

Integrated Character Education (ICE): Reconstructing islamic education policy for sustainable development

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Abstract

Nowadays, the flow of information is widespread without spatial and temporal restrictions. This impairs access to information, which can have negative consequences if not used wisely. One of the consequences is the deterioration of students' morale and character. Integrated Character Education (ICE) is an alternative strategic solution to instill global awareness in a young generation. This study analyzes Integrated Character Education (ICE) in the context of Islamic education to reconstruct the direction of educational policies by emphasizing character values as the foundation for sustainable development. The research method uses a qualitative approach through a systematic literature review that analyzes various academic publications and educational policies in the context of Islamic education. The results of the study show that integrating character values into curricula and school programs can promote the development of responsible, cooperative, creative, innovative, and change-minded students. Educational policies that emphasize only cognitive aspects have proven less effective in addressing long-term developmental challenges. For this reason, a policy redesign is needed that emphasizes character development as a central foundation and requires synergies between government, society, and educational institutions. This study contributes to the formulation of an Islamic education policy that is guided by offering instructional implications, including character-based lesson planning, collaborative and reflective learning strategies, and assessment practices that integrate moral values within English and Islamic education to support sustainable development.

Keywords: *Character building; Islamic Education Policy; Sustainable development; Curriculum development; Inclusive values.*

INTRODUCTION

Globalization and technological advances have negative impacts on education today, such as moral degradation and identity criticism. The rapid flow of global information that is open without limits has an impact on the phenomenon of moral and character degradation among students. This is caused by the use of gadgets without intensive supervision (Siti Nur Kholifah et al., 2024). The influence of technology and social media is also a challenge in building the character of the millennial generation (Sinaga et al., 2021). Character values such as responsibility, mutual cooperation, and independence are no longer found in students. According to

Yusnita et al., the decline in character values in the digital era is accompanied by a decline in morality in students (Yusnita et al., 2023).

Research conducted by Waty and colleagues shows that moral degradation in adolescents occurs due to rapid technological advances, thus reducing human living standards, damaging ecosystems, eliminating morality, and low levels of discipline (Waty et al., 2022). This phenomenon results in a decline in traditional morality built by society (Luthfi et al., 2024). Moral degradation can result in cases of violence against children which are balanced by rapid digital access being the main focus in creating a pleasant learning environment. The Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) as quoted by Fikriana and Hartantri, noted that within a period of 9 years, there were 37,381 complaints of violence against children from 2011 to 2019 in Indonesia (Fikriana & Hartantri, 2024). In a study conducted by (Priyosahubawa et al., 2024), the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) stated that in 2020 there were 19 cases of bullying, continuing to increase in 2021 by 53 cases and in 2020 by 119 cases. Violence and bullying cases are one of the challenges in integrating character values in education.

Challenges in the Islamic education system such as resistance to change can hinder the character education process that is in accordance with the development of the times (Anwar & Ridlwan, 2024). Character education is an important issue in the context of Islamic education which is faced with various social, technological, and moral value challenges that have declined drastically (Nafsaka et al., 2023). Sadly, the development of the era in the digital era is a challenge in implementing education policies to produce good student character (Darmawan, 2024). Disputes over the paradigm of education policy affect the foundation of student character in schools. Technological developments are increasingly complex challenges for character education (Hakim, 2023).

To answer these challenges, an educational approach is needed that integrates character values into the entire learning process. Integrated Character Education (ICE) in the context of Islamic education as an effort to reconstruct the direction of education policy. Integrated Character Education (ICE) is present as an alternative solution that combines character education systematically and comprehensively in the Islamic education system. Research by (Anggraini, 2022) highlights that the era of disruption has resulted in moral degradation among the younger generation. Character education is considered an important means of shaping the nation's civilization in the future and protecting the younger generation from anxiety and spiritual emptiness due to digitalization (Salsabila Rera Arta M & Silvi Diah Savitri, 2020).

Research conducted by M. Samsul Ikhsan (Ikhsan, 2023) also highlights the importance of transforming Islamic education with a character education approach that demands a creative, innovative, characterful, and religious generation. ICE not only aims to form individuals who are intellectually intelligent, but also have moral

integrity, social awareness, and readiness to face global challenges while upholding Islamic values. This integrative approach has the potential to answer various educational challenges in Indonesia by producing individuals who are intellectually intelligent and have noble morals and are able to contribute to society.

