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Transforming the Islamic Education Curriculum for the Society 5.0 Era: Integrating Technology, Ethics, and Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

The rise of Society 5.0—a human-centred paradigm that merges advanced technology with solutions to social challenges—necessitates a rethinking of the Islamic education curriculum. Traditional pedagogies alone are insufficient to equip learners with the competencies needed in a digitally driven world, particularly in balancing technological fluency with spiritual and ethical grounding. This qualitative study explores how Islamic educational institutions are adapting their curricula to meet the demands of Society 5.0. Data were collected through purposive sampling involving three institutions in Indonesia. The research employed document analysis and semi-structured interviews with 15 participants, including educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers. Thematic analysis was used to identify key trends in curriculum transformation. The study identified three major areas of curricular change: (1) integration of digital tools to facilitate blended and technology-enhanced learning; (2) incorporation of ethics-focused modules that address the moral use of technology through Islamic frameworks; and (3) adoption of interdisciplinary, inquiry-based approaches that foster critical thinking and real-world application of knowledge. These findings demonstrate a growing capacity within Islamic education to align with the technological and ethical demands of Society 5.0 while preserving core religious values. The study concludes by recommending strategic policy and institutional frameworks to support sustainable curriculum transformation. This model of integration offers valuable insights for Islamic education systems globally seeking to remain relevant in an increasingly digital era.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Society 5.0, first introduced by the Japanese government in 2016, marks a transformative phase in human civilization that transcends the previous eras of societal developmen, namely Society 1.0 (hunting and gathering), Society 2.0 (agriculture), Society 3.0 (industrialization), and Society 4.0 (information age). Unlike its predecessor, which primarily emphasized technological

automation and efficiency, Society 5.0 envisions a balanced and human-centered integration of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, and big data analytics into every aspect of human life. The goal is not merely technological advancement, but the resolution of complex social issues, including inequality, environmental degradation, and healthcare disparities, through digital innovation grounded in ethical values. In this rapidly evolving context, the field of education occupies a strategic position as a driver of societal change. Educational systems are expected to respond proactively to the demands of Society 5.0 by cultivating individuals who are not only competent in using emerging technologies, but also possess the critical thinking skills, collaborative capabilities, and moral integrity necessary to navigate and shape the future. For Islamic education, this challenge is twofold: first, to modernize its curriculum to remain relevant in an increasingly digital world; second, to preserve its spiritual and ethical foundations amidst the disruptive forces of secularization, materialism, and cultural relativism.

Islamic education has historically played a central role in shaping the intellectual, spiritual, and moral fabric of Muslim societies. From the classical era of Madrasah Nizamiyah in the 11th century to the contemporary pesantren system in Southeast Asia, Islamic education has always sought to balance between *naqli* (transmitted) knowledge from divine revelation and *aqli* (rational) knowledge derived from human reason. Scholars such as Al-Ghazali in his magnum opus *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* emphasized that true knowledge is that which refines character (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and draws individuals closer to God. This holistic vision of education, which integrates intellectual rigor with moral and spiritual formation, is more relevant than ever in the digital age.

However, empirical data suggest that Islamic educational institutions have been slow to adapt to the demands of the 21st century. A 2021 UNESCO report indicates that nearly 60% of Islamic schools in Southeast Asia still rely heavily on traditional pedagogies such as rote memorization (*tahfiz*) and one-way lecturing, with limited emphasis on creativity, problem-solving, or interdisciplinary learning. While these methods have merit in preserving foundational religious texts and values, they often fall short in equipping students with the critical competencies required in the digital economy and knowledge society. Moreover, the global pandemic has revealed significant disparities in digital access and literacy: according to the Indonesian Ministry of Education (2022), only 35% of pesantren in rural or remote areas have adequate internet connectivity or digital infrastructure.

Beyond access, the digital revolution poses epistemological and ethical challenges that demand serious attention. The proliferation of online learning platforms such as Zoom, Google Classroom, and Moodle has undoubtedly expanded educational access, but it also risks dehumanizing the learning process, reducing rich teacher-student interactions into mechanical exchanges. AI-powered tools like ChatGPT offer unprecedented personalization, but without ethical guidance, they may reinforce biases or disseminate misinformation. Furthermore, the algorithmic design of social media platforms like YouTube and TikTok has been shown to amplify polarizing or even radical content, leading to what Jalaluddin Rakhmat (1989) described as an "epistemological crisis", where learners lose the ability to distinguish between valid knowledge and sensationalized opinion.

