

REPOSITIONING ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM: A PHILOSOPHICAL CRITIQUE OF THE TEACHER ORDINANCE LEGACY

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Abstract: *The positioning of Islamic Religious Education within Indonesia's national curriculum cannot be adequately understood without examining the epistemological legacy of colonial educational policy. During the Dutch colonial period, regulations such as the Teacher Ordinance of 1905 and its 1925 revision, along with the Wild School Ordinance of 1932, were introduced to regulate and control Islamic teaching and indigenous educational institutions. Beyond administrative control, these policies established a regulatory logic that shaped the authority, legitimacy, and scope of Islamic knowledge within the educational system. This study offers a philosophical critique of the Teacher Ordinance legacy by analyzing how its underlying logic continues to influence the epistemological position of PAI in contemporary Indonesian education. Employing a qualitative library-based method, the analysis proceeds through historical-textual examination, philosophical interpretation using a power-knowledge framework, and normative-conceptual reconstruction. The findings demonstrate that colonial policy produced an enduring epistemic structure characterized by the bureaucratic regulation of teachers, the hierarchical classification of knowledge, and the subordination of religious education to secular-rational standards. These structures persist in transformed forms within the national curriculum, contributing to the marginal epistemological position of PAI. From the perspective of Islamic philosophy of education, this condition reflects a disjunction between the integrative conception of knowledge (ilm) and the fragmented logic of modern curriculum design. This study argues that the problem is not merely institutional but epistemological, and proposes a philosophical repositioning of PAI as an integrative and foundational component of the Indonesian national education system.*

Keywords: *Colonial Education Policy, Islamic Religious Education, National Curriculum, Philosophy of Education, Teacher Ordinance.*

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Abstrak: Posisi Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) dalam kurikulum nasional Indonesia tidak dapat dipahami secara memadai tanpa menelaah warisan epistemologis kebijakan pendidikan kolonial. Pada masa kolonial Belanda, regulasi seperti Ordonansi Guru tahun 1905 dan revisinya tahun 1925, serta Ordonansi Sekolah Liar tahun 1932, diberlakukan untuk mengatur dan mengendalikan pengajaran Islam serta lembaga pendidikan pribumi. Kebijakan tersebut tidak hanya bersifat administratif, tetapi juga membentuk logika regulasi yang menentukan otoritas, legitimasi, dan ruang lingkup pengetahuan Islam dalam sistem pendidikan. Penelitian ini menawarkan kritik filosofis terhadap warisan Ordonansi Guru dengan menganalisis bagaimana logika regulatif tersebut terus memengaruhi posisi epistemologis PAI dalam pendidikan Indonesia kontemporer. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka dengan pendekatan filosofis-historis melalui tiga tahap analisis: kajian tekstual-historis terhadap kebijakan kolonial, interpretasi filosofis berbasis relasi kuasa-pengetahuan, serta rekonstruksi konseptual-normatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kebijakan kolonial melahirkan struktur epistemik yang bertahan, ditandai oleh birokratisasi guru, hierarki pengetahuan, dan subordinasi pendidikan agama terhadap standar rasional-sekuler. Struktur ini tetap hadir dalam bentuk yang telah bertransformasi dalam kurikulum nasional, sehingga berkontribusi pada marginalisasi epistemologis PAI. Dari perspektif filsafat pendidikan Islam, kondisi ini mencerminkan ketegangan antara konsep pengetahuan yang integratif (*'ilm*) dan logika kurikulum modern yang terfragmentasi. Oleh karena itu, persoalan yang dihadapi bukan semata bersifat institusional, melainkan epistemologis. Penelitian ini mengusulkan reposisi filosofis PAI sebagai komponen integratif dan fundamental dalam sistem pendidikan nasional Indonesia.

Kata-kata Kunci: *Filsafat Pendidikan, Kebijakan Pendidikan Kolonial, Kurikulum Nasional, Ordonansi Guru, Pendidikan Agama Islam.*

Introduction

Education has long been recognized as a fundamental instrument for the advancement of civilization, intellectual development, and social transformation. Through education, societies cultivate knowledge, shape ethical consciousness, and build collective identities that influence political and cultural life. In contemporary global discourse, access to education is widely recognized as a fundamental human right that must be guaranteed for all individuals without discrimination. This principle is affirmed in Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (United Nations 1966), which states that everyone has the right to education. Indonesia ratified this covenant through Law No. 11 of 2005, thereby strengthening its commitment to ensuring equitable access to education. Furthermore, the constitutional foundation of educational rights is articulated in the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, particularly Articles 28C and 28E, which recognize education as an essential component of human rights. The constitution also mandates the state to organize the national education system and allocate significant financial resources for educational development, including the provision that at least twenty percent of national and regional budgets must be allocated to education (Saul 2016; Siddika 2023, 4157).

Despite these normative commitments, the historical development of education in Indonesia cannot be separated from the colonial legacy that shaped its institutional structure and intellectual orientation. During the Dutch colonial period, educational opportunities were distributed unequally according to racial

and social hierarchies. Formal educational institutions such as the *Europeesche Lagere School* were primarily intended for European children, while indigenous populations had limited access to formal education (Ricklefs 2008, 201). Although some indigenous elites were later allowed to attend such institutions in the early twentieth century, the broader indigenous population remained largely excluded from formal educational opportunities. This unequal educational structure stimulated the emergence of indigenous educational movements that sought to challenge colonial domination and expand educational access for local communities. One of the most influential figures in this movement was Ki Hajar Dewantara, who founded the Taman Siswa educational movement to promote educational equality, cultural dignity, and national consciousness among indigenous people (Dahlan 2020, 88; Rasmana 2019; Rasmana and Sumiyatun 2021; Suminto 1985, 67).

Alongside nationalist educational initiatives, Islamic educational institutions such as pesantren and madrasah experienced significant growth during the early twentieth century. These institutions played an important role not only in transmitting Islamic knowledge but also in shaping social awareness and intellectual independence among Muslim communities. However, from the perspective of colonial authorities, the expansion of Islamic education was perceived as a potential threat to political stability. Islamic scholars and religious teachers often held influential positions within local communities and possessed the capacity to mobilize resistance against colonial domination. Consequently, the Dutch colonial government introduced a number of regulatory policies designed to control Islamic educational activities.

One of the most significant policies in this regard was the Teacher Ordinance (*Goeroe Ordonnantie*) issued in 1905 and revised in 1925. The regulation required Islamic religious teachers in Java and Madura to obtain written permission from colonial authorities before conducting teaching activities and to provide information regarding their students. Although the revised regulation in 1925 replaced the requirement for formal permission with a notification system, the policy continued to function as a mechanism of surveillance and administrative control over Islamic educational institutions (Steenbrink 1984, 156). The colonial government justified this regulation as a measure to maintain political stability, since Islamic education was considered capable of generating anti-colonial sentiments among indigenous communities.

