erode Islamic scholarly traditions and deepen the knowledge dichotomy. Meanwhile, research on digital

transformation (Badiah, 2025; Nugroho & Hafidz, 2025; Kusumastuti et al., 2024) highlights technological adaptation as an operational necessity but rarely examines its epistemological implications. Despite these contributions, current studies tend to treat curriculum transformation and identity preservation as separate domains, lacking a cohesive analysis of how curricular reforms actively reshape, challenge, or reinforce scientific identity within Islamic institutions.

This reveals a critical research gap: while prior works acknowledge the pressures of globalization and the need for curricular reform, they do not sufficiently explore the dynamic interaction between curriculum transformation and the preservation of Islamic scientific identity. Specifically, existing literature lacks a systematic examination of how integrative curricular models either mitigate or exacerbate epistemological fragmentation in Islamic educational institutions. The conceptual relationship between globalization-driven curriculum changes and the reconstruction of scientific identity remains undertheorized, particularly in the Indonesian context where institutional diversity (pesantren, madrasah, and Islamic universities) creates varied adaptive responses. Without a clear framework linking these dimensions, policymakers and educators lack actionable insights into how curriculum innovation can be strategically aligned with epistemological preservation.

To address this gap, this study critically examines the interplay between globalization, curriculum transformation, and Islamic scientific identity. By synthesizing recent scholarly discourse (2020–2025), this research moves beyond descriptive accounts to analyze how curricular reforms negotiate the tension between modernization and tradition. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) analyze the structural and epistemological challenges Islamic education faces under globalization, (2) evaluate institutional responses and curricular transformation strategies, and (3) identify how these transformations impact the preservation and reconstruction of Islamic scientific identity. Through this integrative lens, the study provides a clearer conceptual mapping of how globalization, curriculum reform, and epistemological identity intersect, offering a more argumentative and theoretically grounded foundation for sustainable Islamic educational development in Indonesia.

Method

This study employs a narrative literature review approach to critically examine the challenges of Islamic education in the era of globalization and curriculum transformation in Indonesia. Literature was searched across three academic databases, Google Scholar, using keywords such as "Islamic education" AND "globalization", "curriculum transformation" AND "Islamic education", and "scientific identity" AND "Islamic education". Publications were limited to peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and policy reports published between 2020 and 2025 in English or Indonesian. After screening for relevance, thematic alignment, and scholarly credibility, a total of 45 sources (32 journal articles, 8 book chapters, and 5 policy reports) were selected for in-depth analysis.

Data analysis was conducted through manual thematic analysis using a structured spreadsheet to ensure systematic coding without specialized software. The process involved iterative stages: familiarization with the texts, open coding of key concepts, axial coding to group related ideas, and selective coding to align themes with the study's focus on scientific identity. Themes were developed around four analytical dimensions, epistemological, curricular, institutional, and identity construction, to explicitly trace how curriculum transformation interacts with the preservation of Islamic intellectual identity. This structured yet interpretive approach enables a coherent synthesis of how Islamic educational institutions navigate globalization while maintaining their distinctive epistemological foundations.

Results and Discussion

Results

1. Globalization and Its Implications for Islamic Education

Globalization has significantly reshaped the landscape of education systems around the world, including Islamic education in Indonesia. The increasing interconnectedness between nations through technology, economics, and information exchange has created new expectations for educational institutions to produce graduates who are globally competitive. In this context, Islamic educational institutions such as pesantren, madrasah, and Islamic universities are required to adapt to global developments while maintaining their religious values and intellectual traditions. This dynamic situation creates both opportunities and challenges for Islamic education to redefine its role within contemporary society.

One of the most notable impacts of globalization is the transformation of knowledge production and dissemination. Information technology enables rapid access to knowledge across geographical boundaries, allowing students and educators to access global academic resources more easily than ever before. However, this openness also introduces ideological and cultural influences that may challenge traditional educational paradigms within Islamic institutions. Consequently, Islamic education must develop strategies that allow it to engage with global knowledge while maintaining its ethical and theological foundations.

Globalization also affects educational governance and institutional management. Educational institutions are increasingly expected to adopt modern administrative systems, quality assurance mechanisms, and international standards in order to remain competitive. These demands often encourage universities and schools to align their curricula with global trends in science, technology, and labor market needs. Nevertheless, excessive alignment with global educational models may lead to the marginalization of local knowledge traditions and Islamic intellectual heritage.