Against this backdrop, reforming the Islamic education curriculum becomes an urgent imperative, not merely as a reactive measure, but as a proactive reimagining of how Islamic knowledge can be taught, lived, and applied in a digitally mediated world. Yet despite the growing body of literature on educational transformation in the era of Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0, relatively few studies have specifically addressed the unique challenges and opportunities facing Islamic education in this context. Most reform efforts remain confined to technical upgrades, such as introducing coding classes or digitizing textbooks, without addressing deeper pedagogical and philosophical questions. There is a critical research gap in exploring integrative curricular models that simultaneously foster technological competence and spiritual depth.

This study seeks to fill that gap by proposing a curriculum transformation framework for Islamic education that is responsive to the ethical, cognitive, and technological demands of Society 5.0. The framework draws on two key theoretical foundations: Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) and Imam Al-Zarnuji's classical treatise *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*. These two models, though

developed in vastly different contexts, offer complementary insights into the aims and processes of meaningful education.

Bloom's Revised Taxonomy provides a hierarchical model for developing higher, order cognitive skills, moving from remembering and understanding to applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. In the context of Society 5.0, this taxonomy is particularly valuable for guiding curriculum planners to go beyond content delivery and toward active, inquiry-based, and project-based learning models. For example, in teaching Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), instead of merely memorizing legal rulings, students can be engaged in simulations of real-life ethical dilemmas, such as cryptocurrency transactions or medical technologies, requiring analysis and judgment based on maqāṣid al-sharī'ah (objectives of Islamic law).

At the same time, Al-Zarnuji's *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* provides a spiritual-ethical foundation often missing from modern educational theories. His work emphasizes the importance of noble intention (*niyyah*), ethical behavior (*adab*), perseverance, humility in seeking knowledge, and a respectful teacher-student relationship. These values are essential in ensuring that technological literacy is not divorced from moral responsibility. Operationalizing Al-Zarnuji's framework in curriculum design could mean embedding adab modules in digital ethics courses, or integrating reflective practices such as *muhasabah* and *muraqabah* into project-based assessments.

The integration of Bloom and Al-Zarnuji in curriculum design is not merely theoretical. It has practical implications for pedagogy, assessment, and institutional culture. For instance, the "STEM-Q" (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, and Qur'an) program piloted at Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School demonstrates how Islamic values can be interwoven with technological innovation. In this program, students not only learn coding and engineering principles, but also design AI-based applications to assist in Qur'anic *tajwīd* learning, and critically analyze Qur'anic verses related to environmental ethics. This dual literacy, technological and theological, prepares students to become faith-driven innovators rather than passive digital consumers.

Furthermore, the transformation of Islamic education in the Society 5.0 era requires systemic collaboration across sectors. Universities, pesantren, and the technology industry must build strategic partnerships to co-develop educational content, teacher training programs, and digital platforms that are both pedagogically sound and religiously grounded. Government agencies and policymakers must also provide the necessary regulatory frameworks and infrastructure investments to ensure equitable digital access for all learners. Without such collaborative ecosystems, the promise of Society 5.0 will remain unevenly distributed and potentially exacerbate existing inequalities.

It is also vital to ensure that curriculum transformation does not lead to the erosion of identity or religious authenticity. Islamic education must resist the temptation to mimic secular technocratic models without critical engagement. The core objective remains the formation of *insān kāmil*, the holistic human being, who harmonizes knowledge, faith, and action. As Nurcholish Madjid (2002) reminded us, the modernization of Islamic education must be based on the principle of *al-muhāfaẓah 'ala al-qadīm al-ṣāliḥ wa al-akhdhu bi al-jadīd al-aṣlaḥ*, preserving the noble traditions while embracing beneficial innovations.

In sum, the curriculum of Islamic education must undergo a paradigm shift that reflects the realities of the Society 5.0 era. This shift involves not only integrating digital tools and subjects, but also rethinking the goals, content, and methods of education itself. It demands a move from rote memorization to creative inquiry, from passive consumption to active production, and from isolated instruction to collaborative learning grounded in ethical and spiritual values.