The Teacher Ordinance generated strong criticism and resistance from Muslim scholars and Islamic organizations who regarded the regulation as discriminatory and restrictive toward the freedom of religious teaching. Prominent Islamic scholars such as Haji Rasul (Abdul Karim Amrullah) opposed the policy because it interfered with the dissemination of Islamic teachings. Likewise, major Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah criticized the regulation because it placed Islamic educators under colonial supervision and limited the autonomy of Islamic educational institutions (Noer 1994, 189).

In addition to regulating Islamic teachers, the colonial government also

introduced the Wild School Ordinance (*Wildeschoolen Ordonantie*) in 1932, which restricted the establishment of private indigenous schools. This regulation required educational institutions to obtain official permission from colonial authorities and imposed legal sanctions for violations. The policy was widely interpreted as an attempt to suppress indigenous educational initiatives that promoted nationalist awareness and anti-colonial sentiments. Institutions associated with the Taman Siswa movement and Islamic educational organizations were among the primary targets of this regulation. The ordinance triggered widespread protests from nationalist leaders and educators. Ki Hajar Dewantara strongly opposed the policy and threatened civil resistance if the regulation was not revoked. Due to increasing public opposition from nationalist groups and Islamic organizations, the colonial government eventually repealed the ordinance in 1933 (Ricklefs 2008, 214).

From a philosophical perspective, these colonial educational policies demonstrate the close relationship between knowledge and power. Educational regulations functioned as instruments through which colonial authorities attempted to control the production and dissemination of knowledge within society. The relationship between knowledge and power has been extensively discussed by Foucault, who argued that knowledge is often embedded within structures of power that determine which forms of knowledge are considered legitimate within a particular social order. In the colonial context, regulations such as the Teacher Ordinance and the Wild School Ordinance can therefore be interpreted as mechanisms of epistemic control aimed at limiting the influence of Islamic knowledge and indigenous educational initiatives (Foucault 1980, 153).

Within the broader discourse of Islamic philosophy of education, the marginalization of Islamic knowledge within modern educational systems has also been critically examined by several Muslim scholars. Rahman, emphasized the need to reconstruct Islamic education by integrating classical Islamic scholarship with modern intellectual disciplines in order to overcome the fragmentation of knowledge within Muslim societies (Rahman 1982, 17). Similarly, Al-Attas, argued that the crisis of modern Muslim education stems from the loss of the metaphysical and philosophical foundations of Islamic knowledge and the separation between religious and secular intellectual traditions (Attas 1999, 43).

Recent scholarly studies have explored various aspects of educational policy, teacher professionalism, and curriculum development across different contexts. Cananau, Edling, and Haglund (2025, 104816), for instance, examined the role of critical thinking within teacher education policy frameworks, while Coombes and Mark highlighted structural pressures contributing to teacher disengagement (Coombes and Mark 2026, 40–55). Other studies have focused on policy frameworks shaping educational practice and teacher development. In the context of Islamic education, Muluk et al. (2019, 445–55), analyzed curriculum development in Islamic higher education institutions, and Muthohirin (2025, 102153), examined the transformation of Islamic studies in Indonesian State Islamic Universities.

However, despite these contributions, existing studies tend to treat educational

policy, curriculum development, and Islamic education as separate domains of analysis. There remains a significant gap in understanding how colonial educational policies—particularly the Teacher Ordinance—have historically shaped the epistemological and structural position of Islamic Religious Education within the national curriculum. Moreover, previous research has not sufficiently employed a philosophical–critical framework, especially one grounded in the analysis of power–knowledge relations, to interrogate the long-term impact of colonial policy on contemporary curriculum structures.

This article addresses this gap by offering a philosophical critique of the Teacher Ordinance legacy, positioning it not merely as a historical regulation but as a formative structure that continues to influence the marginalization of Islamic Religious Education. Unlike previous studies that are either descriptive-historical or policy-oriented, this study integrates historical analysis, philosophical reflection, and critical theory to reconstruct the epistemological foundation of Islamic education. The novelty of this article lies in its effort to bridge colonial policy history with contemporary curriculum philosophy, thereby proposing a conceptual framework for repositioning Islamic Religious Education as an integral and transformative component of the national education system.

Although these studies provide valuable insights into educational policy and institutional transformation, relatively limited attention has been devoted to examining colonial educational regulations from a philosophical perspective that connects historical policy with the epistemological positioning of Islamic Religious Education within the national curriculum. Most studies focus on contemporary educational policy or teacher development, while fewer analyze how colonial policies shaped the structural and epistemological status of Islamic education within modern educational systems. Therefore, a philosophical examination of the Teacher Ordinance and related colonial educational policies is necessary to understand how historical power structures continue to influence the positioning of Islamic Religious Education in contemporary Indonesia.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the philosophical implications of colonial educational regulations—particularly the Teacher Ordinance and the Wild School Ordinance—in shaping the positioning of Islamic Religious Education within the Indonesian national curriculum. By examining the intersection between colonial governance, knowledge production, and educational authority, this research seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how historical structures of power influenced the epistemological construction of Islamic education within the national education system.

This study employs a qualitative library-based research design focusing on the analysis of colonial policy texts and their implications for Islamic Religious Education (Kalisdha 2023,700–707; Zhang et al. 2023, 103507). The unit of analysis consists of key colonial regulatory documents, particularly the *Teacher Ordinance of 1905 and its 1925 revision*, as well as the *Wild School Ordinance of 1932*, alongside related archival records, policy commentaries, and secondary scholarly interpretations. The study proceeds in three analytical stages. First,

a historical-textual analysis is conducted to examine the content, structure, and regulatory intent of the ordinances, focusing on provisions related to the control, supervision, and restriction of Islamic teaching and educators (Kesić 2024, 101072; Subramaniam et al. 2021, 101074). This stage distinguishes between primary historical data (colonial regulations and archival sources) and secondary interpretations in existing scholarship.

Second, a philosophical interpretation is applied by reading these regulatory texts through a power–knowledge framework, examining how authority over education is constructed, legitimized, and institutionalized. In this stage, the ordinances are not treated merely as administrative policies, but as epistemic instruments that define what counts as legitimate knowledge, who is authorized to teach, and which forms of education are marginalized (Coombes and Tresidder 2026; Yasmin et al. 2024, 150–58). Third, a normative-conceptual analysis is undertaken to reconstruct the philosophical foundations of Islamic Religious Education within the contemporary national curriculum. This involves identifying the enduring effects of colonial policy on the epistemological status of Islamic education and formulating a conceptual argument for its repositioning as an integral and transformative component of the curriculum. Through this threefold analytical procedure—historical, philosophical, and normative—this study ensures a clear distinction between empirical description, interpretive analysis, and theoretical reconstruction, while maintaining coherence within a critical philosophy of education framework (Chu 2015, 36–41; Miao 2019, 914–26; Rashevskaja and Semerikov 2026, 100147).