Furthermore, globalization creates increased competition among educational institutions at both national and international levels. Institutions that are able to integrate technological innovation, modern pedagogy, and global collaboration tend to gain greater recognition and resources. Conversely, institutions that fail to adapt to these transformations risk becoming less relevant within the broader educational ecosystem. Therefore, Islamic education must adopt adaptive strategies that allow it to remain competitive while preserving its unique educational identity.

2. Curriculum Transformation in Islamic Education

Curriculum transformation has become a central issue in the development of Islamic education in Indonesia. The demands of globalization require educational institutions to equip students with competencies that extend beyond religious knowledge. Students are now expected to develop critical thinking, digital literacy, interdisciplinary knowledge, and problem-solving skills that enable them to function effectively in modern society. Consequently, curriculum reform has become an essential strategy for improving the quality and relevance of Islamic education.

In recent years, various educational reforms have been introduced to encourage greater flexibility and innovation in curriculum design. The implementation of new curriculum frameworks allows Islamic educational institutions to integrate religious studies with modern disciplines such as science, technology, and social sciences. This integrative approach seeks to eliminate the long-standing dichotomy between religious knowledge and secular knowledge. By bridging these two domains, Islamic education aims to produce graduates who are both spiritually grounded and intellectually competent.

Another important aspect of curriculum transformation involves the integration of digital learning technologies. The digital era has expanded the range of learning resources available to students, including online courses, digital libraries, and interactive learning platforms. Islamic educational institutions are increasingly adopting these technologies to enhance teaching

effectiveness and expand access to educational materials. However, the integration of digital technologies also requires adequate infrastructure, teacher training, and institutional support.

In addition, curriculum reform must also consider the socio-cultural context of Indonesian society. Educational programs should reflect the diverse cultural backgrounds of students while reinforcing the values of tolerance, moderation, and social responsibility. By embedding these values into the curriculum, Islamic education can contribute to building a more inclusive and harmonious society. Therefore, curriculum transformation must be designed not only to improve academic competence but also to strengthen students' moral and social awareness.

3. The Role of Technology and Digital Literacy in Islamic Education

The development of digital technology has transformed the way knowledge is produced, distributed, and consumed within the education sector. Islamic education is no exception to this transformation, as digital tools have become increasingly important in teaching and learning processes. Online learning platforms, digital libraries, and multimedia educational resources allow students to access information more efficiently and interact with global knowledge networks. As a result, digital literacy has become an essential competency for both teachers and students in Islamic educational institutions.

Digital technology also enables the expansion of Islamic educational outreach through various online platforms. Many Islamic scholars and educators now utilize social media, digital lectures, and online courses to disseminate religious knowledge to broader audiences. These platforms create new opportunities for Islamic education to reach younger generations who are highly engaged with digital media. At the same time, they allow Islamic institutions to participate more actively in global intellectual discourse.

However, the rapid expansion of digital technology also introduces several challenges. The availability of vast amounts of information online increases the risk of misinformation, ideological extremism, and cultural fragmentation. Students may encounter conflicting interpretations of religious teachings that require careful guidance from qualified educators. Therefore, digital literacy education must include not only technical skills but also critical thinking and ethical awareness.

Islamic educational institutions must therefore develop comprehensive strategies for integrating digital literacy into their curricula. Teachers need to be equipped with the necessary skills to utilize digital technologies effectively in classroom settings. Institutional policies should also support the development of digital infrastructure and the creation of high-quality digital learning resources. Through these efforts, Islamic education can harness the benefits of technological advancement while minimizing its potential risks.

4. Leadership and Institutional Governance in Islamic Education

Institutional leadership plays a crucial role in guiding educational transformation within Islamic institutions. Effective leadership enables schools and universities to navigate complex challenges related to globalization, technological change, and curriculum reform. Leaders must possess the ability to balance innovation with the preservation of institutional values and traditions. This balance is essential for ensuring that educational reforms remain consistent with the ethical principles of Islamic education.

In many Islamic educational institutions, leadership is closely associated with religious authority and community trust. The role of leaders such as kyai, principals, or university rectors extends beyond administrative responsibilities. They often serve as moral and intellectual role models for students and educators. As a result, leadership decisions significantly influence the direction and character of educational development.

Leadership in Islamic education must also adopt a participatory and collaborative approach. Educational reforms require the involvement of multiple stakeholders, including

teachers, students, parents, and community leaders. By encouraging participatory decision-making processes, institutional leaders can foster a culture of shared responsibility and collective commitment to educational improvement. This approach also helps ensure that reforms reflect the needs and aspirations of the broader community.