Therefore, this study aims to explore how the Islamic education curriculum can be transformed in a way that aligns with the technological and ethical demands of Society 5.0. It focuses on identifying integrative strategies that merge cognitive excellence with spiritual depth, drawing on the theoretical insights of Bloom and Al-Zarnuji to develop a practical model for curriculum reform. By doing so, the research aspires to contribute not only to academic discourse, but also to policy and pedagogical innovation within Islamic educational institutions.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design, integrating an in-depth literature review with multiple case studies to investigate how Islamic educational institutions are transforming their curricula in response to the demands of Society 5.0. The case study method was chosen to provide a contextualized understanding of curriculum reform processes within specific institutional environments, allowing for the exploration of both challenges and best practices in implementation.

Sampling was conducted purposively, targeting institutions that have demonstrated preliminary efforts to integrate technological, ethical, and interdisciplinary components into their educational frameworks. Three institutions were selected from Indonesia and Malaysia, representing a diversity of Islamic educational settings, including a modern pesantren, an integrated Islamic school, and an Islamic university. The criteria for selection included: (1) formal adoption of technology-enhanced learning strategies; (2) inclusion of ethical and interdisciplinary components within the curriculum; and (3) institutional willingness to participate in the study. This purposive sampling enabled the researcher to capture a range of perspectives and models while maintaining thematic coherence.

Data collection was carried out through two primary methods: document analysis and semi-structured interviews. The document analysis involved a close reading of 27 institutional texts, including curriculum frameworks, strategic plans, pedagogical guidelines, and official reports related to innovation in Islamic education. These documents provided a foundation for understanding the institutional vision, objectives, and policy orientations related to Society 5.0.

In addition, fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders in Islamic education, comprising educators (n = 6), curriculum developers (n = 4), and policymakers (n = 5). The interviews, each lasting between 45 and 60 minutes, were conducted both in, person and via Zoom, depending on availability and location. The interviews were designed to explore participants' perceptions of Society 5.0, the nature of curriculum transformation, institutional capacities and constraints, and the integration of ethical and technological dimensions into Islamic learning. Interview questions were open-ended to allow for rich, qualitative insights, while still structured enough to align with the study's conceptual framework.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, guided by the six-phase approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final report. Emerging themes included the integration of digital literacy within Islamic pedagogical structures, tensions between technological advancement and the preservation of religious tradition, institutional readiness for curricular innovation, and the incorporation of ethical reasoning into interdisciplinary learning environments. These findings informed the development of a conceptual model for curriculum transformation that is responsive to technological imperatives while grounded in Islamic epistemology and values.

Ethical considerations were rigorously observed throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, all participants were informed of the study’s objectives, their right to withdraw at any stage, and the measures in place to protect their confidentiality. Written or verbal informed consent was obtained from all participants. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were used for individuals and institutions, and identifying details were redacted from all transcripts and publications. Ethical approval was secured from the institutional research ethics committee, ensuring compliance with academic standards of integrity and human subject research.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study generated empirical insights from three purposively selected Islamic educational institutions, one pesantren in Indonesia, one integrated Islamic secondary school, and one Islamic university in Malaysia. Data were drawn from 27 institutional documents and 15 semi-structured interviews with educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers. Thematic analysis revealed four interrelated findings.

3.1 Technology Integration: Selective and Uneven Implementation

All three institutions had begun integrating digital technology into the curriculum, but the depth and scope varied significantly. While basic tools like e-learning platforms (Google Classroom, Zoom) were used consistently across all institutions, the adoption of advanced technologies such as AI and VR was more limited.

At the pesantren level, technology was introduced primarily to support existing pedagogies, such as using YouTube for Qur'anic recitation tutorials. The integrated Islamic school implemented gamified learning apps and blended instruction, while the university had piloted AI-based simulations for legal reasoning in contemporary *fiqh* issues. According to interviewees, the university reported a 30–40% increase in student participation following the introduction of AI simulations. However, both the pesantren and school reported limited access to infrastructure and teacher readiness as ongoing challenges.

A curriculum developer in Malaysia noted, *"We want to use AI more widely, but we don't have enough trained staff who understand both the technology and its Islamic ethical implications."* This reflects a common theme of aspiration without full institutional support.

