



The Efficiency of Islamic Higher Education Curriculum in Indonesia: A Literature Review on Improving Intellectual Competence and Work Readiness Through Islamic Religious Education

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the efficiency of the curriculum of Islamic universities in Indonesia in ensuring the readiness of students to enter the workforce, by reviewing the role of Islamic religious education in improving intellectual competence. Through a literature study approach, this study identifies the challenges and opportunities faced by Islamic universities in integrating religious values with the intellectual and professional needs of students. The main focus of this study is the effectiveness of the curriculum in balancing theoretical aspects of religion and practical skills needed in the workplace. This study found that the curriculum of Islamic universities in Indonesia has attempted to adopt an integrative approach that combines religious education with the development of soft skills and hard skills that are relevant to professional careers. However, there are still some weaknesses in the implementation, such as the lack of curriculum adjustment to the dynamics of the labor market, as well as the imbalance between religious education and practical skills. The results of this study indicate that Islamic religious education has an important role in shaping the character and professional ethics of students, which are the main capital in entering the workforce. Therefore, increasing the efficiency of the curriculum through collaboration between academics, industry practitioners, and policy makers is needed to ensure that students' intellectuality is in accordance with the demands of the workplace. This study contributes to the academic discussion on the reform of Islamic higher education curriculum and emphasizes the importance of Islamic religious education in producing graduates who are not only intellectually competent, but also have strong ethical values to face professional challenges. The implication of this study is the need for a more flexible and adaptive curriculum strategy to improve the competitiveness of Islamic higher education graduates in the global job market.

Keywords: Curriculum efficiency, Islamic higher education, Intellectual competence, Work readiness, Islamic religious education

1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic higher education in Indonesia faces major challenges in the era of globalization, where the demands of the work world are increasingly competitive and dynamic. Globalization forces higher education institutions, including Islamic universities, to adjust their curricula in order to produce graduates who are not only competent in the field of religious knowledge but also ready to face the ever-changing job market. Curriculum efficiency is important to ensure that students acquire the knowledge and skills needed in the work world, without neglecting Islamic identity and values.

An efficient curriculum not only includes the delivery of academic materials, but also builds intellectual competencies that can help students think critically, innovatively, and provide solutions. In addition, Islamic universities play an important role in shaping students' ethics and morals through Islamic religious education. Islamic religious education plays a role

in building character and professionalism in accordance with Islamic values, so that graduates can adapt well in the work environment, while carrying strong moral integrity.

This study is designed to answer several key questions that arise from this phenomenon: 1) How efficient is the curriculum of Islamic universities in Indonesia in ensuring the readiness of students to enter the workforce?; 2) To what extent does Islamic religious education play a role in improving the intellectual and ethical competence of graduates of Islamic universities? This study has several main objectives: 1) To examine the extent to which the curriculum of Islamic universities in Indonesia is efficient in improving the intellectual competence of students, which is needed for readiness in the workforce; 2) To analyze the important role of Islamic religious education in preparing students not only academically, but also ethically and morally to face the demands of the professional world; 3) To provide literature-based recommendations to improve and increase the efficiency of the curriculum of Islamic universities, so that they are more in line with the needs of industry and global society.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative literature study method. The focus of the study is to examine various literatures that discuss the integration of Islamic science and contemporary science in the context of Islamic religious education. This study aims to understand how the integration of these two types of science can contribute to sustainable future development. This qualitative literature study focuses on in-depth interpretation of relevant sources and how these issues have been discussed in previous studies.

The data used in this study come from various relevant literature sources, including: 1) Books, scientific journals, articles, and previous research related to the topics of Islamic science, contemporary science, and Islamic education. These sources will be taken from leading scientific databases, such as Scopus, Google Scholar, JSTOR and others. This literature provides a theoretical basis and critical views on how the integration of Islamic and contemporary science can be applied in education; 2) Educational policy documents related to sustainability. These documents can come from the ministry of education, Islamic educational institutions, or international institutions that focus on developing sustainability-based educational curricula.

