



Islamic Education in Public Schools: A Five-Dimensional Analysis of Challenges in Educational Transformation

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the problems of Islamic Education in public schools within the context of national educational transformation. The study employed a qualitative research approach using a literature review method. Data were obtained from relevant scholarly literature, including academic books, journal articles, and educational policy documents. The literature was analyzed using content analysis through comprehensive reading, initial coding, categorization, cross-source comparison, and conceptual synthesis. The findings indicate that the problems of Islamic Education are complex, systemic, and interconnected across five dimensions: curriculum, pedagogy, teacher competence, learning assessment, and the social environment. The analysis shows that curriculum content remains insufficiently contextualized, learning practices tend to be teacher-centered, teacher competence in digital and innovative pedagogy remains uneven, and assessment continues to emphasize cognitive outcomes. At the same time, social and technological changes create additional challenges for strengthening students' religious awareness and character. These conditions reveal a gap between the holistic objectives of Islamic Education and its implementation in public schools. The study concludes that improving Islamic Education requires an integrated, contextual, and adaptive framework that connects curriculum development, transformative pedagogy, continuous teacher professional development, authentic assessment, and supportive social environments. The study contributes a multidimensional conceptual perspective for understanding the interconnected nature of these challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Education in public schools, both epistemologically and normatively, does not merely serve as a means of transmitting religious knowledge. More than that, Islamic Education functions as a strategic instrument for internalizing values, shaping character, and fostering students' religious awareness in a comprehensive manner (Muhaimin, 2021; Nata, 2020). Within the framework of Islamic education, the learning process should not be limited to the achievement of

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cognitive outcomes. It should also address affective and psychomotor dimensions, which are reflected in students' actual behavior in their daily lives (Hidayat, 2022). Thus, religious education holds a highly significant position in shaping students' personalities holistically while ensuring that this formative process takes place continuously.

However, in practice, Islamic Education in public schools continues to face a number of complex challenges. Empirically, religious education is often reduced to formal academic activities that focus primarily on the achievement of cognitive outcomes. Consequently, the role of Islamic Education as a process of value and character formation becomes less apparent. In practice, learning remains dominated by textual, normative, and teacher-centered approaches. Such practices tend to emphasize memorization and mastery of subject matter, thereby limiting opportunities for the development of students' critical, reflective, and contextual thinking skills (Fauzi, 2022; Mustafida, 2020; Nasih et al., 2021). This situation indicates a clear gap between the ideal conception of Islamic education and its implementation within the formal education system.

This condition highlights the urgency of reconstructing the learning paradigm of Islamic Education to make it more adaptive and transformative. In contrast to previous studies that tend to examine the problems of religious education separately and partially, this study attempts to examine these issues more comprehensively through a multidimensional and systemic approach. This urgency has become increasingly relevant in the context of globalization and rapidly advancing digitalization, which have brought significant changes to various aspects of life, including education. Social transformations driven by advances in information and communication technology have also shifted patterns of interaction, ways of thinking, and students' learning styles (Suyanto, 2021; Tilaar, 2020).

Today, students are no longer entirely dependent on teachers as their primary source of knowledge. Extensive access to information through digital media enables them to learn independently from a wide range of sources. However, this condition also brings other consequences, including the emergence of a more dynamic value system that is simultaneously vulnerable to the influence of global ideologies and cultures that are not always consistent with Islamic values (Prasetyo, 2023; Rahmawati, 2021). In this situation, religious education faces serious challenges, including the crisis of scholarly authority, value disruption, and the weakening role of education in shaping students' character comprehensively. Therefore, a paradigm shift in Islamic Education is needed to integrate normative, contextual, and transformative dimensions simultaneously (Anwar, 2022).

Theoretically, studies on religious education have developed from various perspectives, ranging from curriculum and pedagogy to learning assessment. Several previous studies have contributed to identifying various weaknesses in its implementation. These include the low effectiveness of learning methods, the suboptimal integration of values into the educational process, and limited innovation in assessment systems, which still tend to focus predominantly on cognitive aspects (Arifin, 2021; Rasyid, 2022).

