

CROSS-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH IN SCIENTIFIC INTEGRATION AND ITS APPLICATION IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION

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Abstract :

This study aims to analyze the concept and application of the cross-disciplinary approach in Islamic education as a strategy to integrate Islamic values with modern scientific knowledge. The research employs a qualitative approach using library research, focusing on an in-depth examination of scholarly literature from journals, proceedings, and academic documents. The analysis follows three main stages: collecting relevant literature, evaluating its validity and relevance (Creswell, 2014), and conducting content analysis to explore themes of knowledge integration and Islamic epistemology (Zed, 2014). The findings reveal that the cross-disciplinary approach in Islamic education encompasses three main forms: instrumental, which utilizes methods or tools from other disciplines; conceptual, which fosters dialogue across disciplines to expand theoretical frameworks; and transformative, which seeks to create new paradigms through the integration of science and Islamic values. Its practical implementation can be observed in integrative curricula at Islamic universities (UIN), ethically grounded institutional management, and research based on maqashid al-shariah. This study concludes that the cross-disciplinary approach plays a crucial role in building holistic, contextual, and globally competitive Islamic education. It strengthens the epistemological foundation of Islamic scholarship by uniting spirituality, rationality, and professionalism into a coherent educational paradigm.

Keywords : Islamic education, cross-disciplinary approach, knowledge integration, Islamic epistemology.

INTRODUCTION

The development of modern science has significantly transformed human perspectives on reality and scientific truth. In traditional societies, dominant realities were largely understood and constructed through myth. In the modern era, myths continue to exist but no longer occupy a dominant position, as their influence has been displaced by scientific knowledge (Afnan, 2022). Nevertheless, contemporary life is confronted with increasingly complex challenges, including moral, social, and environmental crises. Such issues can no longer be adequately explained through a single, discipline-bound approach. Consequently, a more appropriate framework grounded in a new, boundary-crossing paradigm is required. This paradigm enables interaction and mutual complementarity among disciplines in understanding and addressing real-world problems. One prominent approach within this context is cross-disciplinarity, a mode of thinking and research that involves genuine interaction among different fields of knowledge to produce more comprehensive and contextual



understandings (Klein, 2023; Miller, 1982). This approach emphasizes epistemological openness, whereby theories, concepts, and methods from one discipline may be borrowed or adapted by others in order to enrich the analysis of phenomena without negating the original disciplinary identity (Grigg, Johnston, & Milsom, 2003).

Within the context of Islamic scholarship, the cross-disciplinary paradigm holds significant urgency due to the multidimensional nature of contemporary challenges in Islamic education. The issues faced by Islamic educational institutions are not merely theological, but also social, psychological, cultural, and technological. Therefore, a purely normative-theological approach is no longer sufficient to meet the demands of the modern era. A new epistemological model is required – one that connects Islamic values with contemporary scientific approaches. It is in this context that the concept of knowledge integration, or the Islamization and Integration of Knowledge as proposed by scholars such as Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, and M. Amin Abdullah, becomes highly relevant (Yafiz & Daulay, 2023). These thinkers emphasize that revelation and reason are not contradictory entities, but rather complementary sources of knowledge that must be synergized in the development of Islamic scholarship.

A key figure recognized as a pioneer of the Islamization of knowledge is Ismail R. al-Faruqi. For al-Faruqi, tawhid constitutes the foundational principle of knowledge integration, whereby all sciences must be directed toward achieving the unity of divine truth (Thoib & Ismail, 2013). Meanwhile, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas articulates the concept of ta'dib, which refers to an educational process that instills adab (proper conduct) as the moral foundation for the pursuit of knowledge (Al-Attas, 1995). Expanding upon these ideas, M. Amin Abdullah introduces the integrative-interconnective approach, which seeks to unify three epistemological sources in Islam—bayani (textual-normative), burhani (rational-empirical), and irfani (spiritual-intuitive)—into a dialogical and contextual system of knowledge. Together, these paradigms underscore the necessity for Islamic education to adopt an integrative pathway that opens sustained dialogue between religious sciences and modern scientific disciplines (Abdullah, 2018).