The data collection procedure was carried out through the following steps: 1) Collection of literature related to the integration of Islamic and contemporary science in education from scientific databases, such as Scopus, Google Scholar and international journals. The selected literature must be relevant to the research topic and discuss aspects of the integration of science

and sustainability education; 2) Classification and analysis of data based on the main themes identified, such as the contribution of Islamic science, the role of contemporary science in sustainability, and the challenges of integrating the two paradigms in education. Each literature will be analyzed to identify key points that support or challenge this integration.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis method. In this method, the main themes that emerged from the literature were classified and organized to provide insight into the integration of Islamic science and contemporary science in Islamic religious education. Any themes related to sustainability and Islamic religious education will be identified and explored further to understand the potential contributions of these two fields. Thematic analysis also allows researchers to explore the relationship between Islamic science, contemporary science, and sustainability from an educational perspective.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Definition and Concept of Curriculum Efficiency

Curriculum efficiency refers to the ability of an educational system to achieve academic goals with optimal use of resources. In the context of higher education, this involves the effective use of time, effort, and materials to deliver quality educational outcomes, particularly in improving students' competencies and readiness to enter the workforce. The concept of efficiency in higher education encompasses the effective use of resources to maximize outputs, such as graduates and research contributions. This efficiency is essential to optimize public funding and improve the quality of education.

Resource allocation and management required through efficient management of higher education institutions is crucial, especially in innovative economies where financial resources are limited(D., X., 2023). Studies show that higher education efficiency varies significantly across European countries, with management performance being the main source of inefficiency post-2017(Blecich, 2024). Evaluation metrics such as Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) are commonly used to assess university efficiency, focusing on inputs such as academic staff and government spending against outputs such as the number of graduates and citations(Giulia Boezi., Angelica Cottarelli., Daniele Pagnozzi., 2023). The need for reforms in educational practices is highlighted, emphasizing the importance of aligning education with socio-economic demands to improve overall efficiency(Aganbegyan, 2023). Qualitative aspects of education such as student satisfaction and holistic development of graduates need to be considered as well, which may not be fully captured by quantitative measures.

Efficiency of Islamic College Curriculum

The efficiency of the curriculum in Islamic higher education is not only measured by the ability to achieve academic targets, but also by the success in integrating religious education with practical skills relevant to professional careers. Important elements of curriculum efficiency include the balance between religious knowledge and skills that can be measured through learning outcomes and the relevance of the curriculum to the world of work. The efficiency of the Islamic higher education curriculum is a multifaceted issue that includes curriculum relevance, student engagement, and character development. Research shows that while Islamic education aims to produce well-rounded individuals, there are significant areas for improvement.

Many Islamic education programs, such as the one at the University of Abuja, suffer from outdated curricula that do not meet the needs of contemporary society. This lack of periodic review limits the ability of students to teach effectively in the future (Abdulhamid, 2017). A well-structured curriculum is essential to disseminating diverse Islamic knowledge, combining revealed and worldly knowledge, as emphasized in the philosophy of Islamic education (HasinaBanuShirin, 2018)

Student engagement and motivation need to be involved, studies show that Islamic Religious Education can improve motivation and academic performance, especially among working students, by implementing effective teaching strategies (Panduwinata., Yusrivan Irianto., 2022). However, current pedagogical approaches often focus on knowledge transfer rather than active learning, which can hinder character development and student engagement (Asep Dudi Suhardini., Kama Abdul Hakam., 2020)

Character development through Islamic education's potential to foster character development is significant, yet often underutilized. A shift toward a constructivist teaching model could enhance the effectiveness of character education in Islamic curricula (*Научные Труды* , 2023). In short, while Islamic college curricula have the potential to be effective, they require significant reform and pedagogical change to fully realize their goals.

Intellectual Competence and Work Readiness

Intellectual competence includes critical, analytical, and solution-oriented thinking skills needed to understand and solve problems in various fields. In the context of the curriculum, this competence is developed through study programs designed to foster analytical, communication, and problem-solving skills, which are important provisions for work readiness. The concept of intellectual competence is increasingly recognized as important in educational curricula, reflecting the need for students to develop skills relevant to personal and

professional contexts. This relationship is underscored by a variety of studies exploring how curricula can be designed to foster intellectual competence effectively.