However, these studies generally remain fragmented and have not yet established a truly integrative and comprehensive analytical framework. From the perspective of holistic Islamic education theory, the quality of education is determined by the interconnection of various dimensions that influence one another (Husaini, 2023). Based on this perspective, this study seeks to contribute to strengthening and developing Islamic education theory through an integrative and multidimensional approach. This approach is expected to be more relevant in responding to contemporary educational transformations and various challenges in the future.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study proposes an analytical approach through a five-dimensional framework for examining the problems of religious education, encompassing curriculum, pedagogy, teacher competence, learning assessment, and the social environment. This framework is developed in response to the limitations of previous studies, which tend to address these dimensions separately and have not yet integrated them comprehensively.

The novelty of this study lies in its effort to integrate these five dimensions into a single holistic analytical system. This integration not only broadens the scope of the analysis but also generates a conceptual model that is more contextual, adaptive, and relevant to the continuously evolving dynamics of the national education system.

Accordingly, this study aims to comprehensively analyze five dimensions of religious education problems in public schools from the perspective of national educational transformation. The findings are expected to provide a deeper understanding while formulating a relevant, adaptive, and sustainable conceptual framework.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a literature review and content analysis to examine and synthesize scholarly literature on the functions of Human Resource Management in educational institutions. A literature review was selected to synthesize concepts, theoretical perspectives, and findings from previous studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Snyder, 2019; Xiao & Watson, 2019), while content analysis was used to identify, categorize, and interpret relevant information and develop a conceptual synthesis (Paul & Criado, 2020).

The data consisted of secondary sources, including books, reputable journal articles, theses, dissertations, and educational policy documents related to Human Resource Management in educational institutions. Sources were selected based on relevance, credibility, and recency, with the analysis focusing on publications from 2019 to 2026 to capture recent developments in contemporary educational contexts (Booth et al., 2021). The literature addressed human resource planning and recruitment, professional development, compensation and work motivation, performance management and evaluation, and the integration of Human Resource Management functions in supporting institutional effectiveness.

Data were collected through document analysis by identifying, selecting, recording, and classifying relevant literature. The selected sources were read comprehensively, and key concepts, arguments, findings, and contributions were systematically recorded in a literature synthesis matrix to facilitate cross-source comparison (Snyder, 2019; Braun & Clarke, 2021). This process supported the identification of similarities, differences, and recurring patterns across the reviewed literature (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

The researcher served as the primary research instrument by determining the research focus, selecting and reviewing the literature, conducting coding, and interpreting the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). A literature synthesis matrix and coding sheet were used to maintain consistency in recording concepts, findings, categories, and relationships across sources (Xiao & Watson, 2019). Content analysis involved comprehensive reading, identification of relevant information units, initial coding, grouping of conceptually related codes, category development, and interpretation of relationships among categories (Snyder, 2019; Xiao & Watson, 2019). Coding and categorization were conducted iteratively through cross-source comparison to identify recurring patterns, similarities, differences, and conceptual relationships.

The analysis generated five major categories: adaptive human resource planning and recruitment, continuous professional development, compensation and work motivation, evidence-based performance management and evaluation, and the integration of Human Resource Management functions toward institutional excellence. These categories were compared and interpreted to examine their interrelationships and contributions to educator development, organizational effectiveness, and institutional sustainability. Divergent findings were also considered to avoid excessive generalization and to develop a broader conceptual synthesis of Human Resource Management functions in educational institutions.

The credibility of the analysis was strengthened through source triangulation by comparing information and findings across multiple relevant sources. The researcher critically assessed the credibility, relevance, and consistency of the selected literature to ensure that the interpretation was not based on a single source or perspective (Booth et al., 2021). Consistency among codes, categories, and synthesized findings was also reviewed throughout the analytical process to strengthen the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Islamic Education constitutes an important component of the national education system and plays a strategic role in shaping students' character, value systems, and religious awareness in a comprehensive and sustainable manner. In the context of contemporary Islamic education, Islamic Education is no longer viewed merely as a process of knowledge transfer, but rather as a process of value transformation and value formation, as well as the internalization of norms directed toward the development of a complete Muslim personality (*insan kamil*) (Abdullah, 2022; Muhaimin, 2021). Therefore, the success of Islamic Education learning should not be assessed solely from the cognitive aspect. More importantly, such success is reflected in the extent to which Islamic values are internalized in students' attitudes and behaviors in their daily lives.

Despite its strategic role, the results of a literature analysis using a library research approach involving various recent scholarly sources from 2020 to 2026 indicate that the implementation of Islamic Education in public schools continues to face complex, systemic, and multidimensional problems. These problems do not only originate from internal factors within the education system but are also influenced by continuously evolving external factors. The dynamics of globalization, rapid digitalization, and the accelerating social and cultural changes occurring within society have further intensified the challenges associated with the implementation of Islamic Education learning (Husaini, 2023; Prasetyo, 2023). This condition requires more adaptive adjustments to ensure that Islamic Education remains relevant and capable of responding to students' needs amid changing times.