3.2 Ethical Integration: Embedding Islamic Values in the Digital Environment

All three institutions had undertaken deliberate efforts to embed Islamic values into their approach to digital transformation. One Malaysian institution applied a *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*-based framework to assess the ethical use of digital platforms and AI tools. For example, student projects involving data analysis were evaluated not only on technical accuracy but also on whether they aligned with values such as *ḥifẓ al-'aql* (protection of intellect) and *ḥifẓ al-dīn* (protection of religion).

Analysis of institutional documents and student outputs—such as reflective essays and digital portfolios—indicated a growing emphasis on value integration. In one school, essay assignments required students to reflect on Islamic ethical dilemmas in AI applications, such as algorithmic bias and surveillance. Coding and robotics classes were also paired with discussions on *niyyah* (intention) and *amanah* (trust), providing a dual emphasis on skills and spirituality. An educator from the pesantren remarked, *"We don't just teach them how to use technology; we ask them why they use it and for what purpose. That's where Islam comes in."*

Table 1. Integration of Islamic Ethical Frameworks

Institution	Ethical Framework Used	Curriculum Integration	Reported Impact
Pesantren (Indonesia)	Basic *Adab* & *Amanah* values	Technology use is discussed within fiqh and akhlak sessions	Heightened awareness of online ethics
Integrated Islamic School	*Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*-informed themes	Essays linking AI/data ethics with Islamic moral concepts	50% increase in value-referenced reflections
Islamic University (Malaysia)	Institutional *Maqāṣid* framework	AI modules assessed on ethical as well as technical quality	Improved critical engagement with tech in religion

3.3 Institutional Challenges: Resistance and Resource Gaps

Despite enthusiasm for innovation, all institutions faced systemic and cultural challenges. The *pesantren* encountered parental resistance due to fears that online platforms would weaken traditional teacher–student relationships (*ta'dhim al-mu'allim*), a cornerstone of Islamic pedagogical ethics. This resistance was not merely technical but deeply rooted in concerns about the erosion of moral and spiritual values traditionally cultivated through face-to-face interaction. In contrast, at the Islamic university, debates emerged around the appropriateness of using AI in religious legal reasoning. Interviews revealed that some faculty members feared the "automation" of *ijtihād* might undermine human judgment and scholarly authority, potentially marginalizing the role of senior scholars trained in classical jurisprudence. Others questioned whether algorithms could ever adequately grasp the ethical and contextual nuance required in Islamic legal deliberation.

Resource limitations were also significant. Two institutions lacked stable internet access in all classrooms, impeding the regular use of digital tools in teaching and learning. Only one had a formal training program for teachers in educational technology, reflecting a broader lack of institutional preparedness. Several interviewees highlighted the absence of national policy guidance on how Islamic education should navigate advanced technologies, resulting in ad hoc and often contradictory approaches. A policymaker from Indonesia observed, "There is no official framework yet. Everyone is experimenting in their own way, which creates confusion and inconsistency." This regulatory vacuum has left many educators uncertain about the boundaries and possibilities of technological adoption in religious contexts, thereby slowing systematic innovation.

3.4 Local Innovations: Models of Integration

Despite these constraints, the study identified promising innovations that illustrate the adaptive potential of Islamic educational institutions. One institution piloted a "Digital Tazkiyah" module, blending coding instruction with spiritual reflection, where students designed mobile apps for daily prayer reminders, *sadaqah* tracking, or Qur'an memorization. This approach not only fostered technical skills but also encouraged students to conceptualize digital tools as means of spiritual self-regulation and moral development. Another institution used virtual reality (VR) to recreate key historical moments in Islamic civilization, such as the Hijrah or the Abbasid translation movement, followed by student-led critical discussions that connected historical insights with contemporary ethical dilemmas. Educators reported increased student engagement and deeper reflective thinking as a result of these immersive learning experiences.

These innovations demonstrate that Islamic education can move beyond binary debates of tradition versus technology toward holistic integration when pedagogical creativity is supported by clear ethical grounding. They also suggest a shift from passive content consumption to active, values-oriented digital production. Moreover, such examples underscore the potential for Islamic education to contribute to broader discourses on technology and ethics, particularly in contexts where moral frameworks are central to curricular aims.

