

Transformation of Islamic Education: A Comparative Study of Educational Policies and Innovations in Selected Muslim-Majority Countries

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze policies and innovations in Islamic education using a qualitative approach based on literature review. Despite the growing body of research on Islamic education reforms in individual countries, limited studies have comparatively examined how different policy frameworks and educational innovations shape the development of Islamic education across diverse national contexts. To address this gap, this study conducts a comparative analysis of Islamic education policies and innovations in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei. Data were collected from various literary sources, including scientific journals, books, and policy documents, focusing on Islamic education policies, technological innovations, and comparative studies of educational systems in different countries. The comparative analysis was conducted by examining similarities and differences in policy orientation, implementation strategies, integration of technology, and the incorporation of Islamic values within the educational systems of the three countries. The research findings indicate that Islamic education policies in various countries, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei, reflect diverse approaches tailored to local contexts. Examples of successful policy implementations include education decentralization in Indonesia, the integration of Islamic values with modernization in Malaysia, and the application of the Melayu Islam Beraja philosophy in Brunei. Technological innovation and character education also play a significant role in enhancing the quality and relevance of Islamic education. However, challenges such as quality disparities, limited infrastructure, and lack of coordination among stakeholders remain obstacles that need to be addressed. The study concludes that the transformation of Islamic education requires a holistic approach that integrates technology, adaptive policies, and Islamic values. International collaboration and the development of innovative curricula present strategic opportunities to build competitive and relevant Islamic education in the era of globalization.



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INTRODUCTION

The transformation of Islamic education has become an urgent necessity amidst the increasingly complex dynamics of social, economic, and technological changes. Islamic education, as a system aimed at cultivating morally upright and knowledgeable individuals, faces significant challenges in addressing contemporary needs while preserving its foundational values. In Indonesia, for example, the reform of national education policies has incorporated Islamic values into various aspects, such as decentralizing education management and developing competency-based curricula relevant to the globalization era (Permana, 2020). Similarly, in Malaysia, the dualism between religious and secular education remains a major issue, although efforts to integrate Islamic-based curricula are continually being pursued (Embong, 2020).

In line with the theory of social transformation, changes in the education system must reflect adaptations to societal needs. Within the context of Islamic education, innovations in digital technology

have emerged as a potential solution. Zein's research (2024) highlights that the digitalization of education offers significant opportunities to enhance learning quality through interactive media and blended learning approaches. However, challenges such as infrastructure, educators' digital competencies, and ethical issues in technology use pose significant barriers that must be addressed. Furthermore, the study by Abu A'la and Makhshun (2022) underscores the importance of supportive policies for the digitalization of Islamic education to ensure effective transformation.

On the other hand, comparative studies across countries provide additional insights into how Islamic education systems can be improved through policy adaptations and innovations. Research by Mesra and Tuerah (2024), which compares the education systems in South Korea and Indonesia, reveals that the success of education is strongly influenced by the consistent implementation of competency-based policies (Mukhlis, Suradi, et al., 2023; Mukhlis, 2025b). Meanwhile, Amalita et al. (2024) highlight the importance of values education in building a generation that is not only intellectually competent but also morally strong in their study of character education in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Japan.

Despite extensive research, gaps remain in the implementation of Islamic education policies, particularly concerning the integration of technological innovations and competency-based curricula. For instance, Islamic education in many countries still struggles to effectively adopt technology to support learning processes, both in terms of infrastructure and teacher readiness (Zein, 2024). Additionally, a holistic approach to innovation is often hindered by a lack of coordination among governments, educational institutions, and the private sector (Rahman et al, 2023). Although previous studies have examined digitalization, curriculum reform, and character education separately, limited attention has been given to a comprehensive cross-country analysis that simultaneously investigates how policy frameworks, technological innovations, and competency-based approaches interact in transforming Islamic education systems. This gap indicates the need for a more integrative perspective capable of identifying transferable policy lessons and innovation models across different national contexts.