Based on the synthesis of the literature, five major dimensions were consistently identified as sources of problems in Islamic Education learning, namely curriculum, pedagogy, teacher competence, learning assessment, and the social environment. These five dimensions do not operate independently but are interconnected and form an integrated system. This interconnectedness indicates that weaknesses in one dimension can affect other dimensions and consequently influence the overall quality of Islamic Education learning. In other words, the problems are systemic because they involve interactions among components within the educational process (Anwar, 2022; Setiawan, 2024).

Problems in the Curriculum Dimension

In the curriculum dimension, various findings from the literature indicate that the curriculum of Islamic Education remains dominated by a normative-doctrinal approach and is not yet fully contextualized. Learning materials tend to emphasize

textual aspects and memorization without being accompanied by adequate efforts to connect the substance of religious teachings with the realities of students' lives. This condition contributes to the emergence of a *knowledge-action gap*, namely a gap between the mastery of religious concepts and their actual practice in everyday life (Muhaimin, 2021; Rahmawati, 2021). In addition, the curriculum of Islamic Education has not demonstrated an optimal level of responsiveness to various contemporary issues emerging in society. Issues such as religious moderation, social diversity, digital literacy, and ethics in media use have not yet been systematically integrated into the structure and implementation of the curriculum. Consequently, Islamic Education learning tends to lose its contextual relevance and is therefore less effective in equipping students with the adaptive competencies required to face the complexities of modern life (Abdullah, 2022).

More deeply, this weakness indicates a gap between curriculum design and the demands of twenty-first-century educational transformation, which emphasizes the development of critical, reflective, and contextual thinking skills. Therefore, curriculum reconstruction in Islamic Education is needed not only to emphasize cognitive aspects but also to integrate values, attitudes, and skills holistically within the context of real-life situations.

Problems in the Pedagogical Dimension

In the pedagogical dimension, the findings indicate that the practice of Islamic Education learning remains dominated by conventional approaches, such as lectures, memorization, and simple question-and-answer activities. This pattern reflects the strong orientation toward teacher-centered learning, in which teachers serve as the primary source of knowledge while students tend to remain passive and receive information through one-way communication (Mustafida, 2020; Nasih et al., 2021).

This condition affects the level of students' active involvement in the learning process. Consequently, the development of critical, creative, and reflective thinking skills becomes constrained. From a constructivist perspective, however, effective learning should provide opportunities for students to actively construct understanding through direct experience, exploration, and social interaction (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This indicates that the dominance of conventional approaches is an indicator of suboptimal innovation in the pedagogical practices of Islamic Education.

On the other hand, the limited variety of learning methods and strategies also contributes to low levels of student learning motivation. Monotonous learning tends to make students less interested and less emotionally and intellectually engaged. Therefore, pedagogical transformation is needed toward learning approaches that are more active, collaborative, and experience-based (*experiential learning*). This effort is important for creating more meaningful learning and improving the quality of Islamic Education learning comprehensively (Wibowo, 2022).

Problems in the Teacher Competence Dimension

In the teacher competence dimension, the analysis indicates that Islamic Education teachers continue to face various challenges in developing their professionalism, particularly in terms of digital literacy, learning innovation, and mastery of contemporary pedagogy. In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and Society 5.0, the role of teachers is no longer limited to delivering subject matter but has expanded to that of learning facilitators who are capable of integrating technology effectively and adaptively into the educational process (Setiawan, 2024; Suyanto, 2021).

However, empirical conditions in the field indicate that some teachers are not yet fully prepared to meet these demands. Limitations in the mastery and utilization of technology affect learning processes that are less innovative and less aligned with the characteristics of digitally oriented students, who tend to prefer interactive, visual,

and multimedia-based approaches (Anwar, 2022). Consequently, learning becomes less engaging and less capable of optimizing students' learning potential.

On the other hand, the limited availability of continuous training and professional development programs also constitutes a hindering factor in improving teacher competence. Efforts to enhance teacher capacity remain sporadic and have not yet been systematically structured. Therefore, strategies for strengthening teacher competence are needed through needs-based training, professional mentoring, and the development of teacher learning communities. These measures are important to ensure that Islamic Education teachers are capable of adapting to the dynamics of modern education and continuously improving the quality of learning.