Colonial Educational Policy and the Regulation of Islamic Knowledge

Colonial educational policies in the Dutch East Indies, particularly the Teacher Ordinance of 1905 and its 1925 revision, were not merely administrative mechanisms but formed part of a broader strategy to regulate and delimit the transmission of Islamic knowledge. These policies introduced systems of licensing, surveillance, and restriction that positioned Islamic teachers and institutions under strict colonial oversight (Aziz 2026, 1–24; Yanas et al. 2025, 153–63). In this context, Islamic education was not only controlled institutionally but also redefined epistemically, as its authority was subordinated to colonial standards of legitimacy. Rather than assuming a direct causal continuity between colonial regulations and contemporary curriculum structures, this study adopts a genealogical perspective to trace how certain regulatory logics persist, transform, and reappear across different historical periods. Following the notion of power–knowledge as articulated by Michel Foucault, colonial policies are understood as producing enduring frameworks that shape how knowledge is classified, authorized, and institutionalized (Ricklefs 2008).

Historical evidence indicates that while formal colonial regulations were abolished after independence, several structural patterns—such as the

differentiation between “general” and “religious” education, the bureaucratic regulation of teachers, and the hierarchical positioning of knowledge domains—continued to influence postcolonial educational governance. These patterns can be observed in the gradual institutionalization of Islamic Religious Education within the national system, where it is often positioned as a complementary rather than foundational component of the curriculum (Steenbrink 2013, 104–28; Thohir et al. 2021, e08237). Therefore, the relationship between the Teacher Ordinance and contemporary curriculum policy should not be understood as a linear or deterministic causation, but as a discursive and institutional continuity, in which colonial modes of regulating knowledge continue to inform the epistemological status of Islamic education. This genealogical reading allows us to critically examine how historical structures of control are rearticulated within modern educational frameworks, including recent curriculum reforms and teacher professionalization policies (Natalis et al. 2025, 104817; Saputra et al. 2025, 103668).

To bridge these historical dynamics with the broader analytical framework of this study, it is important to situate colonial educational policies not only as regulatory instruments but also as formative moments in the construction of epistemic hierarchies. The colonial encounter generated a layered structure of knowledge in which Islamic learning was repositioned within a system that privileged secular-administrative rationality. This repositioning did not occur in isolation; rather, it interacted with local actors, institutions, and intellectual traditions, producing hybrid configurations of authority and legitimacy. As a result, the legacy of colonial regulation cannot be reduced to formal policy remnants alone, but must also be understood through the subtle reconfiguration of how Islamic knowledge is valued, transmitted, and institutionalized within changing socio-political contexts.

Building on this perspective, the following discussion shifts toward examining how these inherited structures are negotiated and reinterpreted in contemporary educational settings. The persistence of regulatory logics is not merely a matter of institutional continuity, but also reflects ongoing contestations over the meaning, scope, and authority of Islamic education in the modern nation-state. By exploring these contestations, this study moves beyond a purely historical account and engages with the dynamic processes through which past frameworks are adapted, resisted, or rearticulated in present-day curriculum policies and pedagogical practices. This transition enables a more nuanced understanding of how colonial legacies continue to shape, yet do not fully determine, the evolving landscape of Islamic education.

The Teacher Ordinance of 1905 and Its Philosophical Implications

The Teacher Ordinance of 1905 represented one of the earliest systematic attempts by a colonial government to regulate Islamic religious instruction through administrative mechanisms rather than outright prohibition. The regulation required any person wishing to teach Islam in Java and Madura to submit a written application to the local Dutch administrative official (*Controleur*) containing information about themselves, their qualifications, the location of their proposed

teaching, and the names of their prospective students. Approval could be withheld if the colonial official deemed the applicant to pose a threat to public order. This requirement effectively placed the Islamic teacher in a position of administrative dependence upon colonial authority, fundamentally altering the traditional relationship between the *ulama* and their communities (Steenbrink 1986, 158).

From the perspective of Foucauldian analysis, the Teacher Ordinance can be understood as an instance of what Foucault described as disciplinary power—a form of power that operates not through direct coercion but through the systematic organization of space, time, and activity to produce docile and manageable subjects. By requiring Islamic teachers to register with colonial authorities, the ordinance subjected them to a form of administrative surveillance that transformed them from autonomous religious authorities into administratively legible subjects of colonial governance. This transformation had profound implications for the epistemological status of Islamic knowledge within the colonial educational order, since it subjected the transmission of Islamic knowledge to the oversight of secular colonial bureaucracy (Foucault 1980, 119).

The philosophical implications of this arrangement extend beyond the immediate political context of colonial rule. The Teacher Ordinance established a precedent for state regulation of religious education that continued into the post-independence period and that continues to shape the relationship between the Indonesian state and Islamic educational institutions today. The National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, for instance, requires all educational institutions—including Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*)—to register with the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Religious Affairs, thereby maintaining a form of administrative oversight that, while serving legitimate quality assurance purposes, also preserves something of the regulatory logic of the colonial ordinance (Azra 2019, 203).

To further deepen this analysis, it is necessary to consider how the Teacher Ordinance not only functioned as a regulatory tool but also contributed to the gradual redefinition of religious authority within a modern bureaucratic framework. The requirement of formal registration introduced criteria of legitimacy that were external to the traditional epistemic foundations of Islamic scholarship, such as sanad (chains of transmission) and recognition within scholarly networks. In doing so, the ordinance subtly shifted the basis of authority from communal and scholarly validation toward state recognition, thereby embedding a new layer of bureaucratic rationality into the practice of Islamic teaching. This shift marked an early moment in the transformation of religious authority into a category that could be administratively classified, monitored, and, when necessary, restricted.

At the same time, this transformation should not be interpreted as a unilateral imposition without response or adaptation from local actors. Islamic teachers and institutions often navigated, negotiated, and, in some cases, strategically appropriated these regulatory frameworks to sustain their educational activities. This dynamic interaction highlights that colonial power, while pervasive, was never absolute; it operated within a field of contestation in which indigenous

actors retained agency. Recognizing this interplay allows the analysis to move beyond a purely structural account of domination and toward a more nuanced understanding of how regulatory regimes are mediated through everyday practices. Consequently, the following section will examine how these patterns of negotiation and adaptation continue to inform contemporary forms of teacher professionalization and institutional governance in Islamic education.

The Wild School Ordinance of 1932 and Epistemic Suppression

The Wild School Ordinance of 1932 represented a more aggressive intervention into indigenous educational activity than the Teacher Ordinance, reflecting heightened colonial anxiety about the spread of nationalist and Islamic ideas through unregulated schools. The term ‘wild schools’ (*wildescholen*) was applied by colonial authorities to any private school that did not receive government funding or recognition—a category that encompassed the vast majority of Islamic educational institutions as well as nationalist schools associated with movements such as Taman Siswa, Muhammadiyah, and Sarekat Islam (Suminto 1985, 112).

The ordinance required all such schools to obtain official permission from colonial authorities before opening, and empowered local officials to close schools and prosecute teachers who operated without permission. The philosophical significance of this measure lies in its explicit equation of unregulated indigenous education with disorder and danger—an equation that reflects the colonial epistemological framework in which indigenous and Islamic knowledge were systematically devalued relative to European secular knowledge. The wild school was ‘wild’ not merely in the administrative sense of being unregistered, but in the deeper sense of being outside the ordered epistemological space of colonial civilization, beyond the boundaries of what colonial authorities recognized as legitimate knowledge (Dahlan 2020, 94).

