



# The implementation of intellectual education in islamic higher education

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## ABSTRACT

Graduates and students from Islamic higher education are expected to understand Islam as a moral compass and possess practical skills to meet the needs of the job market. This study aims to ascertain how scholars in Islamic higher education apply their intellectual education. The study uses a qualitative research method to explore various literature related to the implementation of the intellectual education of Islamic higher education scholars. The data was processed through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The findings demonstrated that the implementation of intellectual education in Islamic higher education could accelerate the process of integration of science and Islamic knowledge, which is oriented towards fostering cadres of scholars who are able to be role models as a stronghold in strengthening faith and providing solutions to various contemporary problems faced by Muslims. Therefore, Islamic higher education is expected to produce intellectual scholars who are pious to God, have integrity, decent morals, and understand Islam in light of contemporary requirements.

**Keywords:** Intellectual education, Islamic higher education

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic higher education are intended to serve as a forum for upholding Islamic principles and advancing knowledge relevant to contemporary demands. Students and graduates of Islamic higher education institutions are expected to be able to master Islamic insights that can provide solutions to various religious problems in society and skills that are in accordance with the needs of the workforce (Une et al., 2015, 103–109). In addition, Islamic higher education institutions are expected to be able to integrate the development of Islamic knowledge and sciences (Bakhtiar 2018, 201). However, in

reality, most Islamic education institutions prioritize the development of scientific knowledge (natural sciences, social sciences and humanities), while some others prioritize pure Islamic knowledge.

Most Islamic higher education institutions prioritize the development of scientific knowledge (natural sciences, social sciences and humanities) since it offers a higher market value in current society, particularly in the employment sector, while Islamic knowledge is only a supplementary subject. Therefore, the institutions want to produce students and alumni with abilities according to the workforce's needs. However, it causes a moral crisis and a decrease in the value of integrity among students and graduates of Islamic higher education (Muniron et al., 2010, 117). It can be seen from frequent demonstrations against campus policies that cause losses, brawls between students, etc.

Parents of prospective students and graduate employers are concerned about this. When selecting an Islamic higher education institution as a place for their children to study, most parents expect their children to grasp moral values from the learning process. The same goes for employers who recruit prospective employees. Employers intend to hire graduates with high values of integrity and morals.

The existence of Islamic higher education institutions offers to prioritize the development of pure Islamic knowledge, where students and their graduates will master Islamic studies, such as Estimation Methodology, the Yellow Book, interpretation of the Qur'an and hadith, and have an Islamic basis in forming morals (Zuhria and Sunaryo 2020). However, the development of scientific knowledge is very minimal. Thus, the public finds it less appealing. Moreover, in the 5.0 era, positions that call for abilities connected to scientific knowledge are in high demand. Therefore, to compete in the workplace in the current environment, one needs scientific knowledge and skills. this situation becomes a challenge and a concern for Islamic higher education institutions.

To integrate Islamic knowledge with other knowledge and skills, this paper seeks to explore the intellectual education of scholars at Islamic higher education institutions as a way to integrate Islamic knowledge and scientific knowledge, which can be a remedy for the present-day issues and difficulties. It is expected that graduates and students from Islamic higher education institutions, apart from having scientific knowledge to meet the labor market needs, they also have an understanding of Islam as a foundation for morality.

## **2. METHODS**

Research is an activity carried out systematically to obtain correct and accurate ideas. Therefore, a research method is needed to work to interpret the overall meaning

of the object that is the target of research (Glaser and Strauss, 1999). The type of research used in this study is qualitative research because it aims to examine the intellectual education of scholars at Islamic higher education institutions to accelerate the process of integration between Islamic knowledge and other knowledge related to skills. Moleong (2013) defines qualitative research as research that relies on human mentality as a key research instrument.

