

MULTICULTURAL-BASED ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LEARNING MODEL: AN INTEGRATIVE DESIGN FOR CHARACTER STRENGTHENING

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Abstract

This study aims to develop an integrative design for multicultural Islamic Religious Education learning in order to strengthen the character of students in a pluralistic society. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach through a literature study by analyzing various theories and previous research results relevant to multicultural education and Islamic Religious Education learning. The results show that the integrative multicultural Islamic Religious Education learning design is built on the principles of content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equality pedagogy, and empowerment of school culture. The implementation of this design is carried out through the stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation using participatory learning strategies such as group discussions, role-playing, and project-based learning. This study also identifies obstacles in the form of diverse student backgrounds, exclusivist attitudes, and limited teacher competencies, as well as supporting factors such as curriculum integration, teacher professionalism, an inclusive school environment, and stakeholder support. This integrative design contributes to strengthening the character of students, especially in fostering attitudes of tolerance, empathy, critical thinking skills, and social responsibility in accordance with the values of Pancasila and the Independent Curriculum.

Keywords: Character Building, Integrative Design, Islamic Religious Education, Multicultural Learning



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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education plays a strategic role in shaping the character of students who are faithful and have noble morals, and are able to live harmoniously in a diverse society. In the context of Indonesia, a pluralistic nation comprising various religions, ethnicities, cultures, and languages, Islamic Religious Education learning is required to be not only cognitively oriented but also to internalize the values of tolerance, justice, and respect for differences. However, Islamic Religious Education learning practices in schools are often normative and do not accommodate the realities of diversity, potentially fostering exclusive attitudes and a lack of openness to differences (Rejeki, 2025).

Multicultural education presents itself as a relevant approach to address these challenges. This approach emphasizes the importance of integrating diversity values throughout the educational process to create an inclusive and equitable learning environment. James A. Banks explains that multicultural education encompasses several key dimensions: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equality pedagogy, and empowerment of school culture (Zahra et. al., 2026). Thus, multicultural education is not merely about delivering material on diversity, but also about transforming the learning system as a whole.

From an Islamic perspective, diversity is a natural law that cannot be avoided but must be accepted and managed wisely. Values such as tolerance (*tasamuh*), brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), and social justice are essential foundations for building harmonious relationships between individuals of diverse backgrounds. Therefore, developing multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education is crucial so that students not only understand religious teachings textually but also are able to implement them in diverse social life. Various studies have shown that the integration of multicultural values into Islamic Religious Education learning can have a positive impact on student character development, such as increasing tolerance, empathy, and critical thinking skills in addressing differences (Yani, 2025). However, its implementation still faces various obstacles, including heterogeneity in student backgrounds, the emergence of exclusivist attitudes, and limited teacher competency in managing inclusive learning. These conditions indicate the need to develop more systematic, contextual, and integrative learning designs.

Based on these challenges, this research aims to develop an integrative design for multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education learning that is oriented toward strengthening student character. This design is expected to provide a solution in creating Islamic Religious Education learning that is inclusive, contextual, and relevant to the needs of Indonesia's pluralistic society.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method. The chosen research model is descriptive-analytical, namely reviewing various literature related to the multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education curriculum, then analyzing it to formulate an integrative design relevant to the educational context in Indonesia. The research participants were not directly individuals, but rather academic sources consisting of journal articles, books, and educational policy documents relevant to the theme of multiculturalism in Islamic Religious Education. The research instrument was a content analysis sheet used to identify the

main themes, concepts, and ideas from the reviewed literature. This instrument assisted the researcher in mapping the gap between Islamic Religious Education curriculum theory and practice in the field. The research procedure was carried out through data collection from international and national journals, books, and educational policy documents. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis and thematic synthesis techniques. This analysis aims to find consistent patterns, themes, and principles in the literature, while also revealing gaps between theory and practice. The results of the analysis were then compared with previous research to demonstrate the novelty of this research, namely the placement of multiculturalism as the main spirit of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum, not merely additional material.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Integrative Design of Multicultural-Based Islamic Religious Education Learning Model

An integrative design in a multicultural Islamic Religious Education learning model is a plan that consciously and systematically combines the values of Islamic teachings with the realities of socio-cultural diversity (Ubabuddin, 2018). This design goes beyond simply embedding multicultural material into Islamic Religious Education lessons, but rather builds an organic synthesis between sacred texts (qauliyah) and the context of diversity (kauniyah) as a unified process of seeking truth. The urgency of such a design stems from the reality of Indonesia as a nation diverse in ethnicity, language, religion, and customs. Without an integrative design, Islamic Religious Education learning has the potential to reinforce sectarianism and exclusivism, rather than foster social harmony.

