



Constructing Multicultural Islamic Education as a Distinctive Feature of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program Curriculum

Muhammad Sulistiono, Universitas Islam Malang

Corresponding Author: Muhammad Sulistiono

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Abstract

This article examines multicultural Islamic education in the curriculum of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Islam Malang. Multicultural Islamic education is one of the strategic approaches to preserving and transmitting the values of togetherness, tolerance, and diversity to future generations in Indonesia. Therefore, the implementation of multicultural education is essential, particularly through its integration into the education system. As a core component of education, the curriculum plays an important role in helping students internalize various values, including multicultural values, in order to prepare prospective Islamic Religious Education teachers who possess inclusive attitudes and multicultural awareness. This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. The research was conducted at the Islamic Religious Education Study Program, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Islam Malang. The data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis. The data analysis techniques included data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. This study is expected to provide an understanding of how multicultural Islamic education is constructed and integrated as a distinctive feature in the curriculum of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program.

Keywords

Multicultural Islamic education; Distinctive; Curriculum; Islamic religious education



Introduction

Indonesia is a country characterized by extraordinary diversity in terms of ethnicity, religion, race, and social groups. This diversity is a blessing from Allah SWT that must be preserved and managed wisely. However, if diversity is not properly maintained, it may become a source of conflict. Historical experiences in several countries, such as the United States, Australia, Germany, South Africa, and Sri Lanka, show that conflicts related to ethnic, religious, racial, and social diversity can lead to serious consequences and even casualties.

Multicultural education is one of the solutions for maintaining harmonious relations among different ethnicities, religions, races, and social groups. For this reason, many studies on multicultural values have begun to be integrated into the field of education and implemented in educational institutions. One example is the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Islam Malang. In this study program, multicultural education is positioned as a distinctive feature. In addition to differentiating the program from similar study programs at other universities, multicultural education also serves as a foundation for curriculum reconstruction in developing contemporary learning materials and courses.

Based on the Rector's Decree of the Universitas Islam Malang Number 242/G152/U.AK/R/L.16/VII/2020 concerning study program distinctions, all study programs at the Universitas Islam Malang are required to establish their own distinctive features, including the Islamic Religious Education Study Program. The distinction referred to in this decree is a form of uniqueness reflected in the curriculum, particularly in the graduate profile.

The *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* defines distinction as a difference in meaning or characteristics (KBBI Daring, 2023). In the context of higher education, distinction functions as a unique identity or label for a study program, making it easier for the public to distinguish one program from similar programs at other universities. For example, the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at the Universitas Islam Malang can be distinguished from Islamic Religious Education study programs at other higher education institutions through its multicultural education orientation.

However, distinction is not merely a label used to differentiate one study program from another. It also serves as one of the foundations for curriculum reconstruction. Through this distinction, additional graduate learning outcomes can



be formulated, leading to the development of new course names, learning practices, and lecture products that reflect the identity of the study program.

Multicultural education was chosen as the distinctive feature of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at the Universitas Islam Malang. Furthermore, it has become one of the foundations for curriculum reconstruction. The determination of multicultural education as the program's distinction was based on various inputs obtained during focus group discussions on curriculum reconstruction.

The integration of distinction into the study program curriculum is an important academic issue because not all study programs clearly demonstrate their distinctive features. Moreover, curriculum reconstruction based on distinction requires a comprehensive academic process involving discussions and contributions from various stakeholders. In the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at the Universitas Islam Malang, the embodiment of multicultural education as a distinction involves curriculum formulation, lecturer interpretation in teaching practices, student learning experiences, the academic environment, and the final learning products produced through the program.

Based on the discussion above, the main research question of this article is: How is distinction internalized in the curriculum of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at the Universitas Islam Malang? Therefore, this study aims to analyze the internalization of distinction in the curriculum of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at the Universitas Islam Malang.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The research was conducted as field research, in which the researcher collected data directly from the research site. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because this study aimed to understand the phenomenon as it occurred in its natural setting.