This study explores various literature related to the implementation of the intellectual education of Islamic higher education; scholars. The data was analyzed through three stages: data reduction, presentation, and verification (Yusuf, 2017:42). This aims to ensure that the research conclusions are based on scientific principles and can be objectively justified. The data reduction stage is done by selecting, grouping, and focusing the data that has been obtained. So, at this stage, the data obtained is selected and compiled to provide convenience in data management related to the implementation of intellectual education for scholars at Islamic religious tertiary institutions (Harahap, 2020). Efforts to select and group data were carried out to support the validity of all the data that has been found. At the data presentation stage, it is necessary to present data that has been put together based on the results of data reduction, and that is adjusted to the needs of the research to provide convenience in drawing conclusions (Creswell, 2009). So that the results of research on the implementation of the intellectual education of scholars in Islamic religious tertiary institutions can be well understood and make it easy to move on to the next stage. After going through reduction and presentation stages, conclusion drawing/verification is the last stage of the data analysis. Conclusions can be drawn about the implementation of the intellectual education of scholars in Islamic religious tertiary institutions.

The use of qualitative research methods in tracing, analyzing, and describing data on the implementation of intellectual education by scholars in Islamic religious tertiary institutions is expected to be able to describe data systematically and provide guarantees for the validity of the data. Therefore, all procedures related to qualitative research have been carried out optimally so that the accuracy of this research can be accounted for.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The current development of civilization necessitates Islamic universities to transform in nurturing students. They serve as the main source of hope in producing a generation with quality in terms of morals and skills. As stated in constitution Number 20 of 2003, Chapter 3, national education aims to develop the potential of learners to become individuals who have faith and devotion to the Almighty God, possess noble

character, good health, knowledge, competence, creativity, independence, and become democratic and responsible citizens (Pemerintah RI, 2003, 6).

Islamic higher education is expected to develop all the potentials of students which are related to skill outlook, and intergrated in various dimensions such as morality, religion, personality, social, and culture. This will enable them to grow and develop as individuals and members of society while practicing the teachings of Islam (Widodo, 2015). Education plays a crucial role in providing the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours needed for the continuity or change of society. Joe Park (1970) explains that "Education is the art or process of imparting or acquiring knowledge and habits through instructional study" (p. 3). Education emphasizes the activities of teaching and nurturing students through habituation so that they can adapt to society after completing their education.

The purpose of Islamic universities is to produce useful outputs for society, individuals who can practice the principles of Islam, and develop and disseminate Islamic teachings based on the needs of the community (Darajat, 2012). This is the goal of Islamic education in society. Therefore, Islamic universities must be careful in formulating development plans and providing quality assurance oriented to the needs of the community. In setting educational goals, historical analysis of the needs of society oriented to reality, analysis of the actual life describing the overall activities of society, and normative values based on morality and the philosophy of the state should be taken into account (Assingkilly, 2021). This way, the graduates of Islamic universities can adapt to society and bring about changes that impact societal well-being.

Islamic universities are expected to capture opportunities related to current issues and changes in the religious climate in society as a process of adaptation to changing trends (Khaerunnas & Anwar, 2018). This should be considered when formulating strategic plans to produce high-quality outputs and remain competitive institutions. Efforts to achieve high-quality outputs must be supported by high-quality inputs and learning processes (Shulhan & Soin, 2013). Both of these factors play a crucial role in determining the quality of educational programs' outputs. Therefore, Islamic religious universities need to develop planned and sustainable planning to provide quality assurance for the outputs, as indicated in Government Regulation No. 57 of 2021 on National Education Standards, Article 3, Paragraph 3, which emphasizes the planned, directed, and sustainable improvement of education quality (Pemerintah RI, 2021, 5). This way, the quality of outputs in Islamic higher education can be maintained and continuously improved.

Currently, the dichotomy between scientific knowledge and religious insights in the field of education is a concerning issue. On one hand, knowledge is perceived as secular

and dichotomous, leading to conflicts between science and religion caused by secularism in education. On the other hand, the dichotomy of knowledge arises from closed-mindedness or a reluctance to understand religion and interpret revelation as a textual corpus, resulting in isolated religious studies that are not communicated with the development of knowledge and civilization at large (Harahap, 2016).