To achieve effectiveness in the school curriculum, this integrative design must be built on several fundamental principles. The first principle is content integration, which substantively connects Islamic Religious Education materials such as justice, tolerance (tasamuh), and brotherhood (ukhuwah) with real-life examples of multicultural life. The second principle is knowledge construction, where students are encouraged to understand that interpretations of religious teachings can be influenced by cultural perspectives, so they develop a critical attitude while still respecting differences. The third principle is prejudice reduction, which requires learning designs to explicitly include reflective activities to identify and dismantle negative stereotypes between groups. The fourth principle is a pedagogy of equality, which requires teachers to use fair methods and accommodate students' diverse backgrounds. The fifth principle is empowering school culture, which extends integrative design to the entire school ecosystem, including policies, extracurricular activities, and daily social interactions. (Branks, 2019)

Furthermore, effective integrative design must be holistically reflected in the five components of the learning system. First, learning objectives are formulated not only for cognitive mastery of Islamic teachings but also for developing tolerant attitudes and social skills in a pluralistic society. Second, Islamic Religious Education learning materials are packaged by enriching verses and hadiths on diversity and juxtaposing them with the sociological realities of Indonesian society. Third, the methods used are participatory and collaborative, such as heterogeneous group discussions, social conflict case studies, role-playing, and cross-cultural project-based learning. Fourth, media and learning resources are not limited to Islamic Religious Education textbooks, but also utilize documentary films, interviews with interfaith figures, and field trips to different places of worship as authentic learning resources. Fifth, assessments rely not only on written tests but also utilize portfolios, reflective journals, peer assessment, and participant observation to measure changes in students' attitudes and behaviors in responding to diversity (Mashuri, 2021).

Implementing integrative design at the classroom level requires a systematic strategy through three main stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation (Hamsyah, 2025). In the

planning stage, teachers develop teaching modules that explicitly integrate multicultural values into each Islamic Religious Education topic and prepare learning differentiation to accommodate students' diverse backgrounds. During the implementation phase, teachers act as facilitators and role models, creating a safe and inclusive classroom atmosphere and providing a space of respect for all students, including those from different faiths—for example, by not forcing participation in certain ritual activities. During the evaluation and reflection phase, teachers and students engage in reflective discussions to identify new understandings of diversity and measure the extent to which prejudice has been reduced. The results of this process are then used to improve subsequent learning designs.

The integrative design of this multicultural Islamic Religious Education learning model strongly correlates with character building, particularly within the Merdeka Curriculum framework. The values of tolerance, justice, and respect for differences directly shape the character dimensions of Global Diversity and Mutual Cooperation in the Pancasila Student Profile. The process of understanding other perspectives also fosters critical thinking, while completing collaborative projects fosters independence and creativity. The flexible Merdeka Curriculum, with its project-based learning approach, provides an ideal platform for concretely applying multicultural values. Teachers are given the freedom to develop teaching modules that are contextual and responsive to diversity in each school's environment. Thus, integrative design is not merely an ideal concept, but rather a practice systematically supported by national curriculum policy.

Implementation and Teacher Strategies in Applying Multicultural-Based Islamic Religious Education Learning to Strengthen Students' Character

The implementation of multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education requires teachers to have a focused strategy for integrating the values of diversity into the teaching and learning process. Teachers serve not only as transmitters of material but also as facilitators, fostering mutual respect, tolerance, and empathy among students. Through a multicultural approach, Islamic Religious Education learning is directed towards enabling students to understand religious teachings while internalizing universal values such as justice, brotherhood, and respect for cultural and religious differences. Strategies include using cross-cultural discussions, case studies relevant to everyday life, and fostering inclusive attitudes in classroom activities. Thus, Islamic Religious Education learning not only strengthens cognitive aspects but also shapes the character of students who are noble, open, and prepared to live harmoniously in a pluralistic society.

