

A Comparative Analysis of Classical and Contemporary Integrative Methodologies in Islamic Education Studies

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Abstract

This study examines the fundamental issue of epistemological tension as well as the potential for synergy between classical integrative methodology and contemporary integrative methodology in the study of Islamic education. The purpose of this study is to analyze in depth the similarities, differences, and potential synthesis of both approaches as an effort to construct a relevant paradigm of Islamic education in the modern era. The research was conducted using a qualitative method with a content analysis approach and comparative analysis. The results indicate that classical integrative methodology is rooted in the concept of *wahdat al-'ilm* with a theocentric orientation, whereas contemporary integrative methodology is dialogical, multidisciplinary, and responsive to the development of modern scientific knowledge. A new finding of this study is the importance of reconstructing a methodology that not only preserves the values of *tawhid* but also promotes social transformation and scientific innovation. The main conclusion of this study is that a synthesis of the two is necessary to produce a transformative-integrative model that is relevant to the needs of Islamic Higher Education Institutions in the era of globalization. These findings are significant for the development of curricula, educational policies, and interdisciplinary research oriented toward forming individuals who are holistic, critical, productive, and contributive.

INTRODUCTION

Since its early development, Islamic education has stood at the intersection between preserving classical scholarly traditions and responding to the dynamics of contemporary developments (Engkizar et al., 2025; Gulcimen et al., 2023; Surono & Ifendi, 2021). In the context of globalization and advances in modern scientific knowledge, Islamic education is required to maintain its intellectual heritage, which has evolved over centuries, while also adapting its methodologies to contemporary conditions. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1980: 15) asserts that one of the fundamental issues faced by the modern Muslim community is the “confusion of knowledge,” namely the uncertainty in positioning modern knowledge within the framework of Islamic epistemology (Alhattab & Jamil, 2024; Auni & Hermanto, 2020; Shobahiya, 2017).

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This situation places Islamic education in a complex position: it must remain rooted in the classical tradition that views knowledge as a unified whole, yet at the same time open space for new approaches to remain relevant to contemporary demands (Febriani et al., 2020; Muis et al., 2019). Within this context, integrative methodology emerges as an approach intended to bridge the diversity of scientific disciplines. Both classical and contemporary integrative methodologies share the same goal linking religious sciences with general sciences although they differ in orientation, historical context, and epistemological structure. Therefore, a comparative examination of the two is essential to understand the direction of epistemological development within Islamic education (Engkizar et al., 2023).

The intellectual tradition of classical Islam, particularly during the Islamic Golden Age from the eighth to the thirteenth century, reflects an integrative tendency in the study of knowledge (Alfurqan et al., 2019; Muhamad et al., 2020). Classical scholars did not draw rigid distinctions between religious sciences and rational sciences. al-Ghazali (1982); Hasib & Khasanah (2025), for instance, emphasizes that beneficial knowledge is that which leads human beings to happiness in this world and the hereafter. This view affirms that the integration of knowledge in the classical period was consistently directed toward spiritual and ethical purposes. Ibn Khaldun, in *al-Muqaddimah*, also argues that rational sciences are part of human nature and hold an important position in both religious and social affairs (Bensaid & Machouche, 2017; Engkizar et al., 2024).

Furthermore, al-Farabi and Ibn Sina provided philosophical foundations for the integration of knowledge by combining metaphysics, logic, ethics, and science. According to Sofia & Sari (2018), education aims to achieve *al-sa'adah* (happiness) through the unity of theoretical and practical knowledge. Thus, classical integrative methodology is characterized by an epistemology grounded in *tawhid*, a harmony between revelation and reason, and an ethical-spiritual orientation (Hadi, 2019; Kamali, 2016).

Entering the modern era, Islamic education faces social transformations and scientific developments that have given rise to the dichotomy of knowledge a separation between religious sciences and general sciences. Several modern scholars have highlighted this issue. Haryanto (2022); Ilham (2020) observes a widening gap between the Islamic intellectual tradition and the development of modern scientific knowledge, which results in the lack of harmony in efforts to integrate knowledge. In response, several thinkers have proposed new methodological frameworks. Yahdi (2023) develops the concept of integrative-interconnective methodology, which enables dialogue among religious sciences, social sciences, and natural sciences.