The resistance to the Wild School Ordinance, culminating in its repeal in 1933, demonstrated the limits of colonial epistemological control and the capacity of indigenous educational movements to assert the legitimacy of their own knowledge traditions. Ki Hajar Dewantara’s declaration that Taman Siswa would not comply with the ordinance was not merely a political act but a philosophical one—an assertion of the epistemic sovereignty of indigenous and Islamic educational traditions against the colonial monopoly on legitimate knowledge (Rasmana and Sumiyatun 2021, 41). This assertion of epistemic sovereignty would later provide a philosophical foundation for the integration of Islamic education into the Indonesian national curriculum after independence, though this integration remained incomplete and contested.

To better understand the broader implications of the Wild School Ordinance, it is crucial to situate it within the colonial project of epistemic ordering, in which knowledge was not only categorized but hierarchically arranged according to its perceived proximity to European rationality. In this framework, the labeling of certain institutions as “wild” functioned as a discursive mechanism that delegitimized alternative systems of knowledge production while simultaneously

justifying their regulation or elimination. The ordinance thus operated at both administrative and epistemological levels, reinforcing a boundary between what was considered “civilized” and “uncivilized” knowledge. This boundary, however, was neither fixed nor uncontested, as indigenous and Islamic educational actors continuously challenged and redefined the terms of legitimacy imposed upon them.

Building on this dynamic, the subsequent analysis turns to how the legacy of such epistemic suppression continues to resonate in contemporary educational discourse and policy. Although the explicit language of “wildness” has disappeared, its underlying logic can still be traced in subtle forms of marginalization, such as the differential valuation of religious and secular knowledge or the regulatory pressures placed on non-state educational institutions. By examining these continuities, the study highlights how historical forms of exclusion are rearticulated within modern frameworks, shaping ongoing debates about curriculum authority, institutional recognition, and the place of Islamic education within the national system.

Philosophical Foundations of Islamic Religious Education

Islamic education is grounded in a distinctive philosophical tradition that understands knowledge (*‘ilm*) as simultaneously theoretical and practical, individual and communal, worldly and transcendent. The classical Islamic educational tradition, as articulated in foundational texts such as al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* and Ibn Khaldūn’s *Muqaddimah*, conceives of education as a process of forming the complete human person (*insān kāmil*) in all dimensions of their being—intellectual, moral, spiritual, and physical. This holistic conception of education stands in significant tension with the fragmented, subject-specific, and competency-based framework of the modern national curriculum, which tends to treat religious education as one subject among many rather than as a comprehensive vision of human formation (Attas 1999, 23).

Islamic education is grounded in a philosophical tradition that understands knowledge (*‘ilm*) as both theoretical and practical, individual and communal, as well as worldly and transcendent. Classical works such as *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* by al-Ghazālī and the *Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldūn conceptualize education as the formation of the complete human person (*insān kāmil*), encompassing intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social dimensions (Agustini and Sofa 2024, 363–85; Khaldūn 2014, 23; Nasri 2019b).

Within this framework, knowledge is not merely transmitted but embodied, linking learning with ethical responsibility and spiritual development. This orientation is operationalized through the integrated concepts of *ta’līm*, *tarbiyah*, and *ta’dīb*, which together define Islamic education as a holistic and transformative process. Instruction, nurturing, and ethical formation are not separate domains but interconnected dimensions of a unified educational vision. Consequently, the aim of Islamic Religious Education extends beyond cognitive mastery toward the cultivation of a morally grounded and spiritually aware individual. However, this integrative philosophical foundation stands in tension with the dominant

structure of the modern national curriculum, which is organized around disciplinary fragmentation, standardized competencies, and measurable outcomes (Ghazālī 2005, 43; Nasri 2019a, 25). Within this framework, Islamic Religious Education is reduced to a subject-specific domain, assessed primarily through cognitive and behavioral indicators that only partially reflect its broader aims. This mismatch reveals a deeper epistemological disjuncture between the philosophical foundations of Islamic education and the prevailing logic of curriculum design.

This epistemological disjuncture makes clear that the challenge facing Islamic Religious Education is not merely one of curricular inclusion or pedagogical improvement, but of conceptual positioning within the structure of knowledge itself. As long as the curriculum continues to operate on assumptions that privilege fragmented, standardized, and instrumental forms of knowledge, the holistic vision of Islamic education will remain structurally constrained. Therefore, what is required is not an incremental adjustment, but a philosophical repositioning—a reconfiguration of the epistemological foundations of the curriculum that allows Islamic Religious Education to function not as a peripheral subject, but as a meaningful and integrative component of educational formation.

To further clarify this tension, it is important to recognize that the philosophical foundations of Islamic education are not merely normative ideals, but constitute an alternative epistemological framework that challenges the underlying assumptions of modern educational systems. While contemporary curricula are largely shaped by positivist and instrumental rationalities—emphasizing quantification, standardization, and measurable outcomes—the Islamic tradition situates knowledge within a moral and metaphysical horizon that resists such reduction. In this sense, the disjuncture between Islamic Religious Education and the national curriculum is not accidental, but reflects a deeper divergence in how knowledge itself is defined, organized, and valued. This divergence raises critical questions about whether integration can occur within existing structures, or whether it requires a more fundamental rethinking of curricular epistemology.

Building on this insight, the subsequent discussion explores how this philosophical tension is negotiated in practice, particularly within contemporary efforts to reform Islamic Religious Education. These efforts often attempt to bridge the gap by aligning Islamic content with competency-based frameworks, yet such approaches risk diluting the integrative vision that defines the tradition. At the same time, they also reveal the possibility of creative reinterpretation, where elements of Islamic pedagogy are adapted to modern contexts without entirely losing their philosophical grounding. By examining these processes of negotiation, the study moves toward a more nuanced understanding of how Islamic educational philosophy continues to interact with, challenge, and reshape the structures of modern curriculum design.

Tarbiyah, Ta'lim, and Ta'dib: The Tripartite Framework

Islamic educational philosophy distinguishes between three fundamental concepts that together describe the scope and purpose of Islamic education:

tarbiyah (nurturing), *ta'lim* (instruction), and *ta'dīb* (moral cultivation). Al-Attas (1999) has argued that *ta'dīb* is the most comprehensive of these three concepts, encompassing both the transmission of knowledge and its proper application in the moral formation of the human person. This tripartite framework implies that Islamic Religious Education cannot be reduced to the cognitive transmission of religious content but must encompass the full range of human formation, including the cultivation of *akhlāq* (moral character) and the development of spiritual sensitivity (Fathurokhman 2013, 967–75; Kartikawangi 2017, 35–45).