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the key instrument in collecting and interpreting data. The data are descriptive in nature, the research process is emphasized, and data analysis is conducted inductively to obtain meaningful findings (Masganti, 2002). This is in line with Azwar's view that qualitative research emphasizes the analysis of data and the dynamics of relationships among observed phenomena through scientific logic (Syaifudin, 2002).



Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. These techniques were used to obtain actual and contextual information related to the phenomenon found in the field. Through these methods, the researcher was able to explore the internalization of multicultural education as a distinctive feature in the curriculum of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program. The research was conducted at the Islamic Religious Education Study Program, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Islam Malang. This site was selected because the study program has implemented a new curriculum policy influenced by both national higher education policies and institutional policies at the university level.

Results and Discussion

1. Curriculum Reconstruction and the Determination of Study Program Distinction

In general, a curriculum is a structured plan that contains learning objectives, subject matter, learning resources, and educational experiences used by educators to guide students in the learning process. Wiggins and McTighe define curriculum as a specific blueprint for learning designed to achieve intended educational goals (Ansyar, 2015). In other words, the curriculum serves as a learning pathway that students follow with the guidance of educational institutions.

In higher education, curriculum development is strongly influenced by the demands of the times, institutional policies, and the competencies expected from graduates. Therefore, curriculum reconstruction is necessary to ensure that study programs remain relevant to contemporary social, academic, and professional needs. In the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Islam Malang, curriculum reconstruction was carried out to formulate distinctive courses that reflect the study program's identity.

The determination of the distinctive feature in the Islamic Religious Education Study Program involved several stages: curriculum review, analysis of tracer study reports, focus group discussions with students, alumni, and experts, and focus group discussions with lecturers of the Faculty of Islamic Studies. These stages were conducted to ensure that the distinctive feature was not merely an administrative label but was grounded in academic, institutional, and social considerations.

The review process led to the selection of multicultural education as the distinctive feature of the study program. This decision is closely related to the inclusive Islamic values promoted by one of the founders of the Universitas Islam Malang. Inclusive Islamic values include *ta'āruf* or mutual recognition, *tawassuṭ* or



moderation, *tasāmuḥ* or tolerance, *ta'āwun* or mutual cooperation, and *tawāzun* or balance. These values support the development of multicultural culture in society and the nation (Hasan, 2016). In addition, the doctoral program in Islamic Religious Education at the postgraduate level had already established Multicultural Islamic Religious Education as its distinctive feature, which further strengthened the direction of the undergraduate program's curriculum reconstruction.

2. Multicultural Values in Graduate Profiles and Learning Outcomes

After multicultural education was determined as the distinctive feature, it was embedded in the graduate profile of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program. The graduate profile was formulated as an Islamic religious educator based on multicultural values. This profile describes graduates as educators who possess professional skills, mastery of knowledge, managerial competence, and responsibility in teaching Islamic Religious Education in schools and madrasahs. Graduates are also expected to have good character, up-to-date knowledge in their field, and the ability to carry out educational responsibilities based on Islamic teachings and ASWAJA values (Direktorat PTKI, 2018).

The graduate profile was then translated into graduate learning outcomes. Several learning outcomes reflect the multicultural orientation of the program, particularly in the areas of attitudes, values, and special skills. In the attitude domain, students are expected to uphold humanitarian values in carrying out duties based on religion, morals, and ethics. They are also expected to respect cultural diversity, perspectives, religions, beliefs, and the opinions or original findings of others.

In the special skills domain, students are expected to manage and collaborate on academic works related to multicultural Islamic religious education, particularly those that reflect the character and spirit of Islamic entrepreneurship in the development of information technology-based media. Students are also expected to master ASWAJA values that contain the roots of inclusive character, including *ta'āruf*, *tawassuṭ*, *tasāmuḥ*, *ta'āwun*, and *tawāzun*, which encourage the realization of a multicultural culture (PAI FAI UNISMA Curriculum Development Team, 2021).