Intellectual competence encompasses cognitive abilities and skills required for effective problem solving and decision making in a variety of contexts (Адиллова et al., 2023). It integrates knowledge, skills, and attitudes, enabling individuals to perform tasks successfully in real-world situations (Cenuş, 2020). Modern curricula are shifting towards a competency-based approach, emphasizing the integration of knowledge with practical applications, thereby enhancing students' readiness for the workforce (Judith, 2023) (Napal Fraile et al., 2018). The focus on competencies aims to align educational outcomes with societal and professional expectations, foster autonomy in learners, and bridge the gap between education and real-world demands (Cenuş, 2020)

Competence is closely related to assessment practices, where education systems increasingly prioritize accountability and measurable outcomes (Judith, 2023). Effective assessment of intellectual competence requires innovative methods that reflect students' ability to apply knowledge in practical scenarios (Zanfirova et al., 2021). The definition and application of competence can vary significantly across educational contexts, potentially leading to inconsistencies in implementation and assessment.

Factors that influence students' readiness to face the world of work

Students' work readiness is influenced by various factors, such as the relevance of learning materials to industry needs, practical experience through internships or fieldwork, and soft skills such as communication, collaboration, and professional ethics. A work-oriented curriculum should facilitate the development of these skills. Students' work readiness is influenced by various factors, including personal attributes, educational experiences, and external support systems. Understanding these determinants is critical to improving employability and ensuring that graduates meet workforce expectations.

The main factors influencing job readiness are: 1) Knowledge and skills. Familiarity with workplace expectations and soft skills are significantly correlated with job readiness. Students with a strong understanding of these areas tend to be better prepared for professional challenges (I., G., N., A., Dananjaya., Ni, Ketut, Rasmini., I., P., Sudana., Putu, Agus, 2023); 2) Self-efficacy and motivation. High levels of self-efficacy and motivation have a positive impact on student readiness. Research shows that these psychological factors, along with internship experiences, play an important role in preparing students for the workforce (Cipta & Wahyuni, 2024) (Eka, Nurwidi, Astuti., Muhtadin, 2024); 3) Family and Institutional Support. Support from family and educational institutions increases students' perceptions of

their competence, further enhancing their readiness for the workforce (Cipta & Wahyuni, 2024); 4) Communication Skills. Effective communication is essential for success in the workplace. Studies show that improving this skill can significantly improve vocational students' readiness (Gallery, Garnisha, Deanda., I., A., Darmawan., 2024)

While these factors are critical, it is also important to consider that some students may face barriers such as socioeconomic challenges or lack of access to quality internships, which can hinder their overall readiness despite having the necessary skills and motivation.

The Role of Islamic Religious Education in the Higher Education Curriculum

Islamic religious education in Islamic universities is often integrated with general courses and professional skills. This integration aims to ensure that students not only master religious knowledge, but also have practical skills relevant to the world of work, such as management, technology, and communication. The integration of Islamic religious education with general courses and skills is essential to foster holistic development in students. This approach not only enhances academic learning but also instills moral values and practical skills, preparing students for real-world challenges.

The development of a holistic curriculum can be seen in the integrative curriculum at Hidayatullah Kendari by combining Quranic principles with government education standards, promoting a connected learning model that contextualizes knowledge within a religious framework (Hasan, Basri., H., M., Ide, Said, Dm., Ilham., Muhammad, 2024). Al-Qardhawi emphasized the need for harmonization between educational goals and methods, advocating a curriculum that includes moral and personal development in addition to academic subjects (Aris Setiawan., Moh., 2024)

Bridging knowledge and values. Al Islam Institute of Muhammadiyah aligns general knowledge with Islamic teachings, aiming to develop individuals who can navigate modern complexities while adhering to Islamic principles (Ahmad Affan Hannan., 2024). Integrating entrepreneurship into Islamic education encourages students to apply religious values in practical contexts, fostering critical thinking and ethical responsibility (Arif., Darul, 2023)

Practical applications can be seen in the integrated learning model for children in conflict with the law showing the effectiveness of combining general education, religious teachings, and skills training, resulting in positive developmental outcomes (Fadila et al., 2021) While the integration of Islamic education with general courses is beneficial, some argue that it can dilute the focus on core religious teachings, potentially leading to a less rigorous understanding of Islamic principles. Balancing these aspects remains a challenge for educators.

