

# THE TRANSFORMATION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<b>Article history:</b>  Received 16, 08, 2025 Revised 24, 08, 2025 Published 22, 09, 2025	This study explores the transformation of the Islamic education curriculum by comparing traditional and contemporary approaches. Using a qualitative literature review method, the research analyzes how traditional Islamic education emphasized religious sciences, memorization, and moral development, while contemporary curricula integrate modern sciences, technology, and critical thinking skills. The findings reveal that although modern approaches offer broader educational opportunities, challenges remain in maintaining strong Islamic values. A balanced curriculum that harmonizes spiritual grounding with modern competencies is essential for developing well-rounded Muslim individuals. This study highlights the importance of continuous innovation to ensure the relevance and integrity of Islamic education in a changing world
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## INTRODUCTION

Islamic education has undergone significant transformations over the centuries, evolving from the classical traditional models to more modern, contemporary approaches. This transformation reflects broader societal changes, including advancements in educational philosophy, technological progress, and the demands of an increasingly globalized world. The traditional Islamic education system, rooted in the classical methods of learning such as the study of the Qur'an, Hadith, and Islamic jurisprudence, prioritized memorization and direct interaction between teacher and student (Ibrahim dkk., 2024). It was a system primarily centered on the transmission of religious knowledge within a structured environment.

In contrast, contemporary Islamic education curricula have adapted to modern educational theories and methods, integrating subjects like science, mathematics, social studies, and even technology into the Islamic framework (Syarnubidkk., 2023). These changes aim to provide a more comprehensive education that meets the demands of modern society while maintaining the spiritual and ethical teachings of Islam. The introduction of modern pedagogical techniques, such as student-centered learning, and the use of technology in the classroom, have redefined the way Islamic education is delivered today (Nasir, 2021).

Despite these advancements, the shift from traditional to contemporary approaches has raised important questions about the preservation of Islamic values

in the modern curriculum. Critics argue that contemporary methods may dilute the spiritual and ethical essence of Islamic education, while proponents assert that integrating modern subjects with Islamic teachings can better prepare students for the challenges of the modern world (Moslimanydkk., 2024). This study seeks to explore these transformations in depth, comparing the key characteristics of both traditional and contemporary Islamic education curricula, and examining their implications for students' intellectual, moral, and spiritual development.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative approach based on a literature review method. Various books, journal articles, and previous studies were analyzed to compare traditional and contemporary Islamic education curricula. Data were collected through document analysis, focusing on historical, philosophical, and pedagogical aspects. The study emphasizes a comparative analysis to identify key differences, continuity, and the educational impacts of curriculum transformations. By synthesizing findings from various scholarly sources, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Islamic education has evolved and what challenges and opportunities arise from these changes.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **A. RESULTS**

#### **a. Key Characteristics of Traditional Islamic Education Curriculum**

Traditional Islamic education focused heavily on religious sciences such as the Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqh, and Arabic language. The learning process was teacher-centered, emphasizing memorization (*hifz*) and oral transmission of knowledge. The curriculum aimed to build strong religious foundations, emphasizing moral and spiritual growth above all.

Educational institutions such as *madrasahs* and *pesantrens* traditionally maintained a rigid structure, where students closely followed the authority of their teachers (*ustadz* or *kyai*). Pedagogical methods were simple, prioritizing discipline, repetition, and continuous mentoring rather than critical discussion or questioning. Knowledge was seen as sacred, directly linked to religious duty (Lubicz-Nawrocka & Bovill, 2023).

Despite its strengths in preserving Islamic knowledge and character, traditional curricula often lacked integration with worldly sciences. Subjects like mathematics, philosophy, or natural sciences were taught separately or not at all, leading to limited exposure for students to broader intellectual fields necessary for societal progress (Sarango Quezada, 2024).

#### **b. Innovations in Contemporary Islamic Education Curriculum**

Contemporary Islamic education integrates religious sciences with modern disciplines such as technology, natural sciences, and social studies (Musa & Nurhayati, 2025). This integration reflects an awareness of the need to prepare students for modern challenges while grounding them in Islamic ethics. Student-centered learning approaches have also been widely adopted to foster critical thinking and creativity.