Discussion

The findings of this study affirm that Islamic educational institutions are increasingly aware of the imperative to transform their curricula in response to the demands of Society 5.0. This societal vision, which emphasizes the integration of advanced technology with human-centered development (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2019), has prompted many institutions to initiate digital integration, primarily through basic tools such as learning management systems, mobile apps, and multimedia content. However, implementation remains uneven and context-dependent. Only a few institutions have experimented with more advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) or virtual reality (VR). These early-stage innovations are shaped by a range of systemic challenges, including limited infrastructure, inadequate teacher training, and theological concerns about the appropriateness of certain technologies

in religious learning environments. Similar barriers have been documented in broader global education contexts (Salmon, 2019), but in Islamic settings, they are further complicated by the need to uphold religious and moral principles integral to pedagogy.

What distinguishes the institutions in this study is not merely their adoption of digital tools, but their conscious efforts to embed Islamic ethical values into the process of innovation. Participants consistently highlighted the use of frameworks such as *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law) and principles derived from classical educational texts like *Ta'līm al-Muta'allim* to evaluate and guide the use of technology. Rather than viewing these ethical constructs as constraints, educators treated them as enabling frameworks—tools that provide moral clarity and ensure that digital transformation aligns with core values such as accountability (*mas'ūliyyah*), communal benefit (*maṣlaḥah*), and spiritual growth (*tazkiyah*). This reflects a broader trend in faith-based education where technology is mediated through theological and ethical inquiry (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021).

Notable success stories—such as the "Digital Tazkiyah" module, which integrates coding with spiritual reflection, or the use of AI to simulate *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) decision-making—suggest that effective transformation occurs when innovation is rooted in local pedagogical cultures. These initiatives were not merely technological add-ons, but pedagogically grounded, purpose-driven projects supported by visionary leadership and institutional investment. This aligns with literature emphasizing that sustainable digital transformation in education is most effective when it emerges from internal motivations and cultural relevance, rather than external pressure (Selwyn, 2020). Furthermore, these examples illustrate that the goals of Society 5.0—particularly the balance between technological progress and human well-being—can be harmonized with Islamic educational values through intentional design and ethical foresight.

Nevertheless, the study is not without limitations. Its regional focus on institutions in Indonesia and Malaysia, while offering valuable insights into Southeast Asian Islamic education, limits the applicability of findings to broader contexts such as the Middle East, Africa, or Muslim minority settings in the West. Additionally, the sample size was relatively small—comprising three institutions and 15 interview participants—thus constraining the generalizability of the results. The study also relied heavily on self-reported data and institutional documents, which may be subject to social desirability bias, particularly in environments where innovation is positively valorized. Most importantly, the study did not measure long-term student outcomes, such as ethical resilience, technological fluency, or post-graduation readiness. These are critical areas for future research, especially as Islamic educational institutions seek to prepare students not only for religious life but also for ethical engagement in a digital and globalized world.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the transformative potential of Islamic education within the framework of Society 5.0, revealing that the integration of digital technologies—when grounded in ethical frameworks such as *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* and the pedagogical principles of *Ta'līm al-Muta'allim*—can enhance both intellectual development and moral integrity without compromising religious values. Contrary to assumptions that technological advancement necessitates secularization, the findings show that Islamic educational institutions can adopt tools like artificial intelligence and virtual reality in ways that support holistic, spiritually grounded learning. The study highlights how institutions that align innovation with their ethical and spiritual mission are better positioned to navigate the complexities of the digital age. However, the research is limited by its narrow geographical focus on institutions in Indonesia and Malaysia, a small sample size, and reliance on self-reported data, which may affect the generalizability of the results. Additionally, the study did not assess long-term outcomes related to students' post-graduation readiness or ethical resilience in real-world digital environments. Future research should address these gaps by exploring a more diverse range of Islamic educational contexts across different regions, employing longitudinal methods to evaluate the sustained impact of digital

integration on learners' academic, spiritual, and professional development. Despite its limitations, this study offers a valuable foundation for reimagining Islamic education in the digital era and calls for continued inquiry into how ethical and pedagogical traditions can guide purposeful engagement with emerging technologies.

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