In line with this perspective, the cross-disciplinary approach may be viewed as a practical manifestation of the integrative-interconnective paradigm. It not only facilitates the exchange of methods and theories but also encourages the emergence of new epistemic spaces for creative ideas that transcend conventional disciplinary boundaries (Krishnan, 2009). Through cross-field engagement, Islamic education can expand its analytical horizon from a predominantly normative orientation toward one that is more empirical, analytical, and applicable. For instance, studies on students' religious behavior may employ statistical methods from the social sciences, while Qur'anic exegesis can be linked with modern hermeneutical approaches to contextualize divine messages in contemporary realities (Fitri, 2020).

The cross-disciplinary approach also has significant implications for

curriculum development, institutional management, and academic research. In curriculum design, the synergy between Islamic values and modern pedagogical theories fosters a holistic learning system that emphasizes not only cognitive development but also spiritual and social dimensions (Chaeruman, 2010; McGregor, 2017). In the field of management, modern principles such as planning, organizing, leading, and controlling can be integrated with Islamic values including amanah (trustworthiness), shura (consultation), and istiqamah (consistency) (Qomar, 2020; Abdullah, 2014). In research, the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods grounded in Islamic values generates more contextual and ethical research models, such as studies based on maqasid al-shariah to evaluate the effectiveness of educational policies (Fauzi, 2017; Flogie & Aberšek, 2015).

Philosophically, the implementation of a cross-disciplinary approach signifies a paradigm shift in Islamic education from a dichotomous model toward a dialogical and integrative one. This shift aligns with Thomas Kuhn's concept of scientific revolution, which posits that paradigm change occurs when existing frameworks can no longer adequately explain emerging phenomena (Kuhn, 1962). In the context of Islamic scholarship, the dichotomy between religious sciences and general sciences is increasingly viewed as obsolete. Cross-disciplinarity thus emerges as a pathway toward an epistemological revolution that affirms the integration of faith, knowledge, and action in addressing the growing complexity of global challenges (Qomar, 2020).

Ultimately, the cross-disciplinary approach in the integration of knowledge within Islamic education extends beyond a mere methodological strategy; it represents a profound epistemological transformation. It demands a shift in ways of thinking, institutional systems, and educational orientations to become more open to interdisciplinary interaction while preserving spiritual foundations. Through this approach, it is expected that a new generation of Muslim scholars will emerge—individuals who are not only normatively religious, but also scientifically grounded, critically engaged, and capable of offering constructive solutions to contemporary social realities.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research design, focusing on an in-depth examination of various scholarly sources concerning the concept and implementation of cross-disciplinary approaches in Islamic education. This method was selected because the study is conceptual and philosophical in nature and does not involve field observation. According to Zed (2014), library research emphasizes the systematic identification, reading, and analysis of literature in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of a particular issue. The primary data sources consist of academic journals, conference proceedings, and relevant scholarly documents related to the research topic. The research procedure comprises three main stages: (1) the collection of library-based data from diverse academic sources, (2) the evaluation of the literature to ensure the validity and relevance of its content (Creswell, 2014), and

(3) content analysis, which involves examining key themes such as knowledge integration, Islamic epistemology, and cross-disciplinary approaches.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Conceptualization of the Cross-Disciplinary Approach

The cross-disciplinary approach originates from the awareness that real-world problems cannot be adequately explained within the framework of a single discipline. Any given issue possesses complex and multidimensional characteristics; therefore, understanding and addressing it requires an approach that goes beyond disciplinary boundaries. What is needed is an interactive framework in which a discipline may borrow or adapt theories, concepts, and methods from other fields in order to enrich its analysis of a particular phenomenon (Miller, 1982). This approach is flexible and contextual, allowing for the exchange of perspectives without necessarily dissolving the epistemological boundaries between disciplines. Grigg, Johnston, and Milsom further elaborate this idea by viewing cross-disciplinarity as a process that traverses disciplinary boundaries and creates new intellectual spaces for the emergence of creative ideas that cannot be achieved through single-disciplinary modes of thinking (Milsom, 2003). They emphasize that cross-disciplinarity is not merely a transfer of methods, but an intellectual interaction capable of stimulating knowledge innovation and paradigm transformation (Grigg et al., 2003).