This approach not only emphasizes interdisciplinary connections but also opens space for epistemological reflection so that integration can occur in a more substantive manner. Through his concept of prophetic social science, adds the dimensions of humanization, liberation, and transcendence as foundational values for the integration of knowledge (Engkizar et al., 2025; Jachimowicz, 2024; Maidugu & Isah, 2024). Therefore, contemporary integrative methodology is characterized by a multidisciplinary orientation, openness to critical dialogue, and efforts to contextualize Islamic values within modern realities.

In the present global context, marked by technological advancement, digitalization, and rapid social change, Islamic education faces new challenges related to the relevance of its epistemology and intellectual identity (Asyibli et al., 2025). This reinforces the need for an integrative approach that not only draws on the classical tradition but also responds to contemporary developments. Several studies indicate that discussions on knowledge integration have expanded, yet systematic comparisons between classical and contemporary methodologies remain limited (Engkizar et al., 2025; Maidugu & Isah, 2024).

In addition, empirical research on the implementation of integrative curricula in Islamic education shows varied results, indicating a continuing need for a conceptual framework capable of uniting classical epistemological foundations with contemporary interdisciplinary strategies. Against this background, this study aims to examine the characteristics of classical and contemporary integrative methodologies in Islamic education, identify their similarities and differences, and evaluate their relevance for the development of Islamic educational epistemology in the current era.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative method using a content analysis approach and a comparative analysis approach (Arafeh, 2016; Gergen, 2020; Renz et al., 2018). The qualitative method is used to examine the concepts and methodologies that developed within classical and contemporary Islamic educational thought. A library research design was selected because the primary data are derived from the works of classical scholars such as al-Ghazali, Ibn Khaldun, al-Farabi, and Ibn Sina, as well as contemporary scholars such as Fazlur Rahman, Amin Abdullah, Kuntowijoyo, and al-Attas. The data sources were obtained from university libraries, digital repositories, books, articles, and previous research. The subjects of this study are the ideas of these scholars, while the object of the study is the integrative methodology, specifically in the aspects of epistemology, methods, educational orientation, and its social context (Pohontsch, 2019; Roller, 2019).

Data were collected through document studies, textual analysis, and reviews of secondary literature. The data were analyzed using content analysis to identify concepts and the framework of each scholar's integrative methodology, and comparative analysis to determine the similarities, differences, and relevance between classical and contemporary methodologies (Engkizar et al., 2025). The validity of the data was ensured through source triangulation, by comparing findings from classical and contemporary works, confirming them with previous studies, and verifying interpretations through credible secondary literature.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The concept of methodology in Islamic education is not merely understood as a set of teaching techniques or procedures, but as an epistemological framework that guides the ways of acquiring, developing, and integrating knowledge (Miftakhu Rosyad, 2020; Nor & Malim, 2014). Arifin states that the methodology of Islamic education is a set of principles that direct the process of seeking knowledge in accordance with the aims of Islamic education. In this regard, methodology differs from method, as methodology is philosophical and conceptual, whereas method is practical and applicative. (Efendy, 2016; Saihu, 2019)Fazlur Rahman emphasizes that the main problem of modern Islamic education does not lie in teaching methods, but in the methodology that has not yet succeeded in connecting religious sciences with the development of modern knowledge. Therefore, studying integrative methodologies becomes essential for formulating a comprehensive epistemological framework that aligns with Islamic values. In classical literature, methodology is closely related to the concept of *manhaj*, which serves as the foundation for scholars in constructing the integration between religious sciences and rational sciences (Ma'mur, 2018).

In the classical tradition, knowledge integration was practiced by a number of scholars who combined the intellectual heritage of Greek, Persian, and Indian civilizations with the principle of tawhid as the epistemological foundation (Husni & Hayden, 2024; Refinal et al., 2024). Al-Ghazali emphasized the importance of beneficial knowledge and rejected the dichotomy between revealed sciences (*'ilm shar'i*) and rational sciences (*'ilm 'aqli*) (Hidayat et al., 2018). Ibn Khaldūn viewed

rational sciences as a natural part of human potential, while al-Farabi highlighted the unity between theoretical and practical knowledge as a path toward happiness (Wiyono, 2016). Ibn Sina also affirmed that reason is an essential tool for understanding Islamic law more deeply. The main characteristics of classical integrative methodology include its grounding in tawhid, its orientation toward worldly and spiritual well-being, and its use of philosophy and science as instruments to strengthen the understanding of revelation (Munarun et al., 2025; Nuha et al., 2024).