3. Development of Multicultural Study Materials

The graduate learning outcomes that reflect a multicultural education perspective were then used as the basis for developing study materials. The study materials with multicultural education content include the basic concepts and dimensions of multicultural education, the relationship between diversity, pluralism, and multiculturalism, multiculturalism during the time of the Prophet, the



Companions, and the *tābi'īn*, and the historical development of multicultural education in various countries, such as the United States, Germany, England, Canada, Australia, and South Africa.

Other study materials include the socio-cultural conditions of Indonesian society, future multicultural challenges, multicultural paradigms and approaches in the implementation of multicultural education in Indonesia, the transformation of multicultural education in national education policy, multicultural values in Islamic Religious Education, models of multiculturalism in Islamic Religious Education, and the implementation of multicultural Islamic Religious Education in schools and madrasahs.

In addition, the study materials also cover models, strategies, methods, techniques, and tactics in multicultural-based learning, as well as teachers, facilities, media, and assessment based on multiculturalism. These materials aim to support the creation of a harmonious and tolerant multicultural environment in educational institutions (PAI FAI UNISMA Curriculum Development Team, 2021).

The study materials were developed through discussions with experts and lecturers and by referring to books, articles, and research findings on multicultural education and multicultural Islamic education. These materials later became the foundation for formulating new courses that would be offered to students.

4. Interview Findings on the Internalization of Multicultural Education

The interview findings showed that multicultural education was internalized into the curriculum through several stages, including the formulation of graduate profiles, learning outcomes, course development, and classroom learning practices. The head of the study program explained that multicultural education was selected as the distinctive feature because it reflects the inclusive Islamic values promoted by the university and responds to the needs of prospective Islamic Religious Education teachers in pluralistic societies.

This finding indicates that multicultural education is not merely positioned as a study program label, but is integrated into the curriculum structure and learning process. This is in line with the view that multicultural education should be implemented through educational policies, curriculum content, learning strategies, and school culture to promote equality, tolerance, and respect for diversity (Banks, 2009). In the context of Islamic education, values such as *ta'āruf*, *tawassuṭ*, *tasāmuḥ*, *ta'āwun*, and *tawāzun* also serve as important foundations for building inclusive and multicultural awareness (Hasan, 2016).



Interviews with lecturers further revealed that the internalization of multicultural values was implemented through teaching materials, classroom discussions, student assignments, and assessment practices. Lecturers emphasized that students were encouraged to understand diversity not only as a social reality but also as an Islamic value that must be practiced in educational settings. This supports the idea that curriculum development should connect learning outcomes, learning experiences, and assessment in order to produce graduates with the expected competencies (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

5. Formation of Distinction-Based Courses

The next stage was the formation of courses based on the distinctive feature of multicultural education. This process involved classifying study materials into specific themes and then translating them into course names. The courses that reflect multicultural education include:

- a. Multicultural Islamic Education
- b. Classical Turats Study of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education
- c. Development of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Teaching Materials
- d. Development of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Curriculum
- e. Multicultural Classroom Management
- f. English for Islamic Multiculturalism
- g. Multicultural-Based Learning Innovation
- h. Multicultural-Based School/Madrasah Management

These courses were designed to strengthen the distinctive identity of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program. They also aim to provide students with unique academic experiences that differ from those offered by similar study programs at other universities.

All distinction-based courses are scheduled in the fifth semester to align with the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program, particularly the student exchange program. The MBKM policy allows students to gain broader learning experiences and acquire new competencies through learning activities outside their main study program. This policy is expected to prepare graduates to face the increasingly complex challenges of the twenty-first century (Aris et al., 2020).

The existence of distinctive courses is important because student exchange programs often involve courses with similar titles across universities. Without distinctive courses, student exchanges may only involve the same or overlapping subjects. Therefore, the development of multicultural-based distinction courses is



expected to reduce course overlap and provide students with more meaningful and unique learning experiences.

6. Breadth and Depth of Distinction-Based Courses

After the course names were determined, the next step was to analyze the breadth and depth of each distinction-based course. Breadth refers to the scope or range of subject matter covered in a course (Hanik et al., 2017). In the Islamic Religious Education Study Program, the breadth of each course was reflected in the Semester Learning Plan, which outlines the materials to be delivered in each distinction-based course.