The influence of religious education on the formation of ethics and morals in the world of work

Islamic religious education plays a key role in shaping students' professional ethics, such as honesty, responsibility, and integrity. These values are highly valued in the workplace and can provide a competitive advantage for Islamic college graduates who are able to apply them in a professional environment. The influence of religious education on the formation of ethics and morals in the workplace is significant, as it shapes an individual's character and work ethic. Various studies have highlighted how religious teachings contribute to the development of morals and ethical behavior among individuals, especially in professional settings.

Islamic religious education has been shown to positively influence students' morale, fostering traits such as honesty and discipline, which are important in the workplace (Asep, Mulyawan., 2024) (Permana, 2024). A study showed a strong correlation between religious education and students' moral attitudes, indicating that higher understanding leads to better ethical behavior.

Religious education plays an important role in improving the work ethic of MSME owners, instilling moral values that promote sustainable business practices (Muhammad Ade Kurnia Harahap., Abu Muna Almaududi Ausat., 2023). Integrating religious ethics into business education can improve students' understanding of ethical decision making, aligning their personal beliefs with professional behavior (Blosser, 2019)

While religious education is influential, some argue that its role in workplace ethics is often under-explored, suggesting the need for a more comprehensive integration of religious principles into business ethics curricula (Ahmed Raja Haj Ali., Meguellati Achour., 2019). Furthermore, debate continues over the extent to which religious values should influence workplace ethics, with some advocating a broader understanding that includes multiple religious perspectives (Ali et al., 2019). In conclusion, while religious education significantly shapes ethical behavior and work ethic, the challenge remains in effectively integrating these teachings into practical applications in the workplace.

Islamic College Curriculum Models

Several curriculum models in Islamic universities in Indonesia adopt an integrative approach, combining religious and professional education. This approach often includes project-based learning, interdisciplinary teaching, and a focus on practical experience. The curriculum models implemented in Islamic universities in Indonesia reflect a blend of traditional Islamic teachings and contemporary educational needs. These models aim to foster

moderate values, integrate local cultures, and promote religious moderation while addressing challenges posed by secular influences.

Islamic universities are increasingly adopting international class curricula, which combine local cultures and languages with global perspectives. This model emphasizes the importance of international experiences for students (Wahidmurni., Like Raskova Octaberlina., Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor., Faridatun Nikmah., Nur Hidayah Hanifah., Dian Eka Aprilia Fitria Ningrum., Harir Mubarok., 2024)

The integration of Indonesian fiqh into the curriculum promotes moderate Islamic values, with a focus on gender equality and interfaith harmony. This approach encourages students to engage with contemporary social issues through a religious lens (Hasbiyallah., Büşra, Duran., 2024). The Independent Curriculum emphasizes differentiated learning tailored to the individual needs of students, aiming to produce well-rounded individuals who are aligned with national values, such as Pancasila (M., Mukhibat., Mukhlison, Effendi., Wawan, Herry, Setyawan., M., 2024). A specific curriculum for religious moderation has been developed to counter extremism, foster tolerance and cultural accommodation among students. The Islamization curriculum seeks to integrate Islamic principles with general knowledge, preparing students to address humanitarian challenges through the lens of Maqasid al-Shari (Putri, Silaturrahmi., Uswatun, Hasanah., M., Abdul, 2023)

While these models aim to modernize Islamic education, there is an ongoing debate about balancing traditional values with the demands of contemporary education, highlighting the need for continuous curriculum evaluation and adaptation.