Cross-disciplinarity operates at the most basic level of cross-field engagement, as it can be conducted by an individual researcher without the necessity of formal collaboration. Nevertheless, it carries significant epistemological value because it enables scholars to apply methods from their original discipline to different contexts with distinct objects and characteristics (Krishnan, 2009). In the context of Islamic education, this approach is particularly relevant because contemporary religious educational challenges are multidimensional, encompassing theological, social, psychological, and technological aspects that cannot be resolved solely through normative or jurisprudential approaches. The cross-disciplinary approach thus offers a new epistemological pathway for linking Islamic values with modern theories and methodologies.

Forms of the Cross-Disciplinary Approach in the Context of Islamic Education

Grigg et al., drawing on Salter and Hearn, classify cross-disciplinarity into three main forms: instrumental, conceptual, and transformative. Each form reflects a different level of interaction across disciplinary boundaries, as explained below.

1. Instrumental Cross-Disciplinarity

This form is practical in nature, occurring when a discipline utilizes tools, theories, or methods from another field to address specific problems without generating new knowledge synthesis (Grigg et al., 2003). An example is the use of statistical software and analytical techniques from the exact sciences to examine data on religious behavior within Islamic education studies. In the context of Islamic scholarship, this approach is evident in quantitative educational research employing psychometric instruments or structural equation modeling to measure students' spirituality (Fitri, 2020). Although it does not produce new theories, instrumental cross-disciplinarity strengthens the empirical validity of Islamic educational research.

2. Conceptual Cross-Disciplinarity

At this level, efforts are made to synthesize insights across disciplines, whereby concepts from other fields are employed to expand the theoretical horizon of a discipline without erasing its original identity. According to Grigg et al., this model enables what they term "epistemological dialogue" among disciplines. In Islamic education, this is reflected in the integration of humanistic learning concepts from educational psychology with the values of ta'dib and tarbiyah in instructional practices (Amin Fauzi, 2017; Abdullah, 2006). Through this approach, Islamic curricula emphasize not only cognitive-religious dimensions but also affective and social aspects that support the formation of insan ulul albab – learners who are rational, spiritual, and ethical.

3. Transformative Cross-Disciplinarity

This form represents the most radical level, as it challenges established disciplinary boundaries with the aim of creating integrated theories or new paradigms. It aligns with the spirit of transdisciplinarity as articulated by Chaeruman and McGregor, in which disciplines do not merely collaborate but undergo transformation to address global problems comprehensively. In the context of Islamic education, this form is manifested in the development of integrative-interconnective models at Islamic higher education institutions such as State Islamic Universities (UINs), which seek to combine bayani (textual-normative), burhani (rational-empirical), and irfani (spiritual-intuitive) epistemologies within a unified knowledge paradigm (Abdullah, 2018; Maksudin et al., 2019).

This transformative approach is also consistent with Kuhn's notion of scientific revolutions, which posits that paradigm shifts occur when existing systems are no longer capable of explaining emerging phenomena (Kuhn, 1962). In Islamic education, the long-standing dichotomy between religious and secular sciences is increasingly regarded as obsolete, and cross-disciplinarity has emerged as a pathway toward a more contextual, humanistic, and epistemologically integrative revolution (Qomar, 2020).

Cross-Disciplinarity in Islamic Education

The cross-disciplinary approach in Islamic education represents the practical application of the integrative-interconnective paradigm, namely an

effort to connect various disciplines—religious sciences, social sciences, and natural sciences—within a unified epistemological framework. Through this approach, Islamic education no longer focuses solely on normative-theological dimensions but also incorporates scientific, social, and technological methods to address the challenges of an increasingly globalized world (M. Amin Abdullah, 2006; Fitri, 2020). The implementation of cross-disciplinarity in Islamic education can be observed in three main areas: (1) curriculum development, (2) institutional management and educational leadership, and (3) research and knowledge development.