The implications of this framework for curriculum policy are significant. If Islamic Religious Education is understood primarily as *ta'lim*—instruction in religious content—then it can be treated as analogous to other school subjects and integrated into a competency-based curriculum framework without fundamental philosophical difficulties. However, if it is understood as *tarbiyah* and *ta'dīb*—comprehensive moral and spiritual formation—then it requires pedagogical approaches, time allocations, and assessment frameworks that are fundamentally different from those applicable to other school subjects. The *Teacher Ordinance* (1905; revised 1925) functioned historically as a colonial regulatory instrument governing the authorization and supervision of Islamic teachers. In this study, the term “Teacher Ordinance framework” is used analytically to refer to the continuing regulatory logic derived from these policies, particularly the standardization and bureaucratic control of teacher qualifications. Within this framework, the professionalization of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers—through standardized competencies aligned with general subject teachers—implicitly reflects a *ta'lim*-oriented model, while overlooking the formative dimensions of *tarbiyah* and *ta'dīb* (Khalid and Mansour 2023, 220).

To deepen this analysis, it is important to recognize that the tripartite framework of *tarbiyah*, *ta'lim*, and *ta'dīb* does not merely describe different functions of education, but reflects an integrated hierarchy of purposes in which knowledge, formation, and ethical orientation are inseparable. The privileging of *ta'lim* within modern curriculum structures, therefore, represents not simply a pedagogical preference but a reordering of educational priorities that sidelines the ethical and spiritual telos of Islamic education. In this context, the reduction of Islamic Religious Education to measurable competencies risks fragmenting a fundamentally holistic process, where the internalization of values and the cultivation of character cannot be fully captured through standardized assessment mechanisms.

At the same time, this tension opens a critical space for re-evaluating how educational policy might more adequately accommodate the integrative nature of Islamic pedagogy. Rather than positioning *tarbiyah* and *ta'dīb* as supplementary to *ta'lim*, a more philosophically coherent approach would require rethinking curriculum design to allow for forms of learning that are experiential, relational, and ethically grounded. This suggests that the challenge is not only to critique the limitations of existing frameworks but also to articulate alternative models of professionalization and pedagogy that preserve the integrity of Islamic educational

aims. The following section, therefore, examines how these conceptual tensions are reflected in contemporary teacher training, assessment practices, and institutional expectations within Islamic Religious Education.

***Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah* and Educational Objectives**

The *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* framework provides a complementary philosophical foundation for understanding the objectives of Islamic Religious Education within the national curriculum. As systematized by classical jurists such as al-Ghazālī and Ibn Āshūr, the *maqāṣid* identifies five essential human interests that Islamic law aims to protect and promote: life (*nafs*), intellect (*‘aql*), progeny (*nasl*), property (*māl*), and religion (*dīn*).

To further elaborate the significance of the *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* framework, it is important to note that its application to education extends beyond the identification of objectives toward the reorientation of the entire learning process. The *maqāṣid* do not function merely as abstract goals, but as guiding principles that shape the content, pedagogy, and evaluation of education in a holistic manner. In this sense, aligning Islamic Religious Education with the *maqāṣid* requires a shift from outcome-based standardization toward a more integrative model in which intellectual development is inseparable from ethical formation and spiritual awareness. Such an approach challenges the prevailing tendency to isolate cognitive achievement as the primary indicator of educational success, and instead emphasizes the balanced realization of multiple dimensions of human well-being.

Building on this perspective, the following analysis turns to how the *maqāṣid*-based framework can inform contemporary efforts to reconstruct the position of Islamic Religious Education within the national curriculum. This involves not only rethinking assessment and learning outcomes, but also reconsidering institutional priorities and policy orientations that currently privilege measurable competencies over formative processes. By situating PAI within a broader ethical and philosophical horizon, the *maqāṣid* framework offers a constructive pathway for bridging the gap between Islamic educational ideals and the structural realities of modern schooling, while maintaining coherence with the pluralistic and democratic principles that underpin the Indonesian educational system.

The Epistemological Position of PAI in the National Curriculum

The positioning of Islamic Religious Education within the Indonesian national curriculum reflects an ongoing epistemological negotiation between three competing frameworks: the legacy of secular-rational educational organization, the holistic conception of knowledge within Islamic educational tradition, and the normative orientation of Pancasila-based education (Nasri 2023). This negotiation has produced an ambivalent structure in which PAI is formally recognized as a compulsory subject, yet epistemologically positioned at the margins of curricular authority. While it holds symbolic and institutional legitimacy, its knowledge system is not fully integrated into the dominant framework that defines what counts as valid, measurable, and educationally central knowledge (Pradipto and

Abraham 2014, 186–95; Yusuf et al. 2018, 63–74).

This marginal positioning becomes evident in the way PAI is operationalized within curriculum and assessment practices. The dominant evaluative logic prioritizes standardized competencies, cognitive performance, and measurable outcomes, thereby reducing PAI to a content-based and behavior-oriented subject. In doing so, the deeper dimensions of Islamic education—such as moral formation, spiritual cultivation, and ethical internalization—are only partially accommodated and often remain outside the core criteria of educational success. This reflects a structural tension between an instrumental view of knowledge and a transformative conception of education, where PAI is compelled to conform to epistemological standards that do not fully correspond to its philosophical foundations (Nasirin et al. 2025, 1–24; Nasri et al. 2025, 45–57; Thohri et al. 2025; Thohri and Nasri 2024, 405–23).

From a genealogical perspective, this condition is not incidental but reflects the persistence of historically formed regulatory logics that continue to shape the classification and hierarchy of knowledge within the curriculum. As long as these epistemological assumptions remain unexamined, the inclusion of PAI will continue to be formal rather than substantive. Therefore, the problem is not simply one of curriculum content or institutional placement, but of the underlying structure of knowledge itself. This calls for a philosophical repositioning of PAI—one that does not merely add or adjust curricular elements, but reconfigures the epistemological basis upon which the curriculum is constructed (Muslim et al. 2026, 1001–18; Nasri 2024, 213–20; Suriani et al. 2025, 858–86).

To clarify the implications of this epistemological positioning, it is necessary to recognize that the marginalization of PAI is not solely a matter of institutional design, but is deeply embedded in the criteria through which knowledge is legitimized within the curriculum. The dominance of standardized, empirically verifiable, and performance-oriented knowledge constructs a hierarchy in which forms of understanding that are experiential, ethical, and spiritual are rendered secondary or supplementary. In this hierarchy, PAI is required to translate its holistic and value-laden content into formats that align with prevailing assessment regimes, often at the cost of its integrative and transformative aims. This condition reveals that the challenge facing PAI is not only to assert its relevance, but to negotiate the terms under which relevance itself is defined within the educational system.

Building on this insight, the subsequent discussion shifts toward exploring possible pathways for repositioning PAI within the national curriculum in a more substantive and epistemologically coherent manner. Such repositioning requires more than policy adjustment; it involves critically engaging with the foundational assumptions that structure curriculum design, including the separation between cognitive and moral domains, the prioritization of measurable outcomes, and the implicit hierarchy of knowledge forms. By interrogating and reconfiguring these assumptions, it becomes possible to envision a curriculum in which PAI is not merely accommodated, but functions as an integral component in shaping a more

holistic, ethically grounded, and contextually responsive model of education.