There are five dichotomies faced by the community today, namely: (1) vertical dichotomy, which is the separation of knowledge from God, where anthropocentric scientists feel that they achieve various discoveries without being related to God; (2) horizontal dichotomy, which can occur in two forms: between religious scientists (religious knowledge) who operate independently in their own orthodox corridors, only focusing on one dimension and ignoring the development of other religious knowledge fields. On the other hand, it can occur in an atomistic form, where the approach in a specific field (a particular discipline) is not communicated with the approach (discipline) of other fields of knowledge; (3) actuality dichotomy, which refers to the vast gap between the depth of knowledge and its actual application in helping and developing human life and civilization, or between the epistemology of knowledge and its implementation (its axiology) that are disconnected and become an unthinkable realm, so that knowledge is pursued for the sake of knowledge alone; (4) ethical dichotomy, which refers to a considerable gap between mastery or depth of knowledge and ethics and moral behaviour. Thus, knowledge is not aligned with the morality of its practitioners; (5) intrapersonal dichotomy, which refers to the lack of awareness among knowledge practitioners about the connection between their spiritual and physical aspects in the development of knowledge. (Harahap 2016) These conditions have led to the increasing division among Muslims.

Based on these perspectives, it can be understood that the condition of educational institutions in the Islamic world in the past few decades and even until now is still in decline due to various factors, including: society has been conditioned by colonial agendas to be indifferent towards the Islamic upbringing of the younger generation, which has led to a decline in Islamic studies. The government has also chosen to only fund educational institutions that they categorize as modern, while institutions with Islamic curriculum are not provided with funding. This is understandable since the government is controlled by individuals who have received higher education in institutions built and funded by the state, both domestically and internationally. As a result, the values and vision of Islamic education and Islamic worldview that should be inherent in them are absent, as those who educate them have never internalized Islamic values and that vision into their own beings, and very few understand them correctly. (al-Faruqi, 1984)

However, as Nasr stated, various branches of knowledge or forms of knowledge are ultimately interconnected when viewed from an Islamic perspective. He says that Islam does not recognize an essential separation between "religious knowledge" and "profane knowledge." The various sciences and intellectual perspectives developed in Islam do have a hierarchy, but ultimately, this hierarchy leads to knowledge of the "Ultimate Reality," which is the essence of all knowledge. (Nasr 1976, 13-14) This condition demands Islamic universities to produce graduates with a deep understanding of Islam to shape individuals who possess noble character and skills that align with the needs of the job market to meet the challenges of civilization.

Based on this, the implementation of intellectual education of scholars in universities aims to integrate scientific knowledge and Islamic insight, and to produce students and graduates with comprehensive Islamic knowledge and skills.

### **Integration of Science and Islamic Insights**

The implementation of intellectual education for scholars in Islamic higher education institutions restores the function of these institutions as establishments that nurture and prepare scholars with sensitivity towards society. Their every action and speech can be emulated, rectifying and enlightening society comprehensively about the teachings of Islam, thus becoming a stronghold in strengthening the people's faith in practicing the teachings of Islam. As stated in Surah Al-Ahzab/33:21, the presence of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) serves as a magnificent role model for the Muslim community.

The integration of science and Islamic insights is carried out by developing studies that are relevant to the needs of society. These include skills in solving religious issues within the community, skills required in the job market, and fostering attitudes through Islamic studies. As a result, graduates of Islamic higher education institutions do not become a burden to their families because they possess life skills that enable them to interact with the working world.

Intellectual education in Islamic higher education institutions will produce individuals who will assume the responsibility of being exemplary in practicing the teachings of Islam within society, becoming role models who guide and adhere to the core principles of Islamic teachings. They can even be recognized as religious figures within the community. Therefore, every student must be equipped with a broad Islamic understanding to serve as a resource for motivating the religious spirit of society.