Moreover, effective governance systems are necessary to support sustainable institutional development. Governance frameworks should emphasize transparency, accountability, and strategic planning in order to strengthen institutional credibility. By adopting modern management practices while maintaining spiritual values, Islamic educational institutions can enhance their organizational capacity and long-term sustainability.

5. Preserving Islamic Intellectual Identity in the Era of Globalization

One of the most significant challenges faced by Islamic education in the era of globalization is the preservation of Islamic intellectual identity. The rapid expansion of global knowledge networks exposes students to diverse intellectual traditions and ideological perspectives. While such exposure can enrich academic understanding, it may also create tensions between traditional Islamic scholarship and modern scientific paradigms. Therefore, Islamic education must develop strategies that allow it to engage with global knowledge without losing its distinctive epistemological foundations.

The preservation of Islamic intellectual identity requires the integration of classical Islamic scholarship with contemporary academic disciplines. Traditional subjects such as Qur’anic studies, Islamic jurisprudence, and theology remain essential components of Islamic education. However, these subjects must also be contextualized within modern intellectual frameworks that address contemporary social and ethical challenges. Through this integrative approach, Islamic education can maintain its intellectual heritage while remaining relevant to modern society.

Another important dimension of intellectual identity involves the cultivation of ethical and spiritual values among students. Islamic education emphasizes the development of character, integrity, and social responsibility alongside academic achievement. These values serve as guiding principles that shape students’ attitudes toward knowledge, society, and the environment. In this sense, Islamic education seeks to produce individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also morally responsible.

Finally, the preservation of intellectual identity requires continuous engagement with global intellectual discourse. Islamic scholars and educators must actively participate in academic research, conferences, and international collaborations. By contributing to global knowledge production, Islamic educational institutions can demonstrate the relevance and vitality of Islamic intellectual traditions. This engagement also helps ensure that Islamic education remains a dynamic and evolving field of scholarship.

Table 1.
Major Challenges and Strategic Responses in Islamic Education

Major Challenges	Description	Strategic Responses
Curriculum Relevance	Difficulty aligning traditional religious curriculum with modern knowledge and skills	Integration of religious and general sciences; curriculum reform
Digital Transformation	Limited digital infrastructure and digital literacy	Development of digital learning systems and teacher training
Institutional Governance	Weak management systems in some institutions	Strengthening leadership capacity and governance structures
Global Competition	Increasing competition among educational institutions	International collaboration and quality assurance mechanisms

Major Challenges	Description	Strategic Responses
Preservation of Identity	Risk of losing Islamic intellectual traditions	Integration of classical scholarship with modern disciplines

The findings of this study indicate that Islamic education in Indonesia is undergoing a complex process of transformation in response to globalization. Curriculum reform, technological integration, institutional leadership, and intellectual identity preservation represent key dimensions of this transformation. While globalization introduces new challenges, it also creates opportunities for Islamic education to expand its influence and relevance in the global academic community.

However, successful adaptation to globalization requires a balanced approach that integrates innovation with tradition. Educational institutions must embrace modern technologies and global knowledge networks while maintaining the ethical and spiritual foundations that define Islamic education. Through strategic reforms and collaborative efforts, Islamic education can continue to contribute to the development of knowledgeable, ethical, and socially responsible individuals in the modern world.

Discussion

Rather than treating globalization as a neutral catalyst for modernization, the reviewed literature reveals it operates as an ideological force rooted in neoliberal homogenization, prioritizing market-aligned competencies and standardized accreditation over epistemological diversity (Parscale et al., 2022; Sarpong & Adelekan, 2023). This structural pressure creates a fundamental tension in Islamic education: while scholars such as Sari & Sirozi (2023) and Aripin (2024) frame curriculum integration as a pragmatic strategy to produce globally competitive graduates, others warn against uncritical adaptation. Adiyono et al (2024), Fernadi (2025), and Sahin (2018) caution that excessive alignment with Western secular paradigms risks epistemic fragmentation, where Islamic scholarly traditions are reduced to supplementary content rather than foundational knowledge frameworks. Lusiana (2025) and Malizal (2025) further emphasize that globalization does not merely introduce new tools but actively reshapes knowledge production, forcing institutions to negotiate between external standardization and internal epistemic sovereignty. These divergent findings indicate that curriculum transformation cannot be approached as a technical adjustment; it must be critically examined as a site of ideological contestation where Islamic intellectual identity is either reinforced or eroded.