In contrast to previous studies, this study highlights the importance of policy reconstruction that emphasizes the integration of character education into all aspects of students' lives. Through character building that prioritizes Islamic moral values can be one solution in overcoming these challenges. *Integrated Character Education* (ICE) is an alternative solution in forming students who are competitive and have character. Thus, education policies in Indonesia must integrate general and religious knowledge within the framework of sustainable development.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design using a systematic literature review approach. The review was conducted through a sequential and transparent process consisting of identification, screening, eligibility, and analysis stages. Relevant literature was first identified from credible academic sources, including peer-reviewed journals, scholarly books, conference proceedings, and official educational policy documents related to Islamic education, character education, curriculum development, and sustainable development. The screening stage involved reviewing titles and abstracts to exclude duplicated and irrelevant sources. Eligibility criteria were then applied by selecting studies published within the last ten years, written in English or Indonesian, and directly aligned with the research objectives, while excluding non-academic or methodologically weak sources. The selected literature was subsequently coded and thematically categorized. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification, to identify conceptual patterns as well as pedagogical and policy implications without direct field data collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Islamic education policy towards sustainable development

Sustainable development has become one of the global highlights in recent years, this concept seeks to fulfill current life needs by considering the availability of resources in the future. The concept of sustainable development has touched all aspects of life including education. Integration of sustainable development principles can support the formation of student character who have character values and global responsibility (Wulandari, 2024). Islamic education has a strong foundation of spiritual and ethical values that have the potential to play a major role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to research conducted by (Firdaus, 2024), in addition to focusing on academic development, Islamic education as a tool for social transformation also seeks to instill character, ethics, and responsibility to support

positive reconstruction in society.

The concept of education for sustainable development is contained in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, page four, which states that one way to become a good and responsible citizen is to meet current needs, while still paying attention to future generations (Syakur, 2023). Islamic education requires a holistic and integrated approach to form a generation that has a deep understanding of the principles of sustainability. Internalization of religious education into sustainable development goals is needed in order to create a just and prosperous society (Fadliyana & Nugraheni, 2024). These efforts can be made through policies that prioritize character education and instill Islamic values.

The findings conducted by (Muhafidin, 2024) show that the integration of Islamic values in education policy can help overcome the challenges of sustainable development through the Qur'an and as-Sunnah as practical guidance. Islamic principles when integrated through education policy can provide guidance that is oriented towards justice, sustainability, and human welfare. Carl Friedrich explains that policy is an action that refers to goals in a certain scope while seeking opportunities to realize goals or achieve desired targets (Indriya et al., 2022).

Islamic education policies need to be directed systematically in various aspects, one of which is through the curriculum. According to (Fadil et al., 2023), the curriculum of Islamic educational institutions is a reflection of a concept that seeks to eliminate the dichotomy of general knowledge and religious knowledge. This is done to answer global challenges in the form of developments in science and technology. In addition, education also aims to instill and introduce values and norms that apply in society. This is so that students can develop by understanding these values and norms and integrating into social life.

Education for sustainable development requires policies and strategies implemented by educational systems and institutions to remain relevant to the existing culture (Humaidi & Nasrullah, 2021). In the realm of Islamic education, sustainable education strategies need to be in line with Islamic principles that grow in the traditions of Muslim society, such as the spirit of mutual assistance (ta'awun), social responsibility (mas'uliyah), and attention to environmental balance (mīzān).

Reconstruction of character education through curriculum development

The learning process occurs because there is a curriculum as a tool in carrying out teaching and learning activities in educational institutions. According to Lismina in (Salsabila Rera Arta M & Silvi Diah Savitri, 2020) the curriculum is a design of teaching materials that contain several subjects that are arranged in a systematic manner to achieve the specified educational goals. The curriculum in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning National Education is a regulation that includes objectives, content, and learning materials as guidelines for implementing the educational process, as well as achieving the goals of national education (DPR, 2003). According to (Mustaghfirin et al., 2024) the curriculum in education is used as the core or heart of the education

system. Character education through curriculum development is contained in the material or content of the lessons.

Curriculum development is crucial to face the challenges of the modern era. Educational institutions must pay attention to the needs and character of each student in developing the curriculum. According to Tyler as quoted by (Tatang Hidayat et al., 2019), the first step in curriculum development is defining the objectives. The purpose of curriculum development in this article is to instill character education in students as a provision to face the development of the times. The independent curriculum, for example, through its program prioritizes character education for all students. Research conducted by (Arpianti et al., 2023) shows that the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) program in the independent curriculum aims to form the character of mutual cooperation in students.

