



Integrating Local Wisdom Into Islamic Religious Education Curriculum Development

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ABSTRACT

This study examines why local wisdom should be built into the planning of Islamic education curricula, as a way to strengthen cultural identity and moral values. Bringing local wisdom into Islamic religious education matters because it lets schools meet the demands of a changing world without abandoning ancestral values. The study is qualitative and uses a literature review to examine relevant sources. The findings show that local wisdom can enrich teaching materials and methods, make learning more relevant to the local context, and support a more inclusive and adaptive curriculum. Integration also faces obstacles: lack of awareness, perceived mismatch with global needs, resistance to change, limited resources, the dominance of foreign cultures, and uncertainty about outcomes. Overcoming these obstacles requires education and outreach, community participation, teacher training, and stronger local institutions. Integrated in this way, local wisdom can strengthen students' character and identity and make Islamic education more relevant and effective as times change.

Keywords: Curriculum development; Islamic education; local wisdom

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini membahas pentingnya integrasi kearifan lokal dalam perencanaan pengembangan kurikulum pendidikan Islam untuk memperkuat identitas budaya dan nilai-nilai moral. Mengintegrasikan kearifan lokal dalam kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam sangat penting dalam menghadapi tantangan zaman tanpa kehilangan nilai-nilai leluhur. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan metode studi literatur untuk menelusuri sumber-sumber yang relevan dengan topik ini. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa kearifan lokal dapat memperkaya materi ajar dan metode pengajaran, meningkatkan relevansi pembelajaran dengan konteks lokal, dan membantu dalam pengembangan kurikulum yang lebih inklusif dan adaptif. Namun, integrasi kearifan lokal juga dihadapkan pada berbagai hambatan, seperti ketidaktahuan, ketidaksesuaian dengan kebutuhan global, resistensi terhadap perubahan, keterbatasan sumber daya, dominasi budaya asing, dan ketidakpastian terhadap hasil. Untuk mengatasi tantangan ini, diperlukan pendidikan dan sosialisasi, partisipasi masyarakat, pelatihan guru, dan penguatan institusi lokal. Dengan demikian, integrasi kearifan lokal dalam pendidikan Islam dapat memperkuat karakter dan identitas siswa, serta meningkatkan relevansi dan efektivitas pendidikan Islam dalam menghadapi perubahan zaman.

Kata Kunci: kearifan lokal; pengembangan kurikulum; pendidikan agama Islam



INTRODUCTION

Islamic religious education has a strategic responsibility for shaping students' character, ethics, and morals. Its curriculum aims to produce students who are intellectually capable, who have good character (*akhlakul karimah*), and who can face the challenges of their time. In practice, though, developing this curriculum is complicated. A central difficulty is how to keep the curriculum relevant to local communities without losing the universal values of Islam. The tension between the pull of globalization and the preservation of local values is still unresolved in contemporary discussions of Islamic education.

Globalization has changed education considerably, and Islamic education is no exception. Islamic education curricula have tended to follow international standards that put science and technology first, with little regard for local cultural context (Firdausi, 2020). As a result, local values tied to custom, culture, and religious tradition are often pushed aside. The gap between what schools teach and how people actually live has become harder to ignore. Students learn the normative teachings of Islam but struggle to connect them to the social and cultural realities around them. This raises a basic question about how relevant and effective Islamic religious education is in shaping students' character and identity.

Local wisdom offers a promising way to close this gap. It includes values, religious traditions, knowledge of the environment, cultural arts, and practical skills that local communities have developed over centuries (Endayani, 2023). It is more than a cultural inheritance: it also serves as a moral and ethical guide that shapes the character of a community (Niman, 2019). In education, local wisdom can be a rich and meaningful learning resource, because it grows out of the lived experience of the community and carries values that bear on students' daily lives.

Several earlier studies have addressed the place of local wisdom in educational curricula. Sanusi (2022) studied the revitalization of local wisdom in the teachings of Sunan Kudus as a basis for developing Islamic education curricula, and showed that such values can be a strong foundation for a contextual, relevant curriculum. Annisha (2024) looked at how local wisdom can be integrated into learning under the Merdeka Belajar curriculum, and found that it enriches teaching materials and increases student engagement. Ummah (2019) argued that local wisdom can anchor effective character education because its values come from the real lives of communities.