Comparative study between the curriculum models of Islamic higher education and general higher education Islamic higher education curricula differ from general higher education in terms of religious focus. However, many Islamic institutions are beginning to introduce more job-market-oriented learning methods and models, similar to those implemented in general universities, to increase the relevance and competitiveness of graduates. Comparative studies between Islamic higher education and general higher education curriculum models reveal different approaches to curriculum development, emphasizing values, interdisciplinary learning, and societal needs. Islamic education curricula are designed to integrate Islamic principles with contemporary educational demands, while general higher education often relies on a secular framework.

Islamic Curriculum Model: Islamic education emphasizes a curriculum that combines Islamic values, interdisciplinary learning, and flexibility. For example, the MB-KM program at Al-Hilal College focuses on the integration of digital technology and collaborative learning

(Muhammad, Iqbal., Teuku, Zulfikar., 2024). In contrast, general higher education can adopt Western theories, often considered secular and value-free, as seen in the Islamic Science Education program at the Indonesian University of Education, which aims to produce scholars who are grounded in Islamic teachings (Shofiyah, 2024)

The educational goal in Islamic education is that the curriculum aims to develop not only educators but also practitioners and entrepreneurs in an Islamic context, fostering a holistic educational experience. In general education the focus is usually on producing graduates equipped for a variety of professional fields, often without a specific ethical or moral framework.

While Islamic curricula prioritize moral and ethical development, general higher education may lack this focus, leading to potential gaps in character formation among graduates. This difference highlights the need for a more integrated approach that combines both educational philosophies.

Efficiency of Islamic College Curriculum in Indonesia

The main findings reveal that although Islamic universities strive to combine religious knowledge with professional skills, there are still some obstacles in terms of adapting the curriculum to the needs of the workplace, especially in terms of practical application. The efficiency of the curriculum of Islamic universities in Indonesia is shaped by various factors, including the integration of contemporary values, adaptation to modern educational methods, and the promotion of moderate Islamic teachings. These elements collectively enhance the educational experience and relevance of Islamic education in the current socio-cultural context.

Integration of contemporary values through the incorporation of Indonesian fiqh into the curriculum encourages moderate attitudes, emphasizing gender equality and interfaith harmony (Hasbiyallah., Büşra, Duran., 2024). This approach encourages students to engage with social issues, promoting inclusivity and adaptability in their understanding of Islamic teachings.

Adaptation to modern educational methods. The shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has shown significant effectiveness in practical learning outcomes, especially in medical education (Julian Muhammad Yasin., Syamsu Rijal., Edward Pandu Wiriansya., Sri Julyani., Shofiyah, 2023). Continuous curriculum development is needed to align Islamic Religious Education (PAI) with modern demands, ensuring relevance and quality (Effendi, 2024)

Islamic boarding schools, such as those at the Islamic University of Indonesia, focus on religious moderation to counter radical ideologies, producing graduates who are agents of peace (Suparta, 2024). The Islamization of the curriculum aims to integrate religious and general knowledge, preparing students to address humanitarian challenges through a comprehensive understanding of the Maqasid al-Shari'ah (Putri, Silaturrahmi., Uswatun, Hasanah., M., Abdul, 2023) While these advances highlight the strengths of the curriculum, challenges remain in ensuring that all educational institutions consistently implement this progressive approach, especially in rural areas where traditional methods may still dominate.

The Role of Islamic Religious Education in Improving Intellectual Competence

Islamic religious education has proven effective in improving students' critical analysis skills and forming professional ethics. This is an important asset for Islamic college graduates in facing the competitive world of work. The role of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in improving intellectual competence is diverse, involving teacher competence, innovative teaching methods, and technology integration. This educational framework not only aims to instill religious knowledge but also foster critical thinking and character development among students.