The instillation of character values is implemented in the curriculum mission that emphasizes aspects of mutual cooperation, creativity, and innovation. The second procedure in developing a curriculum is determining the learning experience. This is in line with the opinion of (Irfannisa, 2023) which states that the learning experience is not only related to the content or learning material, but also educational interactions between students in the learning environment. The learning experience should produce students who are responsible for their work or products so that they can lead to sustainable development. This makes students not only responsible but can also foster a sense of mutual cooperation, creativity, and innovation in producing a work. Educational institutions in developing the curriculum then organize and evaluate the learning experiences of students.

Organizing learning experiences into two types, namely, perpendicular (Vertical) and parallel (Horizontal). Perpendicular means presenting the same learning method with different qualities. While parallel means producing the same quality of students in different learning methods (Ahmad et al., 2022). In the character education process, vertical organization is used because students tend to have heterogeneous characters so that teachers must standardize their learning methods. Meanwhile, if using parallel organization, it will confuse teachers in choosing learning methods because of the demands of forming homogeneous student characters. Every curriculum development requires evaluation to measure success and effectiveness in developing the curriculum.

One of the effective curriculum development evaluation models is the Educational System Evaluation model which emphasizes that evaluation is carried out with evaluation objects including performance, impact, process, results, and suggestions for improvement (Salmon et al., 2024). Evaluating the effectiveness of learning experiences is used to assess educational goals that have been achieved (Evaluation). It can be said that the Tyler model has an approach that is oriented towards educational goals (Tatang Hidayat et al., 2019). Thus, character education through curriculum development can be said to be successful if all components or educational resources are optimized. Islamic religious education through the habit of

worship is also an alternative for educational institutions in shaping the character of students.

Research conducted by (Mu'tamar et al., 2024) revealed the opinion of KH Ahmad Rifa'i, that character education can be done through cleansing the heart with worship. Habits and training in forming commendable morals can also create people with character. To realize a person with character, a person must practice the characteristics of *pinuji wolu* (eight commendable characteristics), including: *zuhud*, *qonaah*, *tawakal*, patience, *mujahadah*, *ridho*, gratitude and sincerity. These characteristics aim to bring peace of mind, because the attitudes and inner activities that have become a person's personality, such as gratitude, sincerity, *ridho*, *qonaah* and so on. There are also those that are obtained through struggle and hard work, such as patience in *riyadloh* and *mujahadah* against lust.

KH Ahmad Rifa'i's opinion teaches us to try, endeavor, and pray to Allah SWT, one of the important things in a character-based curriculum. The nature of *pinuji wolu* described reflects character education that shapes students not to give up in learning, so that they have good intellectual intelligence and character. This is reinforced by the opinion of Dede Rosada in (Ikhwanul Muslimin, 2023) which states that character can be developed through knowledge (knowing), action (acting) and habits (habit). Through this development, students not only have knowledge and skills, but also have good habits. Thus, it can shape the character of students in facing the development of the era towards sustainable development.

According to Quraisy Sihab in (Lita & Hasanah, 2021), stated that character education requires moral education in Islamic education teachings. The concept of character or morals in Islamic education can be used as a general principle in different social lives, and is based on the Qur'an. Education is an agent of change and must be able to improve the character of the next generation of our nation (Subawa & Mahartini, 2021). Great hopes for the young generation that is formed can build the nation without abandoning noble character values. One effort to realize this is a curriculum that includes character education and Islamic values for Muslim students.

By mapping character values, curriculum objectives, instructional practices, and evaluation into a unified ICE framework, this study offers a novel contribution to curriculum discourse. ICE is not presented merely as a normative ideal, but as a policy-oriented and pedagogically applicable model for integrating character education within Islamic education curricula to support sustainable development. This framework provides practical guidance for educators and policymakers seeking to align curriculum design with moral formation and long-term societal goals.

Integrative values relevant to current developments

The development of education always follows the flow of progress of the times. Individual needs are no longer just about being academically intelligent, a strong character is needed to be able to face the changes of this ever-evolving era. In the midst of the flow of globalization, the transformation of technological sophistication, and

increasingly complex social challenges, a strong foundation is needed. The basic orientation of education aims to shape human character that is able to express themselves freely, but still based on moral values (Sanusi, 2022). Character education is no longer a complement but the main foundation that must be instilled in each individual to produce a generation that is ready to face the future. The younger generation is expected not only to have a deep understanding, but also to be able to become agents of change that have a positive impact on society and the nation (Fadillah et al., 2024).