Table 1. Breadth of Subject Matter in Distinction-Based Courses of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program

No	Course Name Distinction	Breadth Of Subject Matter
1	Multicultural Islamic Education	31 Subject Matter
2	Classical Turats Study of Multicultural PAI	15 Subject Matter
3	Development of Multicultural PAI Teaching Materials	20 Subject Matter
4	Development of Multicultural PAI Curriculum	15 Subject Matter
5	Multicultural Class Management	31 Subject Matter
6	English For Islamic Multiculturalism	20 Subject Matter
7	Multicultural-Based Learning Innovation	17 Subject Matter
8	Multicultural-Based School/Madrasah Management	25 Subject Matter

The analysis showed that each course has a different breadth of subject matter. For example, Multicultural Islamic Education contains 31 subject matters, Classical Turats Study of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education contains 15 subject matters, Development of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Teaching Materials contains 20 subject matters, and Multicultural Classroom Management contains 31 subject matters. These differences indicate that each course has a specific scope based on its learning objectives and contribution to the study program's distinctive feature.

Depth refers to the level of detail and cognitive complexity of the subject matter (Hanik et al., 2017). The depth of each course was determined by referring to graduate learning outcomes, course learning outcomes, and the expected lecture products. Anderson's taxonomy classifies the cognitive domain into six levels:



remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Ariani, 2014). Based on this classification, each course was assigned a level of depth.

Table 2. Depth of Subject Matter in Distinction-Based Courses of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program

No	Course Name Distinction	Depth of subject matter
1	Multicultural Islamic Education	C4 – Analyze
2	Classical Turats Study of Multicultural PAI	C4 – Analyze
3	Development of Multicultural PAI Teaching Materials	C6 – Create
4	Development of Multicultural PAI Curriculum	C4 – Analyze
5	Multicultural Class Management	C4 – Analyze
6	English For Islamic Multiculturalism	C4 – Analyze
7	Multicultural-Based Learning Innovation	C6 – Create
8	Multicultural-Based School/Madrasah Management	C3 – Apply

As shown in Table 2, *Multicultural Islamic Education*, *Classical Turats Study of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education*, *Development of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Curriculum*, *Multicultural Classroom Management*, and *English for Islamic Multiculturalism* were categorized at the analyzing level. Meanwhile, *Development of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Teaching Materials* and *Multicultural-Based Learning Innovation* were categorized at the creating level. *Multicultural-Based School/Madrasah Management* was categorized at the applying level.

After the breadth and depth of each distinction-based course were identified, the next step was to determine the subject matter load and credit allocation. The subject matter load was calculated by multiplying the breadth of subject matter by the depth level of each course. The course material load was then compared with the total subject material load to determine the appropriate number of credits. This process ensured that credit allocation was based on academic considerations rather than arbitrary decisions. The formula used was as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Breadth} \times \text{Depth} = \text{Subject matter load}}{\text{Course material load}} \times \text{Maximum credits of subject material}$$



Table 3. Credit Allocation for Distinction-Based Courses

NO	Course Name Distinction	Breadth Of Subject Matter	Depth of subject matter	Cours e mater ial load	Credits of subject material while	Credits of subject material
1	Multicultural Islamic Education	31	4	124	2,99380 0979	3
2	Classical Turats Study of Multicultural PAI	15	4	60	1,44861 3377	2
3	Development of Multicultural PAI Teaching Materials	20	6	120	2,89722 6754	3
4	Development of Multicultural PAI Curriculum	15	4	60	1,44861 3377	2
5	Multicultural Class Management	31	4	124	2,99380 0979	3
6	English For Islamic Multiculturalism	20	4	80	1,93148 4502	2
7	Multicultural-Based Learning Innovation	17	6	102	2,46264 2741	3
8	Multicultural-Based School/Madrasah Management	25	3	75	1,81076 6721	2

As shown in Table 3, several distinction-based courses were assigned three credits, including *Multicultural Islamic Education*, *Development of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Teaching Materials*, *Multicultural Classroom Management*, and *Multicultural-Based Learning Innovation*. Meanwhile, other courses were assigned two credits, including *Classical Turats Study of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education*, *Development of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Curriculum*, *English for Islamic Multiculturalism*, and *Multicultural-Based School/Madrasah Management*.