Based on these phenomena, this study aims to explore the transformation of Islamic education through the analysis of policies and innovations across various countries. It seeks to identify patterns of success and challenges encountered in the implementation of adaptive Islamic education policies in response to social and technological dynamics (Mukhlis, Arifin, Ridwan, & Zulbaidah, 2025; Mukhlis, Arifin, Ridwan, Zulbaidah, et al., 2025). The novelty of this study lies in its comparative and integrative framework that examines the intersection of educational policy, technological innovation, and competency-based curriculum reform within Islamic education across multiple countries. Unlike previous studies that focus on a single country or a specific aspect of educational transformation, this research synthesizes evidence from diverse national contexts to develop a broader understanding of successful transformation strategies. Furthermore, this study contributes to the existing literature by proposing a conceptual understanding of how adaptive Islamic education policies can respond to contemporary social and technological challenges while maintaining Islamic values. Through this approach, the research offers both theoretical contributions to the discourse on Islamic education transformation and practical recommendations for policymakers, educational institutions, and stakeholders involved in educational reform.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design. This method was chosen as it allows the researcher to explore in depth the literature relevant to the topic of Islamic education transformation, including policies and innovations in a global context. The approach aims to identify patterns and key themes from the available literature (Mahanum, 2021). Library research facilitates the integration of various sources of information to provide a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon being studied (Ridwan, 2021). To strengthen methodological transparency, this study analyzed a total of 45 sources consisting of 30 peer-reviewed journal articles, 10 academic books, and 5 policy documents. These sources were selected systematically based on their relevance to Islamic

education transformation, policy development, technological innovation, and comparative education in local and global contexts.

Data Sources

The data in this study were collected from various academic literature, including:

1. Scholarly Journals: Articles discussing Islamic education policies, technological innovations, and comparative studies of education systems.
2. Academic Books: Literature providing theoretical foundations and context related to Islamic education.
3. Policy Documents: Official education policies from various countries relevant to this research.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted through the following steps:

1. Literature Search: Data were obtained from academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and ProQuest, as well as university repositories.
2. Inclusion Criteria: Selected articles or literature had to meet the following criteria:
 - a. Published within the last ten years (2014–2024) to ensure relevance.
 - b. Address policies, innovations, or the transformation of Islamic education.
 - c. Relevant to both local and global contexts.
3. Exclusion Criteria: Literature that was irrelevant to Islamic education or failed to meet academic quality standards was excluded.

The selection of sources was conducted through several stages. First, relevant keywords such as “Islamic education transformation,” “Islamic education policy,” “technological innovation in Islamic education,” “digital learning in Islamic education,” and “comparative Islamic education systems” were used to search academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, ProQuest, and university repositories. Second, the identified sources were screened by title and abstract to determine their relevance to the research focus. Third, the full texts of potentially relevant sources were reviewed to ensure that they met the inclusion criteria. Finally, only sources that directly contributed to the analysis of Islamic education transformation were included in the final review.

Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using a thematic approach. The steps of data analysis include:

1. Theme Identification: Data from various literature sources were grouped based on main themes, such as education policies, technological innovations, and character education.
2. Coding: Each theme was analyzed to identify patterns, relationships, and trends in Islamic education policies and innovations.
3. Triangulation: Validation was conducted by comparing information from various sources to ensure accuracy and consistency of findings.

Focus of Analysis

This study focuses on:

1. Islamic Education Policies: Policy studies in Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and other countries.
2. Technological Innovations in Islamic Education: The use of digital technology to enhance the quality and accessibility of education.
3. Comparative Studies of Education Systems: Comparisons of Islamic education systems in various countries to understand patterns of success and challenges.

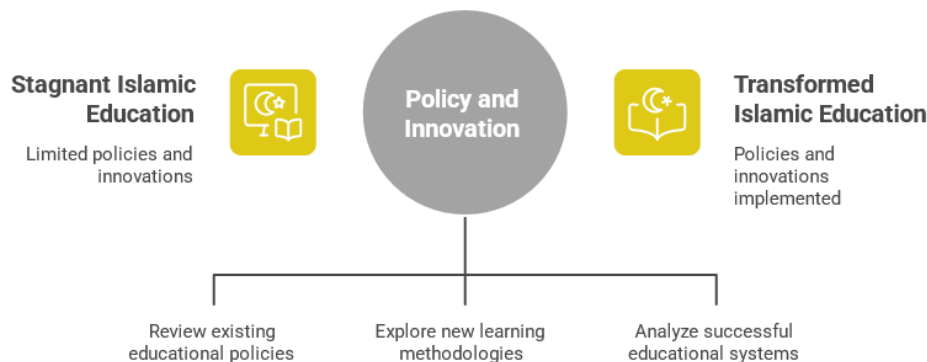
This method is designed to provide an in-depth understanding of the transformation of Islamic education, offering relevant and practical recommendations for future policy development and innovation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results and Findings

This study revealed several key findings regarding the transformation of Islamic education through policies and innovations. These findings were derived from literature analysis covering educational policies, innovations in learning, and comparative studies of educational systems in various countries. Rather than showing a single linear model of transformation, the findings indicate three comparative patterns: decentralization-based reform, integration-based reform, and identity-based reform. These patterns demonstrate that Islamic education transformation is shaped by the interaction between state policy, institutional capacity, cultural identity, and technological readiness.