Efforts to reconstruct Islamic education policies require the instillation of integrative values that are relevant to the development of the times. Instilling and strengthening character values in students is very urgent in global challenges that no longer recognize geographical boundaries (Hasanah, 2022). Character education guides students to change towards better attitudes, behaviors, and cultures in order to create civilized individuals and communities (Amin, 2024). The integrative values in question are such as being responsible, cooperative, creative, innovative and adaptive to change. These values have great benefits and are widely accepted by society. Schools not only convey values, but also help students understand and apply them in life (Sari & Rozana, 2024). These values are not just a list of good traits, but become a set of fundamental abilities that enable individuals to develop, collaborate and contribute significantly to society and sustainable development. By examining more deeply how these values become an important foundation in shaping the character of today's generation who are capable of responding to the challenges of changing times. Here is the explanation:

1. Responsible

The value of responsibility is the main foundation for individuals with character. In the context of rapid and complex developments, a responsible attitude is becoming increasingly vital. Responsibility is the ability to control actions and decisions, as well as a commitment to carry out tasks well and accept the consequences (Handoko, 2023). This does not only mean carrying out personal duties and obligations, but also being aware of the impact of actions on the social and natural environment. Awareness of responsibility is not an innate attitude, but needs to be cultivated through habituation. This process requires the role of others as role models and guides from the immediate environment (Susanti, 2015). In the digital era, responsibility also includes ethics in online interactions and the use of information. Responsible individuals will become agents of positive change, be trustworthy, and have integrity in all aspects of life.

2. Mutual cooperation

Mutual cooperation or collaboration is a very relevant value in the era of globalization and connectivity. The ability to cooperate reflects concern for the environment and a desire to help each other for a better life (Mooduto et al., 2023). Although individualism is often a characteristic of modern society, the ability to work together, share ideas, and achieve common goals is the key to success, both locally and globally. For a long time, society has been aware that as social beings, humans need other people to meet their needs. Conversely, we also need to help each other, because not everything can be solved alone (Pamungkas et al., 2020). Sustainable development, for example, cannot be achieved without cross-sector and cross-cultural cooperation. The value of mutual cooperation teaches empathy, mutual respect, and the ability to synergize, which are essential in solving complex

problems.

3. Creative

Some people can create new ideas quickly and in a variety of ways, but in fact everyone has the ability to think creatively (Rati et al., 2017). Creativity is the ability to generate new and original ideas, and find unconventional solutions. Creativity is important in life because it drives productivity, improves quality of life, and helps find solutions to various problems (Mulyati, 2013). Amidst the rapid pace of change, the need for creative individuals is very high. Industry and technology continue to grow, demanding out-of-the-box thinking for product, service, and process innovation. Education must be able to encourage children and young people to think creatively, dare to take risks, and not be afraid to fail, because from failure often comes brilliant ideas.

4. Innovative

Innovative values are closely related to creativity, but emphasize more on the implementation of new ideas into something that has practical value and can be applied. Innovation is the driving force of progress in various fields, from technology, economics, to social. In the midst of global competition, the ability to innovate is the main competitiveness. Innovative individuals not only think about what can be done, but also how to make it happen effectively and efficiently. Students must be able to become meaningful learners, with appropriate skills, competencies, and performance. This process needs to be supported by various sources and technologies, without ignoring the social or soft skills aspects (Hadi et al., 2022).

5. Adaptive to change

Adaptive ability to change is one of the most crucial values in the 21st century. The world continues to move and change at an unprecedented pace, driven by technological advances and socio-economic dynamics. Adaptive behavior is a person's social and personal ability to adjust to the norms or standards that apply in their environment, measured using an adaptive behavior scale that includes aspects of communication, occupation, self-direction, socialization, and locomotion (Safiri, 2022). Adaptive individuals are able to adapt to new situations, learn new skills, and are not fixated on old ways that are no longer relevant. Adaptive attitudes foster resilience and flexibility, allowing a person to remain relevant and productive amidst uncertainty.