Unlike the classical approach, contemporary scholars developed integrative methodologies within the context of modernity, colonialism, and the secularization of knowledge. They sought to bridge the widening dichotomy between religious sciences and modern sciences that intensified after the twentieth century. Ichwan et al (2024) proposed the double movement methodology, Drammeh (2022) Amin Abdullah developed an integrative–interconnective model that is multidisciplinary and dialogical, while Zulkarnaini (2022) introduced the prophetic social science paradigm that connects modern knowledge with transcendental values. Contemporary approaches are characterized by inter-disciplinary dialogue, a focus on addressing social problems, and the use of hermeneutical approaches in the recontextualization of Islamic teachings.

The fundamental differences and points of convergence between classical and contemporary methodologies can be examined through four main aspects: epistemological foundation, method of integration, orientation, and historical context. A summary of this comparative analysis is presented in the following table.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Classical and Contemporary Integration

Aspect	Classical	Contemporary
Epistemological Basis	Grounded in tawhid with a metaphysical orientation	Grounded in recontextualization with a social-problem orientation
Method of Integration	Synthesis of knowledge through philosophy, logic, and Islamic law	Interdisciplinary and interconnected dialogue
Orientation	Worldly and spiritual well-being (al-sa'adah)	Social transformation and community advancement
Historical Context	Islamic golden age with the dominance of revelation-based epistemology	Modern era with the dominance of Western secular knowledge

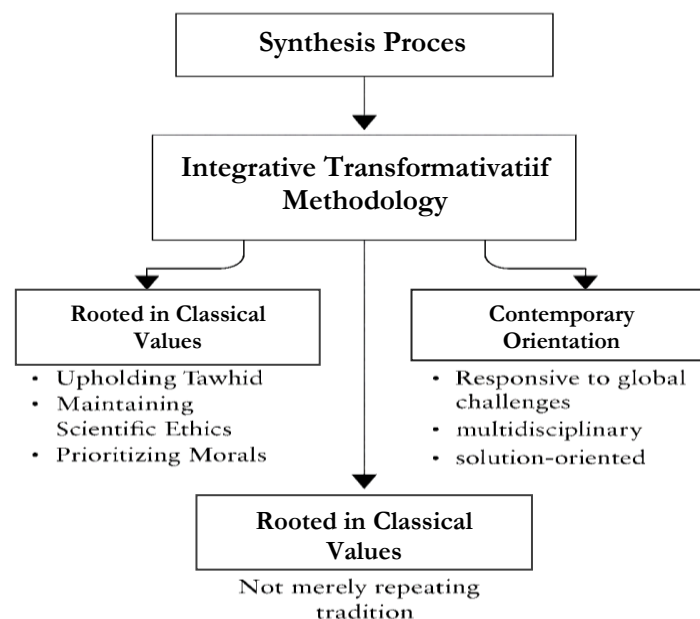


Figure 1. Flowchart of the Relationship between Integrative Methodology Concepts

This comparison demonstrates that despite their different historical contexts, both classical and contemporary approaches aim to address the challenges of their respective eras through the integration of knowledge. The classical approach emphasizes ethical foundations and epistemological unity, while the contemporary approach provides operational mechanisms for responding to modern social issues such as pluralism, ecology, gender, and digitalization. Therefore, a critical synthesis of both approaches is necessary to develop an integrative–transformative methodology capable of preserving classical intellectual heritage while remaining relevant to current academic and societal needs.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that classical and contemporary integrative methodologies in Islamic education have both similarities and differences that complement each other. The classical methodology emphasizes the unity of knowledge with a normative-theological orientation, moral reinforcement, and the assimilation of knowledge within the framework of tawhid, whereas the contemporary methodology is multidisciplinary, dialogical, contextual, and interdisciplinary, making it better able to address global challenges and contemporary issues. The relevance of both approaches indicates that classical integration is important as an ethical-philosophical foundation, while contemporary integration provides practical responses to the needs of modern society. Therefore, synthesizing the two approaches can produce a method of Islamic education that is rooted in tradition, remains future-oriented, and promotes both scientific transformation and the balanced character development of students.

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