1. Curriculum Development

The cross-disciplinary approach in curriculum development aims to create synergy between Islamic values and modern pedagogical theories. The curriculum is not merely a vehicle for knowledge transmission, but also a medium for character formation and the cultivation of students' spirituality. Core Islamic values such as amanah (trustworthiness), ikhlas (sincerity), and ihsan (excellence) are integrated with contemporary learning theories based on constructivist, humanistic, and contextual approaches (Chaeruman, 2010; McGregor, 2017). At the higher education level, Islamic institutions such as UIN, IAIN, and STAIN have developed integrative curricula that combine science, humanities, and Islamic studies in order to produce graduates who are both critically minded and ethically grounded (Fitri, 2020; Qomar, 2020).

Islamic educational institutions such as pesantren and madrasah have also implemented collaborative curricula that integrate Islamic sciences with general fields such as economics, technology, and environmental studies. Such curricula are expected to foster adaptive lifelong learners capable of responding to social change (Mawardi, 2018). This approach reinforces the paradigm that Islamic education is not exclusive, but rather open to innovation across various domains while maintaining its transcendental values (Abdullah, 2018; Flogie & Aberšek, 2015). Innovation, in this sense, is understood as a creative response to dynamic change.

2. Management and Leadership in Islamic Education

At the managerial level, the cross-disciplinary approach encourages the integration of modern management concepts with Islamic ethical principles. The widely recognized management functions of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling are combined with Islamic values such as amanah (moral responsibility), shura (collective deliberation), and istiqamah (ethical consistency) as articulated in the Qur'an and Hadith (Qomar, 2020). In the governance of Islamic educational institutions, this synergy is reflected in transparent financial management, ethics-based human resource development, and public relations strategies that emphasize da'wah values and public service (Mawardi, 2013; Abdullah, 2014).

Leaders of Islamic educational institutions are expected to

internalize the principles of spiritual leadership, whereby strategic decisions are guided not only by efficiency and effectiveness but also by considerations of public welfare (*maslahah*) and spiritual merit (*barakah*) (Fauzi, 2017; Fitri et al., 2020). Through a cross-disciplinary management approach, institutional governance becomes more professional while simultaneously embodying acts of worship, as all activities are directed toward achieving a balance between material outcomes and spiritual objectives (Abdullah, 2006; Fitri, 2020).

3. Research and Knowledge Development

Research and knowledge development constitute a crucial arena for the implementation of the cross-disciplinary paradigm.

a. Methodological Approaches

Islamic education research is no longer confined to a single method; instead, it integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches (mixed methods) grounded in Islamic ethical values (Flogie & Aberšek, 2015).

b. Integration of Science and Religion

Research approaches that combine empirical and normative epistemologies can generate new theories relevant to socio-religious contexts. For example, research based on *maqasid al-shariah* is employed to evaluate the effectiveness of curricula and educational policies in terms of justice, public benefit, and the overall well-being of the Muslim community (Fauzi, 2017; Abdullah, 2018).

c. Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration

Cross-disciplinary collaboration among social sciences, technology, and theology enables the development of innovative models such as digital-based Islamic education, *eco-pesantren*, and technology-assisted religious character education (Moreira de Oliveira et al., 2018).

Thus, the cross-disciplinary approach in Islamic education research not only produces academic knowledge but also contributes tangibly to the social and moral transformation of Muslim society (Al-Faruqi, 1982; Al-Attas, 1993).

Applications and Implications of the Cross-Disciplinary Approach in Islamic Education

The cross-disciplinary approach in Islamic education is not merely conceptual but has also found practical applications in various educational institutions, such as State Islamic Universities (UIN), modern pesantren, and madrasahs. This model of implementation is grounded in the integrative-interconnective paradigm developed by Amin Abdullah (2006), which seeks to connect Islamic sciences with social and natural sciences within a dialogical and unified epistemological framework. In UINs and other Islamic higher education institutions (PTKI), this approach is realized through curriculum designs that integrate religious studies with contemporary disciplines such as economics, psychology, technology, and health sciences (Fitri, 2020; Riyanto, 2013). Academic programs such as Islamic Economics, Islamic Psychology, and Islamic Educational Technology represent concrete outcomes of cross-disciplinary knowledge synthesis.