The existence of graduates from Islamic higher education institutions is expected to build and promote a harmonious religious atmosphere within society. Their presence in spreading religious concepts is part of their service to society. Thus, the community

continuously receives guidance and direction regarding the teachings of Islam, as emphasized in Surah Al-An'am/6:51, which emphasizes the need to consistently provide reminders for those who are devout. Additionally, it is hoped that this presence will create an atmosphere of harmony among people of different religions.

The implementation of intellectual education for scholars in Islamic higher education institutions is also expected to produce alumni who will serve as a defence against challenges to the faith of Muslims in facing various life obstacles. Islam teaches its followers to strengthen their faith and patience in confronting the trials of life. Therefore, the conviction of Muslims should not be easily shaken by the influences and challenges posed by the development of modern social institutions. This objective can be achieved through interactions between individuals and groups.

The output of intellectual education for scholars in Islamic higher education institutions is also expected to offer various solutions to the religious issues faced by society. Currently, the Muslim community faces challenges related to their understanding of religious concepts. This situation arises due to distorted interpretations of Islamic teachings by some Muslims who fail to grasp the comprehensive nature of these teachings. Therefore, the presence of students and alumni from Islamic religious higher education institutions plays a significant role in disseminating the comprehensive teachings of Islam to all segments of the Muslim community. This effort is part of their commitment to rectify and enlighten society regarding the comprehensive teachings of Islam.

The main responsibility of Islamic religious higher education institutions is to enlighten Muslims about the fundamental teachings of Islam comprehensively. Therefore, the presence of intellectual education for scholars in these institutions is expected to provide students with the opportunity to understand the core teachings of Islam holistically. This knowledge will equip them to interact with religious issues within society.

At its core, the program of intellectual education for scholars is designed to meet the needs of society as an effort to solve various religious issues that arise within the community. Therefore, every student is equipped with knowledge to acquire Cognitive Flexibility skills. As stated by Andrade & Clara:

"Its purpose is to acquire the advanced level of knowledge in structured domains and to facilitate the transfer of knowledge to new situations. The ability to restructure this knowledge to solve a new situation or problem is called Cognitive Flexibility." (p, 1122)

This education program aims to enhance the abilities of each student to address and prevent the societal problems that arise due to the dynamics of modern society. Hence, the improvement of skills in students of Islamic higher education needs to be balanced with potential related to intellectual, cognitive, verbal information, motor skills, and attitudes (Gagne 1970, 25). This way, the output of Islamic higher education can shed light on various contemporary issues faced by society.

### **Producing graduates with skills and Islamic perspectives**

The current state of civilization has led to a discourse of pragmatism in every aspect of human life, including educational institutions, which are now seen as a means to obtain degrees as a prerequisite for entering the job market. This means that educational institutions nowadays are primarily seen as a pathway to enter the workforce, emphasizing the development of intellectuality alone. This situation arises due to the separation between knowledge and religious studies.

A human life that prioritizes materialism and solely depends on intellectuality is essentially empty without meaning. Because its orientation is solely focused on material gain. Essentially, the external life cannot be separated from the internal life. The reality of our current life shows unease resulting from the separation of faith from knowledge. Some people in the West are starting to worry about the development of science and technology that negates the existence of religious perspectives. There is a concern that continuous development in this manner will bring about the destruction of humankind itself.

In response to this situation, Islam offers a comprehensive solution because Islam does not differentiate between Islamic perspectives and skills perspectives. Both are interconnected and mutually needed. A faithful Muslim will apply their belief in all aspects and fields of life, including science, technology, politics, social matters, economics, and others. In the teachings of Islam, faith, knowledge, and actions are integral and cannot be separated from one another. An action performed by a Muslim is considered an act of worship if it is based on faith and piety as part of the Islamic perspective. The development of knowledge is also considered an act of worship and can bring benefit to life and the environment when developed based on faith and piety.