Structural Marginalization and the Curriculum Hierarchy

Despite its constitutionally guaranteed status as a required subject, PAI occupies a relatively marginal position within the practical organization of the national curriculum. In terms of time allocation, PAI receives significantly fewer hours per week than core academic subjects such as mathematics, science, and Indonesian language. In the Merdeka Curriculum (2022), PAI is classified as a ‘character and vocational’ subject alongside arts education and physical education, a classification that, while not inherently demeaning, does position it as secondary to the ‘intellectual’ subjects in the curriculum hierarchy.

Bernstein’s (1975) sociological theory of educational knowledge provides a useful framework for analyzing this epistemological positioning. Bernstein distinguished between ‘collection-type’ curricula—in which subjects maintain strong boundaries and specialized identities—and ‘integrated’ curricula—in which subject boundaries are weakened in favor of thematic organization. The Indonesian national curriculum has moved progressively toward integration, most recently through the thematic and project-based learning approaches of the Merdeka Curriculum.

To further unpack this structural marginalization, it is important to consider how curriculum hierarchy is not only reflected in time allocation and subject classification, but also in the distribution of symbolic capital within the educational system. Subjects positioned as “core” disciplines tend to carry greater weight in determining academic success, institutional prestige, and future opportunities for students, while subjects like PAI are often associated with supplementary or character-building functions. This symbolic differentiation reinforces a perception that religious knowledge, while important for moral guidance, is less central to intellectual development. As a result, PAI is placed in a structurally constrained position where its broader educational significance is acknowledged rhetorically but limited in practice.

At the same time, the shift toward integrated and project-based curricula introduces a complex dynamic for PAI’s epistemological identity. While integration offers opportunities to embed ethical and spiritual perspectives across disciplines, it also risks subsuming PAI under generalized themes that may not adequately capture its doctrinal depth and formative intent. This creates a paradox in which PAI is simultaneously invited to contribute to holistic education and yet required to dilute its specificity in order to fit within integrative frameworks. The following section, therefore, examines how this tension between integration and disciplinary integrity shapes the pedagogical and institutional strategies adopted in Islamic Religious Education, and what this implies for its future positioning within the national curriculum.

Teacher Professionalization and Epistemic Authority

The professionalization of PAI teachers through the Teacher and Lecturer Law No. 14 of 2005 has generated complex implications for the epistemological positioning of Islamic Religious Education within the national curriculum. On one level, professionalization has strengthened the institutional legitimacy of PAI by enhancing teachers' academic qualifications and formal status within the educational system. On another level, however, the competency framework embedded in this policy tends to universalize a model of teacher professionalism that is largely derived from secular-rational standards. As a result, the distinctive epistemological foundations of Islamic education are rearticulated within a framework that prioritizes standardization, measurability, and administrative accountability, thereby subtly redefining what counts as legitimate knowledge and authority in religious teaching (Mavi et al. 2025, 536–50).

This tension is particularly evident in the formulation of spiritual competence (*kompetensi kepribadian*), which is formally recognized alongside pedagogical, professional, and social competencies. While this inclusion signals an acknowledgment of the unique character of religious education, its operationalization through observable indicators transforms spiritual formation into a set of externalized behaviors. Such an approach risks reducing the depth of Islamic educational aims, where the authenticity of knowledge transmission is grounded not merely in outward performance but in the inner formation of the self. In the classical Islamic perspective, the authority of a teacher is inseparable from the integrity of their moral and spiritual being, which cannot be fully captured through standardized assessment frameworks (Ağalday 2025, 551–67; Hsieh et al. 2026, 103545).

At a deeper philosophical level, this condition reveals a shift in the locus of epistemic authority—from a tradition-based and ethically grounded conception of knowledge toward a bureaucratically regulated and procedurally validated system. The professionalization framework thus functions not only as a mechanism of quality assurance but also as an epistemic filter that determines which forms of knowledge, dispositions, and practices are recognized as valid within the educational system. In this context, PAI teachers are positioned within a dual expectation: to embody the integrative ideals of Islamic education while simultaneously conforming to externally defined standards of professional competence. This tension underscores the need to critically reassess the epistemological assumptions underlying teacher professionalization, particularly if PAI is to function as a transformative educational practice rather than a formally regulated instructional domain.

To further illuminate this tension, it is necessary to consider how the process of professionalization reconfigures not only the competencies of teachers but also the very basis upon which their authority is recognized. In traditional Islamic educational settings, epistemic authority is relational and rooted in trust, embodied practice, and continuity of scholarly transmission. By contrast, modern

professional frameworks relocate this authority within institutional certification, performance evaluation, and regulatory compliance. This shift does not simply add a new layer of legitimacy; it transforms the criteria of what it means to be a “qualified” teacher, privileging formal credentials and measurable outputs over the less tangible, yet central, dimensions of ethical presence and spiritual influence. Consequently, PAI teachers operate within a hybrid model of authority that is at once traditional and bureaucratic, often requiring them to translate deeply internalized values into externally verifiable forms.

Building on this insight, the following discussion turns to the broader implications of this hybridization for the future of Islamic Religious Education. The coexistence of competing models of authority creates both constraints and possibilities: while it may limit the full expression of Islamic pedagogical ideals, it also opens space for reinterpretation and adaptation within contemporary institutional contexts. The challenge, therefore, is not merely to resist standardization, but to critically engage with it in ways that preserve the integrity of Islamic epistemology while meeting the demands of modern educational governance. By examining how PAI teachers navigate these dual expectations in practice, this study seeks to identify pathways through which professionalization can be reoriented to support, rather than constrain, the transformative aims of Islamic education.

Reconstructing the Philosophical Foundation of PAI

The preceding analysis has identified three interrelated dimensions of the problematic positioning of PAI within the Indonesian national curriculum: the ontological ambiguity of PAI as a form of school knowledge, the epistemological tension between Islamic and secular-rationalist frameworks in validating religious knowledge, and the axiological inadequacy of the prevailing regulatory framework in capturing the full scope of PAI’s educational aims. Ontologically, PAI is positioned ambiguously between being a normative-religious formation and a standardized academic subject; epistemologically, it is required to conform to external criteria of validity that do not fully correspond to its integrative conception of knowledge; and axiologically, its purposes are reduced to measurable outcomes that only partially reflect its moral and spiritual objectives (Akbar et al. 2025, 533–41; Coombes and Tresidder 2026; Azka 2023, 123–45; Ghanbari 2025, 102167; Nasri 2024).

Addressing these dimensions requires a comprehensive philosophical reconstruction that moves beyond adjustment at the level of curriculum content toward a rearticulation of the foundational assumptions of education itself. Drawing on Islamic educational philosophy, such reconstruction must reaffirm *‘ilm* as an integrative unity that binds knowledge to ethical responsibility and spiritual orientation. This implies reconfiguring PAI not merely as a domain of instruction (*ta’līm*), but as a holistic process encompassing *tarbiyah* and *ta’dīb*, where intellectual development is inseparable from the cultivation of moral consciousness and adab. At the same time, this reconstruction must remain responsive to the democratic and pluralist commitments of the Indonesian state,

ensuring that Islamic education contributes constructively to a shared civic and ethical framework.