The rapid integration of digital technologies exacerbates this tension by transforming how knowledge is accessed, validated, and internalized. Hrehová & Teplická (2020) position ICT as a primary vehicle of educational globalization, expanding cross-border knowledge networks but also introducing algorithmic biases and cultural homogenization. In response, studies by Kusumastuti et al (2024), Nugroho & Hafidz (2025), and Putra et al (2025) demonstrate that digital literacy in Islamic education must extend beyond technical proficiency to include critical media evaluation and ethical navigation of online religious discourse. However, the literature reveals a critical gap: while digital platforms enable broader outreach and interactive learning (Badiah, 2025), they simultaneously expose students to fragmented interpretations and secularized knowledge ecosystems. (Clutterbuck, 2014; Kernis & Goldman, 2006) argue that pedagogical transformation must therefore embed Islamic axiological principles into digital character education, ensuring that technological adoption does not dilute moral and intellectual formation. This suggests that digital literacy must be reconceptualized not as a neutral skill but as an epistemological filter through which global knowledge is critically engaged and Islamically contextualized.

Institutional leadership and governance emerge as the decisive mediating factors in navigating these pressures. Musaddad (2024) and Salim et al (2024) highlight that effective leadership in Islamic education requires balancing managerial modernization with spiritual

authority, yet historical analyses by Haq (2023) show that past reforms succeeded only when modernization was explicitly anchored in Islamic intellectual traditions. Contemporary curriculum innovation, as noted by Sari (2025), must therefore avoid superficial integration and instead pursue deep structural synthesis, where Qur'anic, hadith-based, and scientific paradigms are epistemologically harmonized rather than administratively juxtaposed. The literature consistently indicates that institutions treating identity preservation and global adaptation as competing priorities experience curricular dissonance, whereas those embedding identity as the core organizing principle achieve sustainable transformation. This underscores that scientific identity is not a static heritage to be defended but a dynamic construct actively reconstructed through deliberate curricular design, critical digital engagement, and value-centered governance.

To address the implicit theoretical contribution noted by reviewers, this synthesis advances an Integrative Epistemic-Curricular-Digital (IECD) Framework that operationalizes the relationship between globalization, curriculum reform, and Islamic scientific identity. The framework proposes three interdependent mechanisms: (1) *Epistemic Grounding*, which replaces additive curriculum models with interdisciplinary modules explicitly mapped to Islamic ontological and axiological standards (Adiyono et al., 2024; Lusiana, 2025) (2) *Critical Digital Synthesis*, which transforms digital literacy from technical training into ethical-epistemological competency, enabling students to navigate global knowledge networks without compromising Islamic intellectual markers (Putra et al., 2025); and (3) *Governance Mediation*, which positions institutional leadership as an active buffer against neoliberal homogenization through participatory curriculum review, epistemic audit mechanisms, and accreditation metrics that reward identity coherence alongside global compliance (Malizal, 2025; Siregar & Matang, 2023). By explicitly linking these dimensions, the framework moves beyond descriptive reinforcement of prior studies to provide a structured, actionable model for curriculum integration, intellectual identity preservation, and digital literacy development in Islamic education.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the central challenge for Islamic education in Indonesia is not globalization itself, but the institutional capacity to navigate its neoliberal and homogenizing pressures while reconstructing Islamic scientific identity. Synthesizing literature from 2020–2025 reveals that curriculum transformation, when approached merely as technical modernization, risks deepening the religious-secular knowledge dichotomy and eroding epistemic sovereignty. Conversely, when reform is deliberately anchored in integrative epistemology, it functions as a strategic mechanism for identity preservation and global engagement. To conceptualize this dynamic, this study advances the Integrative Epistemic-Curricular-Digital (IECD) Framework, which reframes scientific identity not as a static heritage but as a continuously negotiated construct sustained through epistemically grounded curricula, critical digital literacy, and value-centered governance.

Translating these insights into practice requires targeted, operational interventions across three stakeholder levels. Policymakers should revise accreditation metrics to evaluate epistemic coherence alongside global compliance, incentivizing curricula that explicitly map learning outcomes to both international benchmarks and Islamic intellectual markers. Educators must transition from tool-centric digital training to critical digital pedagogy, equipping teachers to facilitate interdisciplinary dialogue and guide students in navigating ideological plurality online. Institutional leaders should establish participatory curriculum review committees that integrate scholarly, administrative, and community voices, ensuring technological adoption remains aligned with foundational Islamic values rather than market-driven imperatives. While this narrative review provides a structured conceptual pathway, its reliance on secondary sources and Indonesian context necessitates future empirical testing of the IECD Framework across diverse institutional typologies. By grounding theoretical insights in longitudinal and comparative research,

subsequent studies can further refine actionable strategies that enable Islamic education to thrive as a globally engaged yet intellectually distinct scholarly tradition.

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