Islamic teachings do not contradict the development of Islamic perspectives and skill perspectives. Islamic perspectives and skill perspectives are oriented towards self-actualization in fulfilling professional tasks responsibly. Therefore, every task completed with a sense of responsibility is attributed solely to seeking the pleasure of Allah in the form of righteous deeds. Hence, the development of knowledge related to skills is always supported to be balanced with Islamic perspectives.



Regarding knowledge, Allah SWT commands humans to constantly reflect on what exists on Earth. Because thinking is the beginning of acquiring knowledge. In the Qur'an, Allah SWT mentions derivatives (forms) of the words "fakkara" and "tafakkara," which mean thinking, 19 times. Additionally, there are several synonymous words for thinking mentioned in a large number of verses, such as "nadzara" (contemplating, reflecting) in more than 30 verses, "tadabbara" (pondering), "faqiha" (understanding) in 16 verses, "tadzakkara" (paying attention, remembering) in more than 40 verses, and words rooted in "akala" (thinking, understanding) in more than 45 verses. This shows that the Muslim community is always guided to balance Islamic insight with skills and knowledge.

The output of certain educational institutions that rely solely on skill-based knowledge will produce materialistic experts who view all types of work based on profit and loss. If a job is perceived to benefit oneself and their career advancement, it will be pursued with diligence, but social-oriented work will be considered a waste of time and abandoned because everything is based solely on profit. Thus, every job is pursued to achieve financial satisfaction. This brings concerns for employers, as the professional world demands not only professionalism but also wisdom in carrying out social work that focuses not only on financial gain. Therefore, Islamic higher education balances skill-based knowledge with Islamic insight, which is needed by students and alumni for their future in the professional world.

Intellectual education of scholars in Islamic higher education institutions aims to provide harmony between Islamic insight and life skills as preparation for students and alumni in facing life. The harmony between the development of knowledge, which represents skill-based insight for modern work challenges, and Islamic insight, which conveys values that shape a noble character, receive primary attention in nurturing the young generation of Muslims. When coupled with moral values, knowledge will produce graduates with work expertise and integrity. These two aspects are the main requirements for users of graduates in fulfilling responsibilities for a particular job.

In essence, intellectual education produces experts who possess integrity, noble character, and responsibility because of their devotion to Allah SWT, which controls their awareness of being accountable before Him in the afterlife. As mentioned in the Quran (Surah Fatir/35:28), only scholars fear Allah SWT among His servants. This verse shows that Islamic insight, accompanied by skill-based knowledge, will generate a generation that excels in a specific field and is accompanied by noble character as part of Islamic teachings. Thus, every entrusted task will be carried out with a sense of responsibility.

Experts produced through the implementation of intellectual education in Islamic higher education institutions will possess work spirit, creativity, innovation, and a sense of responsibility to complete every task. Work ethic, creativity, and innovation are

obtained through the development of skill-based insight, while responsibility is part of the integrity and moral values produced through Islamic insight. As a result, the output can build trust among stakeholders because they possess the required skills for the job market, integrity, and noble character.

Besides professionalism, integrity and moral character are essential requirements for graduates in the hiring process. This is an effort to avoid negligence of duties and responsibilities in fulfilling a specific position. Therefore, through the implementation of intellectual education of scholars in Islamic religious higher education institutions, graduates who possess the necessary skills, integrity, noble character, faith, and piety towards Allah SWT will be produced, in line with the goals of national education and the goals of Islamic education, which seek harmony between worldly and spiritual happiness.

This indicates that Islam is a religion-oriented towards the future (not only a religion suitable for the modern era, but also for the postmodern era), because Islam provides the following guarantees: (1) Islam is capable of providing resilience for its followers against the shocks of change, as humans increasingly need a "lifeline" to face personal issues and the threats of change that occur around them. (2) Islam teaches an inclusive theology that offers goodness to all humanity, as the present and future world is pluralistic. (3) Islam is a religion capable of driving work ethics, economic ethics, and the ethics of knowledge, which are the driving forces behind today's globalized world. (4) Islam encourages its followers to develop intellectual and spiritual aspects in a balanced manner, so that they do not solely pursue material wealth but neglect their spiritual well-being, and vice versa. (5) Islam instils in humans an awareness of their position as Allah's caliphs (representatives of Allah) on Earth, who are responsible for its prosperity and care, rather than exploiting it arbitrarily.