The implementation and strategies of teachers in implementing multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education learning are essential approaches to building harmony in Indonesia's pluralistic society. This approach not only transmits religious teachings but also shapes the character of tolerant and inclusive students (Sari, 2025).

Multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education (ISE) learning is defined as an educational process that integrates the values of ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic diversity into the Islamic Religious Education curriculum, with the goal of managing differences constructively. This concept is rooted in the Islamic understanding that diversity is a divine law, as affirmed in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Hujurat: 13, which emphasizes the equality of all human beings before God, regardless of background. In Indonesia, this approach is relevant given the reality of a pluralistic society, where Islamic Religious Education plays a role as an agent of social transformation to prevent identity-based conflicts (Muhammad Alfazri et al., 2026). Islamic Religious Education teachers are responsible for designing learning that is not only normative but also contextual, enabling students to coexist with respect for differences (Idi, 2021).

The strategic role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in this implementation encompasses four main dimensions: curriculum planner, dialogue facilitator, moral role model,

and attitude evaluator. According to James A. Banks, multicultural education involves content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equitable pedagogy, and school empowerment, all of which must be adapted to Islamic Religious Education. Islamic Religious Education teachers must shift the orientation of learning from solely cognitive knowledge transfer to the development of affective attitudes, such as empathy and *tawasuth* (moderation) (Banks, 2019). In multicultural schools like State Vocational High School 2 Depok, Islamic Religious Education teachers have successfully fostered this awareness through role models, although challenges such as student resistance remain.

The implementation planning stage begins with the integration of multicultural values into the Lesson Plan, such as selecting material on *ukhuwah insaniyah* (human brotherhood) and the story of the Prophet Muhammad's interaction with non-Muslims. The book "Multicultural Islamic Education: Concepts and Practical Implementation in Schools" emphasizes that the Islamic Religious Education curriculum must be oriented towards heterogeneous students, with achievement indicators such as the ability to engage in interfaith discussions (Thoyib, 2020). Teachers also develop project-based modules, such as visits to different places of worship, to strengthen the psychomotor dimension of tolerant character (Kaharuddin, 2025).

During the implementation phase, key strategies include collaborative learning, such as heterogeneous group discussions and role-playing social conflicts. Research at Labuhan Kananga 2 Public Elementary School showed that a personal approach (individual relationships with students), the habituation of interfaith greetings, and open dialogue effectively instill tolerance. Modeling methods, such as Islamic Religious Education teachers leading prayers with non-Muslim students, strengthen the internalization of the values of *tasamuh* (compassion) and *tawazun* (respect). This educational approach transforms the classroom into a safe space for the expression of differences, allowing students' character traits, such as *musawah* (equality), to develop naturally (Handayani et al., 2024).

The strategy for strengthening character through multicultural Islamic Religious Education targets five Pancasila student profiles: faith, global diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, and critical thinking. Teachers implemented habits such as interfaith collaborative activities to foster mutual cooperation and case studies of historical Indonesian conflicts to train critical reasoning against prejudice. As a result, students demonstrated increased empathy, as evidenced by participant observations in the classroom multicultural sports (Pramana & Fauzan, 2024).

Obstacles and Supporting Factors in the Implementation of Multicultural-Based Islamic Religious Education Learning Models

The implementation of a multicultural Islamic Religious Education learning model to strengthen student character is inseparable from various pedagogical, social, and cultural obstacles. One major obstacle is the heterogeneity of students' characters and backgrounds, which are highly diverse, in terms of religion, culture, and social customs. These differences often create difficulties for teachers in conveying sensitive material, particularly regarding aspects of faith and belief, due to concerns about offending students from different religious backgrounds.

Furthermore, exclusivist attitudes and prejudice between student groups also pose serious obstacles. In a multicultural context, students still tend to associate only with those within the same religious or cultural group, and even exhibit teasing or negative stereotypes between groups. This indicates that the internalization of tolerance values has not been fully successful, thus hampering the goals of multicultural-based character education (Baehaqi et al., 2025).