Problems in the Learning Assessment Dimension

In the learning assessment dimension, the findings indicate that the assessment system in Islamic Education remains dominated by cognitive aspects, particularly through written tests and examinations oriented toward memorization. Meanwhile, affective and psychomotor aspects, which are directly related to the formation of attitudes and behaviors, have not received adequate attention in assessment practices. This condition causes learning assessment to remain partial, reductive, and insufficiently reflective of holistic assessment (Arifin, 2021; Rasyid, 2022).

From the perspective of Islamic education, learning success should not only be measured by the extent to which students master knowledge but also by changes in attitudes, values, and behaviors reflected in their daily lives. Therefore, the dominance of cognitive assessment indicates an imbalance in the assessment system being implemented. This imbalance affects the suboptimal process of internalizing religious values, particularly in the development of students' moral character (Hasanah, 2023).

The weak development of authentic assessment instruments, such as attitude observation, self-assessment, portfolios, and practice-based assessment, is one of the factors that reinforces this problem. A comprehensive assessment approach is essential for capturing learning outcomes in their entirety. Therefore, the learning assessment system for Islamic Education needs to be reformulated by integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor assessment in a balanced manner so that it can support the achievement of Islamic educational objectives oriented toward the development of individuals who are knowledgeable, faithful, and morally virtuous.

Problems in the Social Environment Dimension

In the social environment dimension, the dynamics of globalization and digitalization constitute external factors that have a significant influence on Islamic Education learning. Students today live within a highly open information ecosystem in which global values, cultures, and ideologies can be easily accessed through various digital platforms. However, not all of these incoming values are consistent with Islamic principles (Prasetyo, 2023).

This condition has the potential to generate value conflicts within students, which may eventually develop into an identity crisis. Students are confronted with choices between religious values taught at school and global values that they encounter in their daily lives. Without appropriate guidance, this condition may weaken the internalization of religious values.

Therefore, Islamic Education is required not only to function as a means of value transmission but also as a *value filter* capable of guiding students in responding wisely to various external influences. In this context, strengthening critical literacy is highly important so that students develop the ability to selectively identify, analyze, and evaluate information in accordance with Islamic values (Husaini, 2023).

The integration of religious education with contemporary social realities has therefore become essential. Islamic Education learning needs to be designed in a contextual and responsive manner to contemporary challenges so that it can develop

students who are not only religious but also adaptive, critical, and strong in character when facing the complexities of global life.

Table 1. Synthesis of Problems in Islamic Education

Dimension	Main Findings	Impact
Curriculum	Not contextualized	Values are not internalized
Pedagogy	Teacher-centered	Students remain passive
Teacher Competence	Insufficiently adaptive to digital developments	Learning is less innovative
Assessment	Not holistic	Character is not adequately measured
Social Environment	Value disruption	Identity crisis

The findings of this study confirm that the problems of Islamic Education in public schools cannot be positioned as singular or isolated issues but rather as a complex phenomenon characterized by systemic and interconnected relationships. The five major dimensions identified, namely curriculum, pedagogy, teacher competence, learning assessment, and the social environment, form a dynamic educational ecosystem in which the dimensions influence one another. Thus, any change, weakness, or imbalance in one dimension will have an impact, either directly or indirectly, on the other dimensions (Setiawan, 2024).

Within this framework, the problems of Islamic Education need to be understood as part of an integrated system in which relationships among components constitute a key factor in determining the quality of learning. For example, a curriculum that is not contextualized will affect pedagogical practices by making them less relevant; limitations in teacher competence will influence learning innovation; while a non-holistic assessment system will hinder the achievement of character-building objectives.

Therefore, a partial approach to analyzing and addressing the problems of Islamic Education is no longer considered sufficient. Such an approach tends to address only surface-level symptoms without reaching the structural and interdependent roots of the problems. Consequently, a more comprehensive and integrative approach is needed to examine the interconnectedness among dimensions as a whole, ensuring that the resulting solutions are not fragmented but rather systematic and sustainable.

Theoretically, the findings of this study are consistent with the Islamic education paradigm, which emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to the learning process, namely the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions (Muhaimin, 2021). Within this framework, education is understood not merely as a process of knowledge transfer but also as a comprehensive effort to shape students' attitudes, values, and behaviors so that they reflect Islamic teachings as a whole.