Modern Islamic educational institutions emphasize balanced development between spiritual, intellectual, and social skills. They employ

updated teaching methods like collaborative learning, project-based assignments, and digital learning tools. This shift also introduces interdisciplinary studies, where Islamic teachings are contextualized within global issues (Rohmandkk., 2023).

Although these innovations provide broader educational opportunities, some scholars argue that without careful implementation, there is a risk of diluting core Islamic values. Thus, contemporary curriculum design often requires a conscious effort to harmonize between modern educational advancements and the authenticity of Islamic teachings

**c. Challenges and Opportunities in Curriculum Transformation**

One major challenge in transforming the Islamic curriculum is maintaining a strong Islamic identity while meeting global educational standards (Rohmandkk., 2023). Educators often struggle to balance tradition and modernity, ensuring students remain rooted in their faith without becoming isolated from the modern world. This tension requires thoughtful curriculum design and innovative teaching strategies.

On the other hand, the transformation presents significant opportunities. Contemporary Islamic education can nurture graduates who are both spiritually conscious and intellectually competent (Aripin&Nurdiansyah, 2022). They can contribute positively to society, bridging the gap between religious values and modern development needs. Holistic education also fosters better critical engagement with global issues from an Islamic worldview.

Ultimately, the success of curriculum transformation depends on educators' ability to creatively integrate Islamic principles with evolving educational needs. Strong leadership, ongoing teacher training, and community support are essential to sustain a curriculum that remains relevant, authentic, and impactful for future generations.

**B. DISCUSSION**

The transformation of the Islamic education curriculum reflects a broader dynamic between preserving religious identity and adapting to contemporary realities (Diana dkk., 2024). Traditional Islamic education, with its strong focus on memorization and teacher-centered learning, succeeded in preserving the integrity of Islamic knowledge for centuries. It emphasized moral character, discipline, and deep reverence for religious texts, elements that continue to be foundational in Islamic pedagogy (Hendawidkk., 2024). However, the lack of integration with other fields of knowledge limited students' ability to engage with a rapidly changing world.

In contrast, contemporary Islamic education seeks to expand the scope of learning by incorporating modern sciences, technology, and critical thinking skills alongside religious instruction. This shift is not merely a superficial update but a necessary response to the intellectual and professional demands of today's global society (Dumiyatidkk., 2023). Contemporary approaches aim to create well-rounded individuals who are deeply rooted in Islamic values while also

capable of contributing meaningfully to various fields such as science, economics, politics, and social development (Akrimdkk., 2022).

Despite its advantages, the modernization of Islamic education presents challenges. Some educators and scholars express concerns that excessive adaptation to secular educational models may dilute the spiritual essence of Islamic learning (Wasehudindkk., 2023). Without a strong philosophical and ethical framework, the integration of modern subjects could lead to a fragmented identity among Muslim students. Thus, it is crucial for Islamic education to carefully curate its curriculum, ensuring that modern knowledge is taught within an Islamic worldview that harmonizes faith and reason.

The comparison between traditional and contemporary curricula shows that neither approach is inherently superior or complete on its own. Traditional methods offer deep spiritual grounding, while contemporary methods offer intellectual breadth. (Al-Haija&Mahamid, 2021) A successful Islamic educational model should aim to synthesize the strengths of both approaches, cultivating students who are spiritually aware, intellectually competent, and socially responsible. Building such a balanced curriculum requires continuous innovation, strong leadership, and a commitment to Islamic educational philosophy (Musa &Nurhayati, 2025).

Ultimately, the transformation of the Islamic education curriculum is an ongoing process that must respond to the evolving needs of the Muslim community. The future of Islamic education lies in its ability to remain faithful to its religious roots while embracing the tools and knowledge necessary to navigate modern life. By doing so, Islamic education can continue to serve as a beacon of guidance and excellence for future generations.

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