Similarly, modern pesantren have adopted this approach by incorporating general and scientific subjects into their traditional curricula, thereby producing graduates who possess deep religious understanding alongside professional competencies (Mawardi, 2013; Qomar, 2020). At the madrasah level, collaboration between modern pedagogical approaches and character education rooted in Islamic values demonstrates that cross-disciplinary integration can enhance learning effectiveness and broaden students' global outlooks (Chaeruman, 2010). Nevertheless, the implementation of the cross-disciplinary approach in Islamic education faces several challenges of a cultural, epistemological, and structural nature. Culturally, dichotomous views separating religious knowledge from worldly sciences persist, causing integration efforts to be perceived as potentially undermining Islamic identity (Abdullah, 2014). Epistemologically, methodological challenges arise in developing genuinely cross-disciplinary research and teaching approaches without sacrificing disciplinary depth. Structurally, institutional policies and curricula often remain insufficiently flexible to support collaboration across faculties and academic fields (Moreira de Oliveira et al., 2018).

These challenges indicate that knowledge integration requires not only curricular reform but also a fundamental shift in the academic mindset within Islamic educational institutions. Addressing these obstacles necessitates strategies to strengthen the cross-disciplinary capacities of lecturers and researchers through integrative methodology training, collaborative research initiatives, and multidisciplinary-oriented academic publications. Such programs can encourage scholars to combine Islamic perspectives with contemporary theories, thereby producing innovative and socially relevant academic work (Flogie & Aberšek, 2015; Fitri et al., 2020). Moreover, Islamic educational institutions need to cultivate academic ecosystems that support collaboration, such as interdisciplinary research centers, cross-faculty academic forums, and research partnerships with non-religious institutions (McGregor, 2017). A robust cross-disciplinary approach will transform Islamic educational institutions into not only centers for knowledge transmission but also arenas for producing integrative and contextual knowledge.

The implementation of the cross-disciplinary approach has significant impacts on academic quality, student character formation, and curricular innovation. Academically, cross-disciplinary collaboration broadens intellectual horizons and enhances students' critical thinking abilities by encouraging them to understand phenomena from multiple perspectives (Fauzi, 2017; Abdullah, 2018). In terms of character formation, this approach fosters ethical and spiritual awareness, as learning processes are grounded in Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, and justice. With regard to curriculum innovation, integrative models generate adaptive learning designs that respond to contemporary demands without neglecting the principle of tawhid as the foundational basis of knowledge (Qomar, 2020). Thus, the application of the cross-disciplinary approach in Islamic education not only strengthens academic quality but also cultivates Muslim generations capable of boundary-crossing thinking, critical

engagement, and steadfast commitment to Islamic moral and spiritual values.

CONCLUSION

The cross-disciplinary approach in Islamic education constitutes an epistemological and methodological strategy aimed at integrating multiple disciplines to address the complexity of modern educational challenges. This approach is grounded in the recognition that no single field of knowledge is sufficient to explain multidimensional realities. Within the context of Islamic education, it serves as a bridge between Islamic values and contemporary scientific theories and methods, thereby fostering a more open, adaptive, and contextual paradigm of knowledge. The application of this approach can be observed at three principal levels: (1) the instrumental level, which pragmatically utilizes theories or methods from other disciplines to strengthen analysis; (2) the conceptual level, which promotes inter-disciplinary dialogue to expand theoretical frameworks; and (3) the transformative level, which seeks to establish new paradigms through comprehensive epistemological integration. In Islamic education, these levels are reflected in integrative curriculum development, ethically grounded and professionally managed institutions, and multidisciplinary research that synthesizes science, social inquiry, and Islamic values.

This approach has far-reaching implications for enhancing academic quality, nurturing spiritual character, and strengthening curricular innovation. It encourages the development of learners who are critical, ethical, and spiritually conscious. Nonetheless, its implementation continues to face epistemological, cultural, and structural challenges, particularly in dismantling the dichotomy between religious and secular sciences. Therefore, the success of the cross-disciplinary approach requires a transformation of academic paradigms oriented toward collaboration, integrative research, and the courage to construct new syntheses between Islamic sciences and modern knowledge. Ultimately, this approach reinforces the position of Islamic education as a holistic, relevant, and globally competitive system.

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