The breadth, depth, and credit allocation of these courses have implications for the development of the Semester Learning Plan. Breadth is translated into the number and scope of subject matters to be studied, while depth is translated into operational verbs in the Course Learning Outcomes and sub-Course Learning Outcomes. These verbs must correspond to the appropriate cognitive levels based on Anderson's taxonomy.



7. Multicultural Islamic Education as a Curricular Distinction

The construction of Multicultural Islamic Education as a curricular distinction in the Islamic Religious Education Study Program represents a strategic epistemological and pedagogical positioning. This construction integrates Islamic theological foundations with contemporary multicultural discourse. In the context of higher education, curriculum distinction is not merely a matter of content differentiation. It also represents a paradigmatic orientation that shapes graduate profiles, learning outcomes, course structures, learning processes, and academic culture.

Multicultural Islamic education is grounded in Qur'anic and Islamic values such as *ta'āruf*, justice, moderation, tolerance, mutual cooperation, and balance. These values provide a normative foundation for engaging with diversity within Islamic pedagogy. Contemporary scholarship also emphasizes that multicultural education should not stop at symbolic recognition of diversity but should move toward transformative practice that fosters inclusive attitudes, critical awareness, and social cohesion (Banks, 2009).

Embedding multicultural Islamic principles into curriculum structures through course design, learning strategies, field practice, and assessment strengthens the distinctive academic identity of the study program. This identity differentiates the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at the Universitas Islam Malang from other religious education programs.

Furthermore, the breadth of subject matter in this curricular construction includes theological foundations, sociological analysis of plural societies, inclusive pedagogy, conflict resolution, and culturally responsive teaching methodologies. This approach is consistent with curriculum theory that emphasizes socially responsive and justice-oriented frameworks in teacher education (Gay, 2018).

By aligning Course Learning Outcomes with multicultural competencies, such as intercultural communication, reflective religious understanding, inclusive classroom management, and social responsibility, the study program aims to produce educators who are not only religiously literate but also socially transformative. In this regard, multicultural Islamic education functions both as a philosophical foundation and as an operational framework. It is manifested structurally in course mapping, pedagogically in learning processes, and culturally in the academic ethos of the study program. Thus, multicultural Islamic education strengthens the relevance of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program in pluralistic societies.



Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the construction of Multicultural Islamic Education has become a distinctive feature of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Islam Malang. This distinctive feature was developed through a systematic curriculum review process and focus group discussions involving stakeholders, including experts, lecturers, students, and alumni. The process resulted in the integration of multicultural values into key curriculum components, including the graduate profile, learning outcomes, course structure, subject matter breadth and depth, course titles, and credit allocation. The findings indicate that Multicultural Islamic Education is not merely an additional content area, but a paradigmatic foundation that shapes the epistemological orientation, pedagogical approach, and academic culture of the study program. The multicultural values embedded in the curriculum are rooted in inclusive Islamic principles, including *ta'āruf*, *tawassuṭ*, *tasāmuḥ*, *ta'āwun*, and *tawāzun*. This integrative framework strengthens the relevance of the program in responding to Indonesia's pluralistic social context and prepares prospective Islamic educators to become inclusive, socially responsive, and grounded in Islamic ethical principles. Based on these findings, the study program is recommended to continuously evaluate the implementation of multicultural competencies at the instructional and assessment levels to ensure alignment between curriculum design and classroom practice. Institutional support for lecturer capacity building in multicultural pedagogy is also essential to sustain this distinctive feature. Furthermore, future research should examine the effectiveness of this curriculum construction in shaping students' multicultural attitudes, teaching competencies, and field practice performance. Comparative studies with other Islamic higher education institutions are also recommended to assess the scalability and contextual adaptation of this model.

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