These studies have limits, however. First, most focus on practical aspects of teaching and say little about strategies for integrating local wisdom into Islamic religious education curriculum development as a whole. Second, few have systematically identified the obstacles to integration, whether they lie in policy, resources, or cultural resistance. Third, there has been little exploration of how



local wisdom can be integrated without compromising the universal values of Islam. This study addresses these gaps.

The study analyzes in depth how local wisdom can be integrated into Islamic religious education curriculum development. It asks three questions: (1) Why is integrating local wisdom into the Islamic religious education curriculum important? (2) What strategies can be used to integrate it? (3) What obstacles arise in the process, and how can they be overcome?

The study matters in three respects. Theoretically, it contributes to curriculum theory for Islamic education grounded in local wisdom. Practically, its findings can guide teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers in designing more contextual and relevant curricula. Socially and culturally, it supports the preservation of local heritage against the growing tide of globalization. The study is therefore more than an academic exercise; it has real implications for the practice of Islamic education in Indonesia.

Integration is especially pertinent in Indonesia, given its remarkable cultural diversity. The country is home to thousands of ethnic groups, each with its own traditions, customs, and local values. Every region holds distinctive and valuable local wisdom, which, if well integrated into the curriculum, can enrich students' learning and strengthen their cultural identity. The challenges are also considerable. Centralized approaches to education, limited resources, and the dominance of foreign cultures all hinder integration (Syaodih, 2021). Effective integration therefore requires sound strategies and collaboration among many parties.

It is hoped that this study will contribute to a more contextual, inclusive, and character-building Islamic religious education. Education that integrates local wisdom does more than transfer religious knowledge; it builds a comprehensive understanding that links Islamic teachings to local culture. That, in turn, strengthens students' character and identity and makes Islamic education more relevant and effective as times change.

METHOD

This study takes a qualitative approach and uses library research. A qualitative approach was chosen because the aim is to understand a phenomenon in depth, not to test hypotheses or measure variables statistically. Creswell (2014) describes qualitative research as a process of exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups attach to a social or human problem. Here, it allows the researcher to examine the meanings, values, and practices associated with integrating local wisdom into the Islamic religious education curriculum.

Library research was used because the study traces, analyzes, and synthesizes a wide range of relevant information. It relies on written sources such



as books, scholarly journals, articles, and other documents as its main data (Zed, 2008). The topic calls for a broad and deep understanding of many concepts, theories, and earlier findings, and a literature review lets the researcher identify patterns, themes, and gaps in existing work and build an argument on the available evidence.

The data come from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include textbooks on Islamic education curricula, local wisdom, and character education, along with journal articles that directly address the integration of local wisdom into curricula. Secondary sources include articles, research reports, and education policy documents that help explain the context of Islamic religious education in Indonesia. Sources were selected on three criteria: relevance, credibility, and recency. Relevance means a source bears directly on the topic. Credibility means it comes from a reputable publisher or author. Recency means it was published within the last ten years, except for classic works that remain relevant.

Data were collected through a systematic literature search in several stages. First, the researcher identified relevant keywords, such as "local wisdom," "curriculum development," "Islamic religious education," "integration," and "local culture." Second, sources were searched through academic databases (Google Scholar, Garuda, and Scopus), digital libraries, and physical library catalogs. Third, relevant sources were selected against the criteria above. Fourth, the information gathered was recorded and organized in structured research notes.

Data were analyzed using content analysis and thematic analysis. Content analysis was used to identify and categorize the information in the sources, and thematic analysis to identify the main themes emerging from the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) in data. The analysis proceeded in five steps. First, the researcher read and familiarized themselves with all the collected sources. Second, the data were reduced by selecting relevant information and setting aside the rest. Third, the data were presented as a structured narrative. Fourth, the information was verified by comparing sources to check consistency and accuracy. Fifth, conclusions were drawn from the analysis.

