



Improving Cultural Integration in Education: A Study of Indonesian High Schools

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ABSTRACT

The research examined senior high school Islamic religious education approaches. It used a multi-case study design and qualitative methods. The results show that improving Islamic religious education takes more than additional classroom time. Integrating religious teachings into the school's culture is more extensive. Fostering educational leadership and developing awareness in the school community and society may create a religious culture in schools. This religious culture demonstrates Islamic religious instruction in practice. This technique improves students' spirituality, unity, tolerance, discipline, and learning drive. This technique combines performance and modelling. As cultural norms are integrated, modelling becomes more common, and performance pattern dependency decreases. The study shows that the whole school community must support this technique to succeed.

INTRODUCTION

The need for Indonesian students to secure a strategic position within the national education system is urgent and cannot be overstated. This urgency is driven by several key factors. Firstly, the current textbooks and teaching materials do not effectively integrate information from both science and religion, leading to a fragmented educational experience. Secondly, the teaching and learning methodologies in schools need to align more closely with curricular criteria, primarily due to educators' insufficient competencies. Furthermore, the hidden curriculum has not yet fostered an environment conducive to optimal learning (Mylek & Nel, 2010; Sarkissian et al., 2011; Karlsen & Nazroo, 2010). As a result, the internalization of values within the affective domain has not been effectively embedded into students' personalities.

Additionally, the educational process in Indonesian schools has generally failed to harmonize scientific ideas with religious values and vice versa (Hemming, 2011; Brubaker, 2012). The ideal approach would involve creating a supportive learning environment that promotes such integration (Lubis & Wekke, 2009). Observations in several schools in Malang—including SMAN 1, SMAN 3, SMAN 4, SMA Shalahuddin, and SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Malang—indicate that efforts have been made to enhance Islamic Religious Education to foster a religious culture within the school community. The religious values emphasized in these institutions include:

- Interfaith tolerance
- Greeting others with 'Salam'
- Active participation in religious activities
- Maintaining a clean and organized environment
- Discipline
- Exemplary manners

These practices align with Muhaimin's findings, which reveal that many high schools in Malang have successfully nurtured a religious environment through structured religious activities, responsible leadership in promoting a religious culture, and early exposure of students to these values. The need to integrate scientific knowledge with religious principles in Indonesian schools is a pressing one, especially in today's diverse and globalized society. As educational institutions continue to evolve, this need has become more apparent. Islamic Religious Education (IRE) holds a prominent position within Indonesia's educational system due to the majority Muslim population. However, experts have highlighted a persistent disconnect between religious education and the application of modern educational methodologies. Erbas et al. (2018) suggest that developing a curriculum that balances religious beliefs with contemporary knowledge is vital for fostering students' intellectual and ethical growth.

Recent research underscores the advantages of fostering a school culture that incorporates religious and cultural values and academic education. Sahin (2020) notes that a healthy school culture, where religious beliefs are actively practised, significantly contributes to students' overall character development. Such an environment supports religious teachings within formal schooling and

promotes the internalization of values such as tolerance, respect, and discipline among students. In Indonesian Islamic schools, this integration is essential for preparing students to navigate the modern world while preserving their religious and cultural identities.

Moreover, educational leadership is fundamental in creating an environment where religious and scientific teachings are integrated seamlessly. Influential leaders in Islamic schools are expected to emphasize academic excellence and establish a solid moral and religious foundation. According to Othman and Rahman (2019), leadership within religious education must adapt to the challenges posed by modern educational systems, ensuring that Islamic principles are woven into all aspects of school life. This approach can potentially enhance learning outcomes and better prepare students to meet the demands of the contemporary world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The paramount value in Islamic teachings is the notion of Tawhid, signifying the oneness of Allah. Tawhid is central not only as a theological concept but also as a guiding principle for Islamic education. Ismail Raji al-Faruqi developed an Islamic framework that integrated theories, methodologies, concepts, and topics, focusing on Tawhid (Faith), underscoring its foundational role in shaping Islamic thought and educational philosophy. To enhance Islamic Religious Education, efforts should be primarily centred on this essential idea, as Tawhid is the fundamental principle driving the educational process and shaping its objectives. This perspective aligns with the concept of Tawhidic epistemology, which emphasizes the unification of knowledge and the integration of religious beliefs into all aspects of learning. The educational goal derived from Tawhid, termed 'Ahdaf al-Rabbani,' or divine purpose, is pivotal and must underpin cognition, actions, and perspectives within the educational system. This divine objective is essential in ensuring that all educational activities and curricula are aligned with Islamic values and principles.