At a deeper philosophical level, this reconstruction entails a shift from viewing curriculum as a neutral structure of knowledge distribution toward understanding it as an epistemic and ethical project that shapes the formation of the human person and the moral orientation of society. In this context, PAI can be repositioned as a foundational axis that integrates transcendental values with social responsibility, rather than as a peripheral subject confined within existing curricular hierarchies. Such a reconfiguration not only resolves the internal tensions identified in this study but also provides a coherent basis for aligning Islamic educational philosophy with the broader goals of national education in Indonesia.

To further articulate the direction of this reconstruction, it is important to emphasize that repositioning PAI requires not only a conceptual shift but also a reorientation of how educational success is defined and measured. As long as dominant evaluative frameworks remain narrowly focused on quantifiable outcomes, the integrative aims of Islamic education will continue to be only partially realized. A philosophically grounded reconstruction, therefore, calls for the development of alternative evaluative paradigms that are capable of recognizing ethical growth, spiritual maturation, and the internalization of values as legitimate dimensions of educational achievement. This does not imply abandoning standards or accountability, but rather expanding their scope to accommodate forms of knowledge and formation that are inherently qualitative and process-oriented.

Building on this reorientation, the subsequent discussion turns to the practical implications of reconstructing PAI within the broader architecture of the national curriculum. Such implications include the redesign of curriculum structures to allow greater epistemological integration, the redefinition of teacher roles as moral-intellectual guides rather than mere transmitters of content, and the creation of institutional spaces that support holistic learning processes. By translating philosophical reconstruction into concrete educational strategies, this study aims to demonstrate that the repositioning of PAI is not only theoretically necessary but also practically achievable, offering a pathway toward a more balanced, inclusive, and meaningful model of education in Indonesia.

The Dialogical Model of Curriculum Philosophy

This study proposes a dialogical model of curriculum philosophy as the basis for reconstructing PAI's position within the national curriculum. The dialogical model is grounded in the philosophical tradition of Gadamer's (1975) hermeneutics, which conceives of understanding as emerging from a dialogue between different intellectual horizons rather than from the imposition of one framework upon another. Applied to curriculum philosophy, the dialogical model suggests that the positioning of PAI should be determined not by the unilateral application of secular-rational curriculum frameworks to Islamic educational objectives, but through a genuine dialogue between Islamic educational philosophy, Pancasila philosophy, and contemporary curriculum theory.

This dialogical approach has several concrete implications for curriculum policy. First, it requires the reform of PAI's competency framework to include formative and spiritual dimensions alongside cognitive and pedagogical competencies, recognizing the distinctive epistemological character of religious knowledge without abandoning the legitimate quality assurance purposes of professional standards. Second, it calls for the creation of pluralistic governance structures for PAI curriculum development that include representation from Islamic scholarly communities (*ulama*) alongside state educational authorities, restoring something of the traditional authority of Islamic scholarship in determining the content and methods of religious education (Rombout et al. 2024, 101617; Zhao et al. 2026, 102214). Third, it necessitates the development of assessment frameworks for PAI that can capture the full range of its educational aims, including moral character development and spiritual formation, through multiple and contextually sensitive forms of evaluation.

To further clarify the philosophical significance of this dialogical model, it is essential to recognize that dialogue here is not merely procedural, but epistemological in nature. It involves a mutual transformation of the participating frameworks, where neither Islamic educational philosophy nor secular curriculum theory remains unchanged. In Gadamerian terms, this process constitutes a *fusion of horizons* (*Horizontverschmelzung*), in which understanding emerges through openness, reflexivity, and the willingness to reconsider one's own assumptions. Within this context, the dialogical model does not seek to subordinate one system of knowledge to another, but to create a space in which different epistemologies can interact productively, generating a more comprehensive and contextually grounded conception of education. This approach is particularly relevant in a pluralistic society such as Indonesia, where the legitimacy of the curriculum depends on its ability to accommodate diverse intellectual and moral traditions without erasing their distinctiveness.

Building on this foundation, the following section examines how the dialogical model can be operationalized within institutional and pedagogical practices. The success of such a model depends not only on policy reform, but also on the cultivation of dialogical competencies among educators, policymakers, and scholars—capacities for critical engagement, interpretive sensitivity, and ethical deliberation. By embedding these competencies within the structures of curriculum development and implementation, the dialogical model can move beyond theoretical aspiration toward practical realization. In doing so, it offers a viable pathway for repositioning PAI as an integral and dynamic component of the national curriculum, capable of mediating between tradition and modernity, as well as between religious commitment and civic responsibility.

Integration of Pancasila Philosophy and *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*

A central challenge of the reconstructive project is to develop a philosophical framework that can integrate the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* with the Pancasila philosophy in a way that is coherent and practically implementable. Several points

of convergence can be identified. The Pancasila principle of Belief in the One God (*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*) converges with the Islamic emphasis on *tawhīd* (divine unity) as the foundation of all knowledge and action. The principle of Just and Civilized Humanity (*Kemanusiaan yang Adil dan Beradab*) resonates with the Islamic concept of *karāmah insāniyyah* (human dignity). The principle of Unity in Diversity (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*) can be philosophically grounded in the Islamic concept of *rahmatan lil-‘ālamīn*/mercy for all creation (Azra 2019, 215; Raihani 2023, 284–301).

These points of convergence provide a philosophical basis for developing an integrated framework that positions PAI as simultaneously an expression of Islamic educational philosophy and a contribution to the realization of Pancasila values. Such a framework would reconceive PAI not as a confessional subject that transmits the beliefs and practices of a particular religious community but as a transformative educational practice that cultivates the moral, spiritual, and intellectual capacities needed for democratic citizenship in a pluralist society—while simultaneously nurturing the deep religious commitment and Islamic identity that are central to the lives of the vast majority of Indonesian citizens (Muthohirin 2025, 102153).

Beyond these points of convergence, the integration of *Pancasila* philosophy and *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* can be understood at a deeper epistemological level as a meeting between two normative frameworks that both seek to orient knowledge toward ethical and civilizational ends. While *Pancasila* provides a philosophical foundation for organizing social and political life within a pluralistic nation-state, *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* offers a teleological structure that defines the ultimate purposes of knowledge in terms of the preservation and flourishing of religion, life, intellect, dignity, and social order (Nasri 2016b).

The integration of these frameworks thus requires not merely conceptual alignment, but a rearticulation of curriculum as a space where knowledge is oriented toward the formation of morally responsible and socially engaged individuals (Muliadi and Nasri 2023, 2420–27; Nasri 2016a). In this sense, Islamic Religious Education can function as a mediating epistemic domain that translates transcendental values into civic ethics, bridging the spiritual orientation of *tawhīd* with the socio-political commitments of *Pancasila*. Such an integration moves beyond accommodation toward a constructive synthesis, in which religious knowledge is neither privatized nor subordinated, but actively contributes to shaping a shared ethical horizon within the national education system.