Several strategies were used to ensure trustworthiness. The first was source triangulation, comparing information across different sources to check consistency and accuracy. The second was theoretical triangulation, analyzing the data from several theoretical perspectives. The third was member checking, in which experts or colleagues in the field were asked to verify the findings. The fourth was an audit trail, documenting the whole research process in enough detail for others to trace and verify it. Together, these strategies are meant to make the findings credible and academically defensible.



Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, as a literature study, this research involved no direct field data collection, so its findings are theoretical and conceptual rather than empirical. Second, it was limited to the sources the researcher could find and access, so other relevant sources may have been missed. Third, it focuses on Islamic religious education in Indonesia, so the findings may not fully generalize to other contexts. Even so, the study is expected to make a meaningful contribution to developing Islamic religious education curricula based on local wisdom.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis of the literature that was collected, processed, and interpreted in line with the study's aims. The results are organized under six headings: (1) the nature of local wisdom and its relevance to Islamic religious education; (2) the concept of the Islamic religious education curriculum and the challenges of developing it; (3) why integrating local wisdom into the curriculum matters; (4) strategies for integration; (5) obstacles to integration; and (6) implications and recommendations.

The Nature of Local Wisdom and Its Relevance to Islamic Religious Education

Local wisdom is a complex, multidimensional concept. Etymologically, the Indonesian term *kearifan lokal* combines "wisdom" (*kearifan*) and "local" (*lokal*). Wisdom refers to sound judgment, knowledge, and deep understanding, while local refers to a particular region or culture. Local wisdom can therefore be defined as the cultural characteristics of a place, covering how people interact with one another, with their environment, and with their belief systems (Endayani, 2023). This fits Niman's (2019) view that local wisdom comprises the ideas, activities, and traditions of a local community that are passed down through generations.

More broadly, local wisdom concerns the purposes of life, meaning the wisdom, knowledge, and traditions held by local people in a given region or culture in relation to every aspect of life. It carries values that are wise and prudent and is handed down from generation to generation (Simanungkalit et al., 2024). Local communities also learn to settle conflicts and problems harmoniously, to be tolerant, and to stay open to new ideas (Naryatmojo, 2019). Local wisdom thus helps preserve cultural heritage, and it also acts as a moral and ethical guide that shapes the character of a community.

Its relevance to Islamic religious education lies in its ability to bridge the gap between normative religious teaching and the everyday realities of students' lives. Religious education that stresses only doctrine tends to produce a textualist, literalist understanding of religion, which can lead to attitudes far removed from



humanist values. By contrast, education that integrates local wisdom helps students understand Islamic teachings more contextually and apply them more readily. Local wisdom supplies concrete examples of how Islamic values are practiced in the surrounding community, which makes learning more meaningful and relevant.

Ummah (2019) found that local wisdom can be an effective basis for character education because its values come from the real lives of communities. Values such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), tolerance, deliberation (*musyawarah*), and respect for parents are consistent with Islamic teaching and are also hallmarks of local culture. When these values are built into the curriculum, students learn about Islam in theory and also absorb these values into their daily lives. This in turn strengthens their character and cultural identity.

The Concept of the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum and the Challenges of Developing It

The word "curriculum" comes from the Latin *curriculum*, meaning "teaching material." Some trace it instead to the French *courier*, meaning "to run." The *Kamus Bahasa Indonesia Kontemporer* defines a curriculum as the set of subjects offered at an educational institution, or the set of courses in a particular field of study. In the Islamic educational tradition, the term is often equated with *manhaj*, meaning a teaching plan. The Islamic religious education curriculum is a system inseparable from Islamic educational institutions, since it covers the goals to be achieved, the content, the methods of delivery, and the stages of evaluation.

Syam (2019) explains that the Islamic religious education curriculum has a distinctive character: it is oriented toward shaping students' morals and character and is grounded in Islamic values drawn from the Qur'an and Hadith. In practice, however, developing it is difficult. One major challenge is keeping the curriculum in step with the times without losing Islam's universal values. Another is accommodating the cultural diversity and local contexts of Indonesia, which comprises thousands of ethnic groups with different traditions and customs.