This generation, educated with a strong foundation of character, will be the driving force of sustainable development. They are individuals who understand that the future should not be ignored, who are able to collaborate to solve complex problems, and who are constantly looking for new ways to improve the quality of life. They will continue to feel restless in the face of the transformation of this era, but rather see it as an opportunity to innovate. Therefore, the reconstruction of education policy, including Islamic education, must continue to focus on strengthening these values. In this way, we can produce a generation that is not only academically successful, but also actively contributes to creating a better and fairer world for all.

Discussion

Reconstruction of education policy is a fundamental milestone for educational

progress, as policy serves as the foundation for the overall implementation of education. However, character education is often positioned merely as an additional component rather than being fully integrated into the learning system and school culture. As a result, many students experience a value crisis manifested in low discipline, weak responsibility, and limited adaptability to contemporary challenges. Laros Tuhuteru explains that today's younger generation has lost its direction, making them vulnerable to violence and unable to optimize their potential (Tuhuteru, 2022). Similarly, Muhammad Fauzan Muttaqin and colleagues identify deviations from Pancasila values among the younger generation, highlighting the urgency of integrating character values into education policies and curricula (Muttaqin et al., 2025).

Integrated Character Education (ICE) emerges as a strategic solution for embedding character education into curriculum design and educational policy. Research by Supriyadi et al. (2024) indicates that effective character education focuses on developing a learning culture grounded in integral character values, while Purnomo (2021) demonstrates that character formation is strengthened through the integration of classroom learning and spiritual extracurricular activities. ICE supports the development of students who are religious, honest, disciplined, responsible, creative, and adaptive, contributing to the formation of a progressive national civilization (Pradana et al., 2020).

The integration of character education is further reinforced through the utilization of technological advances and character-based learning media within the curriculum (Astuti et al., 2024). Integration, understood as the unification of various educational elements into a coherent whole (Rahmawati et al., 2021), enables Islamic education curricula to develop students' personalities through structured character values (Aprianti et al., 2024). In the context of society 5.0, Islamic education adopts integrative-interconnective strategies and the 4C approach—Creativity, Critical Thinking, Communication, and Collaboration—to prepare students for contemporary challenges (Istiqomah & Ansori, 2024). Fachrurizal Bachrul Ulum further emphasizes that curricula integrated with character education produce individuals capable of responding to the dynamics of the modern era (Fachrurizal Bachrul Ulum, 2023).

Moreover, contextual learning approaches and the effective use of technology positively influence the formation of students' character, enabling optimal integration of character education (Saputra et al., 2024). The development of Islamic character also enhances students' social skills, including cooperation, communication, and leadership (Baidowi & Putri, 2024). Such integration supports sustainable development by fostering values that encourage personal growth and collective responsibility. Faizah (2022) notes that Islamic education promotes positive mindsets toward collaboration and teamwork. Collectively, these findings confirm that Integrated Character Education (ICE) effectively shapes students who are responsible, creative, innovative, and adaptive, aligning character formation with the goals of

sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the integration of Islamic values into educational policy plays a significant role in supporting sustainable development. Islamic education is not limited to academic achievement but functions as a holistic process that shapes students' character. Curricula that are responsive to sustainability-oriented values—such as mutual cooperation, responsibility, and creativity—are capable of producing resilient and adaptive learners. Therefore, updating Islamic education curricula and policies is essential to address contemporary challenges by considering social contexts and long-term educational objectives.

The alignment between Islamic values and sustainability principles provides a strong foundation for ethical and environmentally conscious character formation. Values such as responsibility, cooperation, creativity, innovation, and adaptability contribute not only to individual development but also to the creation of just and balanced social interactions. By adopting a holistic and spiritual approach, Islamic education becomes more effective in nurturing students' potential. Unlike previous studies that emphasize cognitive mastery, this study positions Islamic character and values as central elements in achieving sustainable development.

Conceptually, this study integrates religious and general knowledge to expand the theoretical framework of sustainable Islamic education. Concepts such as *pinuji wolu* and integrative character values offer practical foundations for contemporary character education, while curriculum initiatives like the Merdeka Curriculum and the P5 program demonstrate how value integration can drive social change. These findings imply that policymakers must promote the integration of Islamic values into curricula and strengthen teacher competence in character formation. Integrated Character Education (ICE) thus contributes to the development of a holistic Islamic education model in which character formation is embedded across learning activities and institutional policies, ensuring relevance to global and sustainability challenges.

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