Transforming Islamic Education



Islamic Education Policies

Islamic education policies show significant development in various countries. In Indonesia, educational policy reforms, especially since the era of decentralization, have granted local governments autonomy in managing Islamic education. This initiative provides opportunities for regions to develop curricula and policies more aligned with local needs. Permana (2020) notes that decentralization strengthens Islamic education but also creates challenges, such as disparities in quality between developed and underdeveloped regions. Indonesia therefore represents a decentralization-based model, where flexibility is high but policy outcomes depend heavily on regional capacity, supervision, and resource distribution.

Malaysia, on the other hand, has sought to integrate Islamic values into its national education system. Embong (2020) identifies dualism in education, where religious and secular education systems operate separately. Nonetheless, the Malaysian government has made significant efforts to address this dualism by developing an integrated curriculum that merges Islamic values with modern education. Malaysia illustrates an integration-based model, in which transformation is directed toward reducing the gap between religious and modern knowledge. Compared with Indonesia, Malaysia shows stronger national policy coherence, although the challenge of educational dualism remains significant.

In Brunei Darussalam, the "Melayu Islam Beraja" (MIB) philosophy serves as the cornerstone of its education system. Rahman et al. (2023) demonstrate how MIB-based education aims to build academic excellence while reinforcing students' character to face globalization challenges.

Innovations in Islamic Education

Innovation, particularly in adopting digital technology, has become a critical element in transforming Islamic education. Zein (2024) highlights that the digitization of learning offers significant opportunities to enhance accessibility to Islamic education. Technology facilitates the development of interactive media-based learning, enriching the learning experience while improving efficiency. However, implementing this technology faces challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited digital competencies among educators, and ethical concerns in its use.

Abu A'la and Makhshun (2022) underscore the importance of government policies in supporting the digitization of Islamic education. They emphasize that the success of technology adoption largely depends on policies encouraging the integration of technology into educational systems. Strategic measures like training programs for educators can enhance the digital skills required for technology-based learning.

Additionally, character education as part of innovation has garnered significant attention. Amalita et al. (2024) found that integrating moral values into the curriculum shapes generations that are not only intellectually competent but also morally strong.

Comparative Studies of Educational Systems

Comparative studies provide critical insights into how Islamic education policies are implemented in different countries. Mesra and Tuerah (2024) compared educational systems in South Korea and Indonesia, finding that the success of educational systems heavily depends on policy consistency and the quality of educational infrastructure. South Korea's focus on competency-based education and technological innovation has created a responsive system for modern societal needs. Conversely, Indonesia faces challenges, such as insufficient investment in educational infrastructure and human resource development.

Research by Amalita et al. (2024) also provides an essential perspective on implementing character education in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Japan. They found that integrating character education into the curriculum not only enhances education quality but also strengthens social values within society.

Gaps and Challenges

The findings indicate that despite significant efforts to transform Islamic education, gaps between policy and implementation persist. For example, in Indonesia, competency-based curricula are often inadequately executed at the school level. Permana (2020) identifies poor coordination between central and regional governments as a primary cause of these gaps.

Furthermore, Zein (2024) notes that although technology has been adopted by many Islamic educational institutions, its use is often limited to administrative purposes. The potential of technology to support value-based Islamic learning remains underutilized due to a lack of training and adequate facilities.

Opportunities and Recommendations

Despite challenges, this study identifies significant opportunities for transforming Islamic education. Collaboration between countries with more advanced education systems, such as South Korea and Japan, could inspire the development of Islamic education systems elsewhere. Rahman et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of international cooperation in curriculum development, teacher training programs, and technology adoption.

Moreover, innovations in Islamic education must be supported by adaptive policies and collaboration among governments, educational institutions, and the private sector. This ensures that the transformation of Islamic education becomes a means of building a more religious, innovative, and competitive society.

Discussion

This study focuses on the transformation of Islamic education through comparative studies of policies and innovations across various countries. The discussion summarizes how policies are implemented, innovations utilized, and challenges faced in this transformation process. It also aims to address the research questions: how policies and innovations influence Islamic education, the challenges encountered, and opportunities for future development. Theoretically, this shows that decentralization in Islamic education cannot be assumed to produce equity automatically. It strengthens local autonomy, but it may also reproduce structural inequality when regions differ in financial resources, teacher quality, and administrative capacity.