Nevertheless, empirical realities in the field indicate an imbalance in the implementation of this paradigm. Islamic Education learning practices remain predominantly characterized by a cognitive approach that focuses on mastery of subject matter and memorization. This orientation results in the neglect of affective and psychomotor development, which in fact plays a crucial role in the process of internalizing religious values.

Consequently, the primary objective of Islamic education, namely the development of character or noble moral conduct, has not yet been optimally achieved. Students may possess a good conceptual understanding but may not necessarily be able to reflect that understanding in their everyday attitudes and behaviors. This condition reinforces the existence of a gap between theoretical ideals and empirical practices while demonstrating the urgency of reorienting Islamic Education toward a more integrative and balanced approach based on strengthening values and real-life experiences.

This study reveals a significant gap between the ideal conception of Islamic education and empirical practices in the field. This gap is not merely caused by weaknesses within each individual dimension but also by the absence of strong and synergistic integration among the dimensions within the Islamic Education system.

Illustratively, a curriculum that is insufficiently contextualized tends to produce pedagogical practices that are irrelevant to students' needs and characteristics. When learning materials are not connected to the realities of life, learning strategies consequently become less adaptive and lose their appeal. This condition subsequently affects the assessment system, which becomes unable to measure learning outcomes comprehensively because it focuses primarily on cognitive aspects without adequately considering attitudes and skills.

The sequence of discontinuities among these dimensions ultimately forms a cycle of problems that reinforce one another. The impact is not only evident in the low effectiveness of the learning process but also in the suboptimal achievement of the overall objectives of Islamic education. Therefore, integrated efforts are needed to align all dimensions systematically so that the quality of Islamic Education learning can be improved continuously and become more responsive to contemporary demands.

In this context, the reconstruction of the paradigm of Islamic Education needs to be directed not only toward the conceptual level but also toward concrete operational implementation in educational practice. This effort requires strengthening integration among educational dimensions through an approach that is adaptive, contextual, and aligned with contemporary developments. Curriculum development, for example, should be grounded in students' social realities and responsive to contemporary issues so that it can provide relevant and meaningful learning experiences.

On the other hand, pedagogical transformation is an essential prerequisite for improving the quality of learning. Approaches that were previously oriented toward teacher-centered learning need to shift toward learning that is active, collaborative, and experience-based (*experiential learning*). In this way, students do not merely function as recipients of information but also as active subjects who construct knowledge and internalize Islamic values in their daily lives.

In addition, improving teacher competence is a key factor in promoting sustainable change. Teachers are required not only to master subject matter but also to integrate technology into learning and develop innovative pedagogical strategies. Therefore, a continuous, structured, and needs-based professional development system is required to systematically enhance teacher capacity. Furthermore, the learning assessment system also needs to be reconstructed toward authentic assessment capable of measuring cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects in a balanced manner. Assessment should no longer merely function as a tool for measuring learning outcomes but also as a strategic instrument for encouraging the internalization of values and the comprehensive development of students' character.

Amid the increasingly strong currents of globalization and digitalization, Islamic Education also needs to strengthen its role as a *value filter*. This means that Islamic Education should not merely transmit Islamic values but also equip students with critical literacy skills to filter and respond to various external influences. Through this approach, students are expected not only to possess sound religious understanding but also to be capable of applying it contextually in a complex modern society. Thus, the multidimensional approach employed in this study not only provides a more comprehensive understanding of the problems of Islamic Education but also produces an analytical framework that is systemic and applicable. This framework can serve as a foundation for designing educational policies that are more effective, adaptive, and sustainable, ensuring that the future development of Islamic

Education is no longer partial but rather integrated and responsive to contemporary dynamics.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the problems of Islamic Education in public schools are systemic and interconnected across curriculum, pedagogy, teacher competence, learning assessment, and the social environment. The findings reveal a persistent gap between the holistic ideals of Islamic education and practices that remain predominantly oriented toward cognitive achievement, limiting the development of students' character and the internalization of Islamic values. These findings highlight the need for an integrated, contextual, and adaptive paradigm of Islamic Education that connects knowledge, values, skills, and real-life experiences. The multidimensional framework proposed in this study provides a conceptual basis for strengthening curriculum relevance, pedagogical innovation, teacher competence, and holistic assessment while responding to social and technological changes. Future research should empirically examine this framework and develop contextually relevant models of Islamic Education.

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