In this context, developing a religious culture within educational institutions represents all individuals' collective mindsets and behaviours guided by religious principles. In Islamic education, the concept of religiosity is comprehensive, encompassing the complete observance and application of Islamic doctrines. Woodhead (2011) and Schuelka (2013) identify five critical components of religiosity, which play a role in shaping both individual and communal religious life:

- A hopeful conviction is where individuals are committed to a particular theology and acknowledge its doctrines.
- Religious practice includes acts of worship, loyalty, and other demonstrations of faith commitment.
- Spiritual experience, as all religions possess unique spiritual expectations that influence the believers' connection to the divine.

- Religious knowledge involves understanding beliefs, rituals, sacred texts, and traditions, fundamental to practising and internalizing religious tenets.
- Practice or consequence, highlighting the tangible outcomes and effects of religious adherence in daily life.

These elements reflect the importance of integrating religious culture and values into the educational process to create a comprehensive learning environment in harmony with Islamic teachings. The relationship between religious traditions and their evolution is deeply intertwined, as the tradition is embedded within the community or institution that maintains it, shaping the practice and interpretation of religion over time. This concept is supported by Racokzy (2004) and Airriess, Hawkins, and Vaughan (2012), who argue that religion profoundly influences societal development and, conversely, that the growth of a community impacts its understanding and practice of religion. Wicks (2011) and Mahmood (1999) further assert that human religiosity is inextricably linked to the cultural identities of the communities practising it, indicating that culture and religion evolve together, shaping educational settings' spiritual and moral fabric.

Furthermore, contemporary Islamic educational theory emphasizes establishing an integrated educational system that balances spiritual, moral, intellectual, and social development. This is in line with holistic education theories, which advocate for an approach that integrates religious values with cognitive and social learning, promoting not just intellectual growth but also ethical and spiritual development within the framework of Tawhid.

Theoretical Contributions

Religious culture, regarding values, embodies the principles of sacrifice, fraternity, mutual aid, and other esteemed traditions. From a behavioural standpoint, it encompasses traditions like communal prayer, charitable giving, commitment to education, and other commendable actions. Hallfors, Cho, Iritani, Mapfumo, Mpofu, Luseno, & January (2012) emphasise that an individual's religious upbringing might deter participation in detrimental behaviours that may result in complications such as HIV and other illnesses.

Moreover, the religious culture within a school setting imbues religious ideals into the school community's behavioural standards and organisational culture. By incorporating religion into the school's daily routines, the community actively engages in the principles of its faith. Research conducted by Francis, Robbins, and Cargas (2010) and Wekke and Lubis (2008) indicates that settings rooted in religion and faith significantly foster beneficial behaviours and practices.

Numerous approaches exist to integrate religious beliefs into the educational environment. This includes regulations established by the school administration, activities undertaken in the classroom and via extracurricular programs, and the ongoing reinforcement of habits and behaviours that uphold religious values. Schools attempting to cultivate a spiritually orientated culture encounter several internal and external hurdles (Dingley, 2011; Boer, 2011; Kraler,

2007). Education systems must internally accommodate the variety of pupils with varying religious views and backgrounds. Every student originates from a distinct background, and technology may facilitate the reconciliation of these disparities (Wekke & Hamid, 2013). Consequently, religious education is anticipated to impart values like:

- Coexistence with Diversity
- Reciprocal Trust
- Reciprocal Understanding
- Reciprocal Respect
- Open-mindedness
- Appreciation and Interdependence, and
- Conflict Resolution.

METHODOLOGY

This research used a multiple case study approach, and the subsequent phases are delineated as follows: Data gathering will commence with the first instance, SMAN 1 Malang. Observation will be undertaken for the second instance, SMAN 3 Malang. Additional observations will be conducted for the third example, SMA Shalahuddin Kota Malang. Despite the sequential planning of the study stages, some observations will co-occur. Key events, including student registration, graduation for class XII, final semester examinations, incidental activities, and other significant occurrences at designated times, will provide concurrent data collection. The researcher will use these occurrences to get pertinent data.