Firdausi (2020) identifies several challenges facing Islamic curriculum development in the era of globalization: (1) the dominance of international standards that prioritize science and technology with little regard for local culture; (2) centralized approaches that emphasize uniform teaching content; (3) limited resources, in both teachers and teaching materials; (4) resistance to change; and (5) the dominance of foreign cultures through mass media, technology, and global trends. Because of these challenges, local values tied to custom, culture, and religion are often sidelined in the Islamic religious education curriculum.

Kartikasari and Mujib (2020) add that obstacles to implementing the curriculum also come from internal factors, such as teachers' limited



understanding of local wisdom and their limited ability to develop contextual teaching materials. External factors, such as top-down education policy and a lack of support from stakeholders, are obstacles as well. Overcoming these challenges calls for systematic, collaborative effort, and integrating local wisdom into the curriculum is one way to do it.

Why Integrating Local Wisdom into the Curriculum Matters

Integrating local wisdom into the Islamic religious education curriculum is a strategic way to build an education that fits the social and cultural conditions of Indonesian society. Through it, students can gain a deeper and more practical understanding of Islamic teachings, which improves their morals and character and strengthens their cultural identity. Sanusi (2022) stresses that revitalizing local wisdom can serve as a basis for contextual and relevant Islamic curriculum development.

Annisha (2024) found that integrating local wisdom into learning under the Merdeka Belajar curriculum enriches teaching materials and increases student engagement. Local wisdom provides rich and meaningful learning resources because it grows out of the community's lived experience and carries values relevant to everyday life. Learning then becomes applied and contextual, not just theoretical.

Tilaar (2015) emphasizes that bringing local wisdom into the curriculum is a way to offer meaningful and transformative learning. Through this approach, education moves beyond transferring knowledge and builds a comprehensive understanding that connects religious teaching with local culture. Students learn what Islam teaches in normative terms, and they also see how those teachings are practiced in their own cultural setting. This strengthens their character and identity and makes Islamic religious education more relevant and effective as times change.

Integration is therefore significant in both theoretical and practical terms. Theoretically, it enriches Islamic educational scholarship by adding a local cultural perspective. Practically, it improves the quality of learning and strengthens students' character. Integrating local wisdom should accordingly be a priority in developing the Islamic religious education curriculum in Indonesia.

Strategies for Integrating Local Wisdom into the Curriculum

The literature points to several strategies for integrating local wisdom into the Islamic religious education curriculum.

First, revise the curriculum to reflect the local context. The curriculum should be revised to rest more firmly on local context, for example by adding elements of local wisdom that matter to the community. The revision should involve



educators, religious leaders, community leaders, and education policymakers, all of whom have a part in making sure the result is relevant and consistent with local values. Sanusi (2022) gives an example of how the local wisdom in Sunan Kudus's teachings can serve as a basis for a contextual Islamic curriculum.

Second, train teachers and build their capacity. Intensive training is essential if teachers are to create and apply a curriculum grounded in local wisdom. Problem-based or project-based learning that involves the local community requires teachers to have the knowledge and skills to work local principles into their lessons. Syam (2019) stresses that teachers play a strategic role in developing the Islamic religious education curriculum, especially in the era of Industrial Revolution 4.0, which demands adaptability and innovation.

Third, collaborate with community leaders and cultural figures. Teaching local wisdom more effectively means working with community leaders, cultural practitioners, and local historians. They can offer a deep understanding of the local values that belong in the curriculum, whether as stories, traditions, or cultural activities carrying noble values. Such collaboration also strengthens the bond between school and community, making education more relevant and meaningful.

Fourth, develop teaching materials based on local wisdom. A curriculum that incorporates local wisdom needs suitable materials. Textbooks and modules should include local wisdom such as cultural arts, customs, and the community's way of life. Annisha (2024) found that locally grounded materials increase student engagement and enrich their learning experience.

Fifth, teach in ways that respect diversity. Islamic religious education that draws on local wisdom should respect and celebrate Indonesia's cultural diversity. Exposing students to the range of cultures that exist makes learning more inclusive and closer to the real life of Indonesian society. Ummah (2019) argues that local wisdom can support character education that values diversity and strengthens tolerance.