Islamic Education Policy: Implementation and Implications

Islamic education policies in various countries demonstrate significant efforts at transformation to address the challenges of the times. In Indonesia, decentralization of education policies allows local governments greater authority in managing Islamic education. Permana (2020) notes that decentralization provides flexibility for regions to integrate local values into the curriculum. However, decentralization also creates disparities in education quality between developed and underdeveloped regions. This indicates that decentralization requires robust supervision and support systems to ensure the quality of Islamic education across all regions.

Malaysia also makes an important contribution to the discourse on Islamic education policy. Embong (2020) explains that the dualism between religious and secular education systems poses a major challenge. The Malaysian government has sought to integrate these systems through the development of a unified curriculum that combines Islamic values with elements of modernization. This approach reflects the importance of an inclusive strategy in the development of Islamic education policies.

Febi (2021) highlights the significance of Islamic education policy as an integral part of public policy. This analysis shows that Islamic education functions not only as a religious institution but also as a strategic instrument for building a morally and intellectually balanced society (Mukhlis et al., 2024; Mukhlis, Maryam, et al., 2023). This approach requires synergy between the government, community, and educational institutions to ensure the sustainability of such policies.

Meanwhile, Brunei Darussalam adopts an approach based on the Melayu Islam Beraja (MIB) philosophy. Rahman et al. (2023) note that this system emphasizes strong character education, which not only supports academic achievement but also fosters a resilient national identity amidst the challenges of globalization.

Innovation in Islamic Education: Technology and New Approaches

Digital technology has become a key element in transforming Islamic education. Zein (2024) notes that technology offers great opportunities to improve access and quality of learning. Through digitalization, Islamic education can reach remote areas and offer more interactive learning methods. However, challenges such as insufficient infrastructure and limited digital competency among educators remain major obstacles. Abu A'la and Makhshun (2022) emphasize the importance of government policies supporting teacher training and infrastructure development to ensure the success of digitalization.

Character education is also a vital aspect of innovation in Islamic education. Amalita et al. (2024) found that integrating character education into the curriculum positively impacts the development of a generation that is not only intellectually competent but also morally upright. Their study highlights that character education approaches in Japan, Malaysia, and Indonesia could serve as models for the development of holistic Islamic education.

Moreover, Afista, Hawari, and Sumbulah (2021) underscore the importance of multicultural education in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. They explain that multicultural education can bridge cultural and religious differences, creating an inclusive and harmonious educational environment. This has important theoretical implications for Islamic education in plural societies: Islamic education should not only transmit religious doctrine, but also cultivate tolerance, civic responsibility, and ethical engagement with diversity.

Astuti, Harahap, and Murtafiah (2023) emphasize the importance of transforming Islamic education management to meet 21st-century challenges (Mukhlis, Janwari, et al., 2023; Mukhlis & Abdullah, 2025). This transformation involves changes in management structure, adoption of modern technology, and strategic approaches oriented toward holistic student competency development.

Chairudin (2024) provides insights on how Islamic higher education institutions can transform into world-class universities. A focus on curriculum innovation, solution-oriented research, and international collaboration are key factors in driving Islamic educational institutions to global levels.

Comparative Studies on Education Systems: Lessons from Other Countries

Comparative studies reveal that the success of Islamic education transformation is heavily influenced by policy consistency and implementation quality. Mesra and Tuerah (2024) compared the education systems of South Korea and Indonesia, finding that South Korea excels in policy consistency and sufficient infrastructure support. Conversely, Indonesia often faces resource and coordination constraints in policy implementation.

The study by Amalita et al. (2024) also provides important insights into how character education is applied in various countries. In Japan, for instance, character education is systematically designed into the curriculum, whereas in Indonesia and Malaysia, it takes a more flexible approach but faces challenges in consistent application. This indicates that structured and integrated character education can be key to the successful transformation of Islamic education.

Fijriah, Mislaini, and Ningsih (2024) highlight the importance of comparative approaches in understanding education systems in different countries. They argue that comparative studies not only provide insights into the successes of a system but also help identify weaknesses and opportunities for improvement that can be applied elsewhere.

Additionally, Mihftahus (2019) offers insights into education reform in Singapore and Indonesia. This research shows that Singapore has successfully implemented education policies oriented toward global competency development, while Indonesia continues to face challenges in adapting these policies.

Challenges in Transforming Islamic Education

The main challenges in transforming Islamic education include disparities in education quality between regions, lack of technology integration, and insufficient teacher training. Permana (2020) observes that decentralization policies in Indonesia are often not accompanied by adequate supervision, leading to disparities in education quality. Furthermore, Zein (2024) highlights that while technology has been adopted in many Islamic educational institutions, its use is often limited to administrative aspects. The potential for technology to support value-based Islamic learning remains vast, but a lack of training and adequate facilities hinders its comprehensive adoption.