To further deepen this integrative framework, it is important to emphasize that the meeting point between Pancasila philosophy and *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* is not only located at the level of shared values, but also in their common orientation toward the formation of a just and ethical social order. Both frameworks reject a purely instrumental view of knowledge and instead situate education within a broader moral project aimed at cultivating responsible individuals and cohesive communities. In this sense, the integration of these two philosophical traditions provides a normative foundation for redefining the purpose of education beyond

technical competence, toward the development of ethical awareness, social responsibility, and spiritual consciousness. Such a perspective reinforces the potential of PAI to function not merely as a religious subject, but as a foundational component in shaping the moral architecture of the national curriculum.

Building on this convergence, the subsequent discussion turns to how this integrated philosophical foundation can be translated into concrete curricular and pedagogical practices. The challenge lies in operationalizing these shared principles in ways that remain faithful to both Islamic teachings and the pluralistic commitments of Pancasila, without reducing either to a symbolic or rhetorical role. This requires the development of interdisciplinary approaches, contextual learning models, and participatory educational practices that embody the ethical synthesis proposed here. Through such efforts, PAI can be repositioned as an active site of value integration—one that not only reflects the coexistence of religious and national ideals, but also contributes to their ongoing dialogue and mutual reinforcement within the Indonesian educational landscape.

Implications for Post-Colonial Curriculum Reform

The reconstruction of PAI's philosophical foundations has important implications for post-colonial curriculum reform in Indonesia and, more broadly, for Muslim-majority societies grappling with the challenge of positioning Islamic education within national curriculum frameworks shaped by colonial legacies. The colonial educational policies examined in this study were not merely historical episodes; they established institutional patterns, epistemological assumptions, and power relations that continue to shape the structure of Indonesian education. The marginalization of PAI within the curriculum hierarchy, the subordination of Islamic epistemic authority to secular state authority in curriculum governance, and the application of secular-rationalist competency frameworks to religious teaching are all partially explicable as legacies of the colonial epistemological order (Syukriani et al. 2018, 56–63; Yasdin et al. 2023, 297–309)

In the context of PAI, this decolonization involves recovering the epistemological resources of the Islamic educational tradition, reasserting the legitimacy of Islamic scholarly authority in curriculum governance, and developing new philosophical frameworks that integrate Islamic educational philosophy with the democratic-pluralist values of post-colonial Indonesia. This is not a straightforward or uncontested process; it involves difficult negotiations between competing intellectual traditions, political interests, and educational philosophies. But it is a necessary process if PAI is to fulfill its potential as a transformative educational practice that contributes to the moral and spiritual formation of Indonesian citizens while also nurturing democratic citizenship and inter-religious understanding (Bernstein 1975, 17; Fischer and Nisa 2025, 100276; Novrita et al. 2025, 103186).

From a philosophical perspective, the reconstruction of PAI's foundations points to the need for a deeper epistemic transformation within post-colonial curriculum reform, one that goes beyond institutional adjustment toward a reconfiguration of how knowledge itself is conceived and authorized. The colonial

legacy embedded in curriculum structures reflects not only historical domination but an enduring epistemological order that privileges secular-rational modes of knowing while marginalizing integrative and value-oriented conceptions of knowledge. In this context, reform requires a process of epistemic decolonization that critically interrogates inherited assumptions about validity, authority, and the purposes of education. For Islamic Religious Education, this entails reaffirming *ilm* as a unified and ethically grounded form of knowledge, restoring the role of scholarly and moral authority in educational practice, and rearticulating curriculum as a space where transcendental values and civic commitments are brought into meaningful dialogue. Such a transformation is not merely technical or administrative, but philosophical in nature, involving a shift from viewing education as the transmission of standardized knowledge toward understanding it as the formation of the human person within a morally ordered and socially responsible framework.

To further extend this argument, it is important to recognize that post-colonial curriculum reform is not simply a matter of recovering pre-colonial traditions, but of critically re-engaging them within contemporary realities. The process of decolonization must therefore avoid romanticizing the past, and instead focus on reconstructing Islamic educational philosophy in ways that are responsive to present social, political, and intellectual challenges. This includes engaging with global knowledge systems, technological developments, and evolving educational paradigms, while maintaining a clear epistemological grounding in the integrative vision of *ilm*. In this sense, decolonization is both a process of critique and of creative renewal, where inherited traditions are reinterpreted to address the complexities of modern life without losing their normative coherence.

Building on this perspective, the following discussion turns to the broader significance of this reconstruction for the future of education in pluralistic societies. The Indonesian case illustrates that the challenge of integrating religious and national educational frameworks is not unique, but reflects a wider tension experienced across post-colonial contexts. By advancing a dialogical and integrative model of curriculum philosophy, this study contributes to ongoing debates about how education can balance identity, spirituality, and civic responsibility in diverse societies. Ultimately, the reconstruction of PAI offers not only a pathway for strengthening Islamic Religious Education, but also a conceptual model for rethinking the relationship between knowledge, values, and human formation in contemporary education systems.

Conclusion

This study shows that the marginal position of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Indonesia's national curriculum is rooted in a historically formed regulatory logic that operates at the level of epistemic ordering rather than merely institutional arrangement. Colonial educational regulations established a framework in which knowledge is classified, authorized, and hierarchically arranged, positioning religious knowledge within a subordinated domain. This

framework reflects a particular conception of knowledge as discrete, measurable, and administratively controllable, thereby redefining the scope and function of Islamic education within a state-centered system. From the perspective of Islamic philosophy of education, this condition represents a fundamental disjunction between two epistemological paradigms.

On the one hand, the modern curriculum is grounded in a fragmented and instrumental logic of knowledge; on the other hand, Islamic educational thought conceives *ilm* as an integrative unity that encompasses intellectual understanding, ethical formation, and spiritual realization. Within this paradigm, education is not limited to *ta'lim* as the transmission of knowledge, but extends to *tarbiyah* as holistic nurturing and *ta'dib* as the cultivation of adab and moral consciousness. The reduction of IRE to standardized competencies thus signifies not only curricular limitation, but an epistemological reduction that obscures its transformative purpose.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the legacy of colonial policy persists as an epistemic formation that continues to shape the hierarchy of knowledge in contemporary education. This shifts the problem of IRE from a question of policy inclusion to a deeper issue of how knowledge itself is defined, legitimized, and institutionalized. Consequently, the repositioning of IRE requires a philosophical reconfiguration that challenges the prevailing hierarchy of knowledge and rearticulates the foundations of curriculum authority. Such repositioning must operate at three interconnected levels: epistemological, by restoring the integrative conception of knowledge; institutional, by redefining the basis of curricular legitimacy; and pedagogical, by expanding educational aims beyond measurable outcomes toward holistic human formation.

Without such reconfiguration, reforms in Islamic Religious Education risk remaining superficial, reproducing inherited structures of marginalization under new institutional forms. This study therefore underscores that any meaningful transformation of the curriculum must begin with a critical re-examination of its epistemological assumptions, particularly in postcolonial contexts where the organization of knowledge continues to reflect historically embedded structures of authority.

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