Sixth, strengthen local institutions. Integration also depends on strong local institutions, such as customary councils, religious study groups (*majelis taklim*), and community organizations. These institutions can be strategic partners in developing and preserving local wisdom and in supporting its implementation in schools. With stronger local institutions, integration can be more effective and more sustainable.

Obstacles to Integrating Local Wisdom into the Curriculum

Despite its many benefits, integrating local wisdom into Islamic religious education curriculum development meets a number of obstacles. These fall into two groups, internal and external.



Internal obstacles include: (1) lack of awareness and concern, especially among young people, about the value of local wisdom, a result of globalization and modernization drawing attention away from traditional values (Syaodih, 2021); (2) resistance to change, since integration requires changes in teaching approaches and methods, and some people resist because of habit or discomfort with anything new; (3) limited resources, including teachers, teaching materials, and infrastructure, since putting local wisdom into the curriculum requires adequate textbooks, teacher training, and infrastructure; and (4) uncertainty about results, since some worry that integration will not deliver the hoped-for improvements in educational quality or global competitiveness.

External obstacles include: (1) perceived mismatch with global needs, since some argue that local wisdom is no longer relevant in an increasingly integrated world and prefer values seen as universal; (2) the dominance of foreign cultures through mass media, technology, and global trends, which can displace local values; and (3) centralized education policy, which stresses uniform national or international content and gives little room for the different local wisdom of each region (Kartikasari & Mujib, 2020).

Facing these obstacles takes a thoughtful approach from everyone involved. If they are left alone, learning will not reach its intended goals. Overcoming them calls for education and outreach on why local wisdom matters, community participation in curriculum development, ongoing teacher training, and stronger local institutions. With these in place, integration can proceed more effectively and benefit students as fully as possible.

The findings have several implications, both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, the study enriches Islamic educational scholarship by bringing local wisdom in as a basis for curriculum development. It also confirms that Islamic religious education cannot be separated from the social and cultural context of the community, so curriculum development has to take local factors into account. Practically, it offers guidance to teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers in designing Islamic religious education curricula that are more contextual, inclusive, and character-building.

Several recommendations follow. First, the government and educational institutions should develop policies that support integrating local wisdom into the curriculum, with clear guidelines on how to do it and adequate resources. Second, teachers should receive continuous training in developing curricula based on local wisdom, covering the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to bring local wisdom into their teaching. Third, schools should build partnerships with community leaders, cultural figures, and local historians to enrich teaching materials and methods. Fourth, further research should test the effectiveness of



integration empirically, using quantitative or qualitative methods, and could focus on its effects on students' learning outcomes, character, and cultural identity.

CONCLUSION

Integrating local wisdom into the development of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum is a strategic effort to make religious education more contextual, relevant, and meaningful for students. By bringing in local cultural values, schools teach students spiritual and moral lessons and also deepen their understanding of their own cultural identity. Success depends on collaboration among teachers, students, local communities, and cultural experts in creating meaningful and transformative learning experiences. Integrating local wisdom into Islamic religious education is more than a pedagogical matter. It is an effort to preserve local cultural heritage, deepen spiritual understanding, and raise a generation of people of character, faith, and cultural grounding who can meet global challenges with strong values.

The study's main contributions to the scholarship and practice of Islamic education, particularly in curriculum development, are: (1) a conceptual framework for integrating local wisdom into the Islamic religious education curriculum; (2) an identification of strategies for doing so; (3) an identification of the obstacles encountered; and (4) implications and recommendations for developing more contextual and relevant curricula. The study is thus not only academic but also has real implications for the practice of Islamic education in Indonesia.

Future research should test the effectiveness of integration empirically, using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods, and should look at learning outcomes, character, cultural identity, and teacher competence. It could also explore integration in more specific settings, such as primary, secondary, or higher education, and across the different cultural contexts of Indonesia. In this way, the body of Islamic educational scholarship grounded in local wisdom can continue to grow and benefit society more widely.

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