Teacher Competency Development. Effective IRE relies on trained educators who embody qualities such as sincerity and responsibility (Amrizon., Mahyudin, 2024). Continuous professional development initiatives, such as teacher working groups, are essential to improving the pedagogical skills and subject matter expertise of IRE teachers (Kamaruddin., Sidik., 2023). **Innovative Teaching Methods.** Interactive learning methods, including group discussions and role-playing, have been shown to significantly improve understanding among students, especially those with intellectual disabilities. These methods encourage active participation, thereby increasing intellectual engagement and understanding of Islamic teachings (Dita, Dzata, Mirrota., Qurrotul, 2024)

Technology Integration. The integration of information and communications technologies (ICT) into IRE is critical to modernizing instructional practices and improving educational outcomes. Despite progress, many educators still need to maximize the potential of technology in their instructional strategies. While progress in IRE is promising, challenges remain in ensuring that all educators are equipped with the skills and resources necessary to contribute effectively to students' intellectual growth.

Readiness of Islamic College Students for the World of Work

The findings suggest a strong link between Islamic college curricula and job market demands. Several Islamic colleges have successfully implemented best practices that create graduates with industry-required skills. Islamic students' workplace readiness is influenced by a variety of factors, including organizational activities, resilience, and specific skills. Research shows that involvement in organizational activities and entrepreneurial behavior significantly increase job readiness among students in Islamic economics and business programs (Diina, 2023). In addition, student resilience is strongly correlated with job readiness, indicating that students with higher levels of resilience are better prepared to face job challenges (Astuti Fidia., Anis Nur Kholifah., 2022)

Key Factors Affecting Readiness. 1) **Activities Organization:** Participation in extracurricular activities fosters important skills and confidence, leading to improved job readiness; 2) **Resilience:** There is a strong relationship between resilience and job readiness, with students demonstrating resilience indicating better readiness for the workforce; 3) **Skills Development:** Soft skills, self-efficacy, and digital literacy are important components that positively impact job readiness, highlighting the need for comprehensive skills development programs (Tifani, Adelia., Ahmad, 2024)

While many students have the knowledge and skills, anxiety and lack of confidence remain barriers to their workforce readiness, highlighting the need for targeted support and training initiatives.

Recommendations for Improving Curriculum Efficiency

Practical suggestions include increased collaboration with industry to align curricula with market needs and better integration of religious education and professional courses. To improve curriculum efficiency, several strategies can be implemented based on recent research findings. These strategies focus on resource allocation, technology integration, and learner engagement, ensuring a comprehensive approach to curriculum design.

Resource Allocation. Adequate resources are essential for effective implementation of the new curriculum. Schools must be equipped with the necessary materials and supporting programs to adequately prepare teachers (Elock, Emvula, Shikalepo., Hilma, Magano, 2023). The Cost-Conscious Curriculum Model emphasizes optimizing resource management while maintaining the quality of education, ensuring that the curriculum is efficient and sustainable (Lore, Demedts., Goele, Soogen., Helena, Brusselle., Dries, Vanacker., Hilde, Van, Puyenbroeck., Nadia, 2024)

Technology Integration. 1) The use of advanced technologies, such as the Transformer Basis Model, can improve curriculum recommendations by addressing content conflicts and enhancing personalized learning experiences (Xiaonan, Xu., Bin, Yuan., Yongyao, Mo., Tianbo, Song., Shulin, 2023); 2) Applying innovative methodologies such as InfoNce Loss can facilitate accurate content matching, thereby improving curriculum relevance and efficiency.

Student Engagement. 1) Involving students in the curriculum design process is critical. Research shows that students are often dissatisfied with existing curricula, highlighting the need for their input in restructuring educational content (Rezvani & Vakilinejad, 2015). While these recommendations focus on increasing efficiency, it is also important to consider potential challenges, such as resistance to change among educators and the need for ongoing professional development to adapt to new methodologies.

4. CONCLUSION

The curriculum of Islamic universities needs to be more efficient in preparing students for the world of work, and Islamic religious education has a significant role in shaping the intellectual and ethical competencies of graduates. The results of this study underline the importance of developing a more adaptive and collaborative curriculum between academics and industry to produce graduates who are more ready to work. It is recommended that there be a revision of the curriculum policy in Islamic universities to ensure a balance between religious education and the needs of the world of work.

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