Another challenge is the lack of coordination among stakeholders in Islamic education development. Abu A'la and Makhshun (2022) recommend policies that facilitate collaboration between governments, educational institutions, and the private sector to address these challenges (Mukhlis, 2025a; Mukhlis & Saidah, 2025). Additionally, Rahman et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of a clear education philosophy to ensure that transformation strengthens Islamic values, not merely technical aspects.

Pitri et al. (2021) stress that systematic thinking and integration in Islamic education policies can help overcome emerging obstacles. This factor is crucial to ensuring that Islamic education systems can respond to global demands without abandoning their traditional values.

Opportunities and Recommendations for the Future

Despite various challenges, Islamic education transformation holds significant opportunities for growth. International collaboration could be key in overcoming these challenges. For instance, partnerships with countries such as South Korea and Japan could provide valuable lessons on curriculum development, teacher training, and technology adoption (Mesra & Tuerah, 2024; Amalita et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Islamic education policies must continuously adapt to changing times. Zein (2024) emphasizes the importance of curriculum development that integrates technology with Islamic values. Additionally, investment in teacher training and infrastructure development should be a priority to ensure the success of this transformation (Abu A'la & Makhshun, 2022).

Transforming Islamic education also requires a holistic approach involving all stakeholders. Permana (2020) recommends strengthening coordination between central and regional governments to

ensure effective policy implementation. Meanwhile, Rahman et al. (2023) highlight the importance of a strong education philosophy to maintain a balance between innovation and traditional Islamic values.

Toto Warsito (2022) suggests that the thoughts of Islamic education figures such as Fazlur Rahman and Azyumardi Azra can inspire solutions to address the dichotomy between religious and scientific knowledge. Integrating these two elements is essential for creating a globally competitive Islamic education system.

Muzakkir (2024) offers a historical perspective on the journey of Islamic education from classical to modern systems. This perspective helps in understanding how traditional values can align with contemporary educational demands.

By understanding existing challenges and opportunities, the transformation of Islamic education can serve as an effective instrument to build a Muslim society that is competitive, innovative, and rooted in Islamic values. This discussion provides both theoretical and practical foundations for the future development of Islamic education.

CONCLUSION

The transformation of Islamic education is an urgent necessity to address global challenges and the demands of the modern era. This study highlights that Islamic education policies in various countries demonstrate diverse approaches, reflecting adaptations to local conditions and societal needs. In Indonesia, the decentralization of education policies provides opportunities to strengthen local values, though it still faces disparities in quality across regions. Malaysia focuses on integrating Islamic values with modernization, while Brunei implements the Melayu Islam Beraja philosophy as the foundation for strong character education.

Technological innovation has become a vital element in the transformation of Islamic education, offering significant opportunities to enhance accessibility and the quality of learning. However, challenges such as limited infrastructure and educators' competencies must be promptly addressed to optimize the use of technology. Character education and multicultural approaches also play a strategic role in shaping a competent and moral generation.

Comparative studies reveal that policy consistency, infrastructure support, and educator competency development are key factors in the success of education systems in various countries. This provides valuable lessons for the development of Islamic education, particularly in adopting best practices from other countries without disregarding Islamic values.

Despite challenges such as quality gaps and a lack of coordination among stakeholders, significant opportunities exist through international collaboration, the development of innovative curricula, and adaptive educational management approaches. Islamic education that integrates technology and is value-based can serve as an effective instrument for building a competitive, innovative society while adhering to Islamic principles.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. First, the analysis is primarily based on policy documents and existing literature, which may not fully capture the practical implementation of Islamic education policies at the institutional level. Second, the comparative scope is limited to selected countries, potentially restricting the generalizability of the findings to other Islamic education contexts. Third, differences in socio-cultural, political, and economic conditions across countries may influence policy outcomes in ways that are not comprehensively addressed in this study.

Future research is recommended to incorporate empirical data through interviews, surveys, or case studies involving policymakers, educators, and students to provide a deeper understanding of policy implementation and its impact. Further studies may also expand the comparative framework by including more countries and examining the long-term effects of digital transformation, curriculum innovation, and character education initiatives in Islamic education. Such investigations would contribute to the development of more comprehensive and evidence-based policy recommendations for the advancement of Islamic education in the contemporary era.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to this study. This research on the transformation of Islamic education policies and innovations was conducted independently without any financial support, institutional bias, or personal relationships that could influence the objectivity and integrity of the findings.

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