A comparative study will be conducted based on the conceptual insights obtained from the three schools to provide a framework for understanding the role of Islamic religious topics in cultivating a religious culture at these institutions. A further modified analysis will focus on enhancing and evaluating the theoretical framework (Ntim, 2012). In accordance with the concepts of a multiple case study, these observations will concentrate on elucidating the significance of events and the relationships among persons within certain situations (Waggoner, 2012). The study uses a phenomenological technique, a method that aims to understand the subjective experiences of individuals, to precisely analyse these occurrences and interactions, as previously outlined.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) incorporates divine (Ilahi) and human (Insani) principles. PAI in educational institutions aims to cultivate pious Indonesians with virtuous character. This encompasses informed, diligent in worship, intellectual, industrious, honest, equitable, ethical, disciplined, tolerant (Masamune), adept at sustaining personal and societal peace and fostering a religious culture within the school community. According to PAI's objectives, these principles should be ingrained and incorporated into the school community's culture.

Embedding these religious principles inside the educational environment requires a collective commitment, especially from the school's leadership. The principal should lead initiatives to foster a religious culture, using incentives and sanctions as specified in the school's disciplinary procedures. Furthermore, an effective technique must be used to influence the school community's perceptions. Ultimately, a normative re-educative approach is essential. Norms, which embody prevalent societal behaviours, when integrated with re-education, may facilitate the transformation of antiquated paradigms within the school community to a more contemporary standard. The persuasive and normative re-educative tactics use indirect habituation, role modelling, and persuasive communication to provide rational justification, eventually persuading the school community to embrace these practices.

The incorporation of religious principles should be fundamental to the school's policy. Moreover, the potential improvement of PAI could serve as a way to significantly augment the community's engagement with the school. Observations indicate that educational institutions exhibiting robust academic achievement and a religious atmosphere garner increased community engagement. Consequently, a program aimed at cultivating a religious culture should be seen as a fundamental approach to improving both educational quality and community involvement.

The results indicate that the efforts to cultivate a religious environment and impart these principles are prominently evident. Data about the implementation of religious ideals demonstrate that PAI has been established adequately and efficiently. The promotion of PAI via religious culturalization in schools is vital, since religion embodies noble qualities that need to be practiced and nourished in everyday life. These results should reassure us that the proposed changes are effective and beneficial. Religious culture is expressed in several forms, including rituals, social interactions, and symbols that embody religious beliefs.

CONCLUSION

Establishing a religious culture in schools is implemented via two primary strategies:

- The instructional sequential approach and
- The constructive sequential method.

The pedagogical approach emphasises structural and authoritative elements, depending on leadership's dedication to executing systematic procedures, often using enforcement and sanctions to cultivate religious culture. This technique includes many essential steps:

- Establishing a religious ambience
- Assimilating ideals
- Offering exemplars
- Promoting habitual habits, and
- Cultural assimilation

The constructive method prioritises the cultivation of self-awareness, promoting the organic development of religious attitudes, behaviours, and habits

among students, ultimately establishing a religious culture inside the school. This methodology encompasses the following steps:

- Establishing a religious ambience
- Fostering religious dispositions
- Nurturing religious conduct
- Consistent reinforcement, and
- Cultural assimilation

The successful implementation of a religious culture in schools requires the dedication and cooperation of the whole school community, along with meticulous oversight and administration of the culturalization process. A key tool in this process is the development of a guidebook that offers explicit guidance for pupils. The support of the school community, including the commitment of the administration, religious education instructors, students, parents, and other staff, is essential. Effective cooperation and dedication among the school, parents, and the local community are crucial for the effective establishment of a religious culture. The advancement of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is crucial for cultivating the religious culture inside educational institutions, and several sources may explain deficiencies in this domain. This encompasses restricted time dedicated to religious education. These pedagogical approaches primarily emphasise cognitive dimensions and insufficient internalisation of values, leading to the perception of education as mere knowledge transmission and adverse external influences, particularly the swift progression of technology.

FURTHER RESEARCH

All studies include inherent limitations, and this research is no different. The principal drawback is the constrained extent of data gathering, confined to a select number of schools within a particular area. This constraint impacts the generalisability of the results since the religious culture and educational procedures in different locations or institutions may differ markedly. The research mostly used qualitative data, which, while offering profound insights, may need to possess the extensive application of quantitative data. A further drawback is the possible bias in observation since the researcher's presence at critical moments may have affected participants' behaviour.

Future research should broaden the study's scope by including a more extensive and varied sample of schools from other areas to improve the generalisability of the results. Furthermore, further research might benefit from a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative data to provide a more thorough comprehension of the evolution of religious culture in educational institutions. Furthermore, longitudinal research may elucidate the enduring consequences of religious culturalization within educational environments, enhancing understanding of its influence on students' values, behaviours, and academic performance. An in-depth examination of the impact of external influences, including technological innovations and social transformations, on religious education would be beneficial.

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