The balance between the development of Islamic insights and practical skills is part of the aspirations of Islamic teachings, which aim to make every believer a useful person for oneself and society. Therefore, in navigating life, humans need a balance between Islamic insights that shape their spiritual state to always draw closer to the Creator, so as not to experience despair and stress when facing various challenges easily. This condition certainly needs continuous support and spiritual nourishment through in-depth study of Islamic teachings. Additionally, practical skills provide the foundation for developing creativity and innovation in finding solutions to various problems encountered in the workplace. Therefore, practical skills must be supported by continuous training according to the needs.

Competition and the rigorous selection process in the job market require professionalism, integrity, and moral character from job applicants. As a result,

graduates of Islamic higher education institutions sometimes have limited opportunities to compete because they are perceived to possess expertise only in religious fields. Therefore, by implementing intellectual education at Islamic higher education institutions, will allow for the harmonization of Islamic insights and practical skills, graduates are encouraged to compete in the job market. This instils enthusiasm and self-confidence in graduates of Islamic higher education institutions to compete in the workforce.

Such achievements must be supported by the seriousness of Islamic higher education institutions in implementing intellectual education for scholars, which provides space to balance Islamic insights and the development of knowledge related to practical skills. Therefore, students and graduates of Islamic higher education institutions should not only delve into Islamic insights without being complemented by practical skills, or prioritize the development of knowledge related to practical skills and neglect Islamic insights.

Intellectual education for scholars that balances Islamic insights and practical skills will promote the increased value of Islamic higher education institutions within society. Because the balance between the two is the main expectation of stakeholders. Thus, students and alumni will find their place in society and the job market, which demand work professionalism and responsible personal qualities in performing tasks.

This can be achieved through a shared vision to implement intellectual education for scholars in every aspect of Islamic higher education institutions. Each aspect has its own role in supporting the realization of this vision. Therefore, it is expected that all aspects can synergize to successfully implement intellectual education for scholars as part of the restoration of the role of Islamic higher education institutions, which are oriented towards nurturing intellectual scholar cadres.

The implementation of intellectual education for scholars in Islamic higher education institutions is certainly not an easy task. There are various challenges, especially external ones related to government regulations that tend to prioritize the development of knowledge related to practical skills as a means of livelihood, while neglecting Islamic insights. Additionally, there are internal challenges related to elements of education that need to be addressed. Therefore, synergy among all elements is needed to implement intellectual education for scholars and balance Islamic insights with practical skills.

In essence, the implementation of intellectual education for scholars in Islamic higher education institutions is not an easy matter. The challenges faced are not only external but also internal. However, these challenges can be overcome with the

understanding and agreement of all elements of Islamic higher education institutions regarding the importance of harmonizing Islamic insights and practical skills to produce graduates with the appropriate competencies required by the job market in the modern era, accompanied by control over attitudes. This will generate professional experts with integrity and noble character, meeting the expectations of stakeholders. Thus, implementing intellectual education for scholars in Islamic higher education institutions is one solution to produce a generation with expertise and noble character.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Based on the various explanations above, it can be understood that the implementation of intellectual education for scholars in Islamic higher education institutions is a necessity to achieve the integration of knowledge that aligns with the needs of the job market and Islamic knowledge, which is oriented towards nurturing scholars who can serve as role models and fortify faith, providing solutions to various contemporary issues faced by the Muslim community. This will produce intellectual scholars who combine the qualities of a scientist, intellectual, and someone close to Allah, possessing both practical and Islamic insights, integrity, noble character, faith, and piety towards Allah SWT.

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