Another obstacle is the perspective bias in Islamic Religious Education learning materials and approaches, where learning tends to be normative and less inclusive of diversity. This results in multicultural values not being optimally integrated into the curriculum or classroom practices. On the other hand, teachers' limited competence in managing multicultural learning

is also a hindering factor. Teachers often lack a deep understanding of inclusive pedagogical strategies, making it difficult to manage cross-cultural discussions or handle conflicts that arise in the classroom. A pluralistic social environment can also be a barrier if not managed effectively. High ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity, without being balanced by education for tolerance, can trigger social conflict that spills over into the school environment (Handayani et al., 2023).

The implementation of a multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education learning model to strengthen character in schools cannot be optimal without systematic and sustainable supporting factors. The first crucial factor is the integration of a multicultural values-based curriculum. An Islamic Religious Education curriculum designed to integrate values such as tolerance, justice, equality, and respect for diversity has been proven to develop inclusive and moderate student character. This integration extends not only to the material but also to the objectives, methods, and evaluation of learning, ensuring that all learning components work synergistically in shaping student character.

The second factor is the competence and role of professional Islamic Religious Education teachers with a multicultural perspective. Teachers hold a strategic position as agents of change in instilling multicultural values. Teachers who possess a broad understanding of diversity and are able to apply an inclusive pedagogical approach will be more effective in fostering tolerance and mutual respect among students. Furthermore, teachers also serve as role models (*uswah hasanah*) in their daily attitudes and behaviors, so that multicultural values are not only taught but also exemplified.

The third factor is the use of innovative and contextual learning methods and strategies. Project-based learning, group discussions, case studies, and collaborative learning are effective approaches to internalizing multicultural values. These strategies enable students to interact, engage in dialogue, and understand differences directly in learning situations. This approach also develops students' cognitive, affective, and social aspects in a balanced manner, ultimately strengthening their character (Hamdani et al., 2026).

The fourth factor is an inclusive school environment that supports multiculturalism. Schools, as social environments, must reflect the values of diversity through policies, school culture, and interactions among members of the school community. A conducive environment will strengthen the internalization of character values, such as tolerance, empathy, and cooperation. In this regard, support from the principal, institutional policies, and a school culture that values diversity are key factors in the successful implementation of multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education (Busthomi & Ula, 2024).

The fifth factor is support from educational stakeholders, including parents, the community, and the government. Collaboration between schools and various parties is crucial to creating continuity between the values taught in school and students' social lives outside of school. This support can take the form of educational policies, the provision of infrastructure, teacher training, and the strengthening of community-based programs. Without this external support, the implementation of multicultural learning will face various obstacles, such as limited resources and resistance to change.

Furthermore, another supporting factor is the utilization of technology and learning media. In the digital era, technology can be used as a means to enrich multicultural Islamic Religious Education learning, for example through the use of interactive media, learning videos, or digital platforms that showcase cultural diversity and values of tolerance. This use of technology can increase students' interest in learning and broaden their understanding of the plurality of society (Sriliza, 2025).

CONCLUSION

A multicultural Islamic Religious Education learning model with an integrative design is a relevant and important approach to be implemented in the context of Indonesia's diverse society. This design not only integrates Islamic teachings with the realities of diversity but is also built on key principles such as content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equality pedagogy, and empowerment of school culture. Its implementation is carried out systematically through planning, implementation, and evaluation stages using participatory learning strategies such as discussions, role-playing, and project-based learning. The role of teachers is crucial as facilitators, role models, and managers of inclusive learning to instill the values of tolerance, empathy, and mutual respect. Despite various obstacles such as student heterogeneity, exclusivist attitudes, and limited teacher competency, the implementation of this model is still supported by factors such as an integrated curriculum, teacher professionalism, an inclusive school environment, and stakeholder support. Overall, the integrative multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education learning model has been proven to strengthen students' character, especially in fostering attitudes of tolerance, empathy, critical thinking, and social responsibility, thus aligning with the values of Pancasila and the objectives of the Independent Curriculum.

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