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## Designing Inclusive Islamic Education: A Democracy and Multiculturalism-Based Approach

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### Abstract

**Objective:** This study aims to analyze the design and implementation of inclusive Islamic education in democratic and multicultural contexts, especially in integrating Islamic values with learning practices that respect diversity. **Theoretical framework:** The theoretical framework of this research combines the values of Islamic education, democratic principles, and multicultural education approaches as the basis for building inclusive learning. **Literature review:** The literature review highlights the importance of Islamic education that is inclusive and responsive to diversity, but it is still dominated by conceptual studies, so an empirical approach is needed. **Methods:** The research uses qualitative methods with interviews, observation, and document analysis techniques in several Islamic educational institutions. **Results:** Results show that inclusive Islamic education is implemented through flexible curriculum, participatory learning, appreciation of diversity, and leadership based on Islamic values, although there are still constraints on teacher readiness and resources. **Implications:** There is a need for a more systematic integration between Islamic values, democracy, and multiculturalism, as well as teacher capacity building and policy support. **Novelty:** This research offers an empirical model of inclusive Islamic education that integrates Islamic values with democratic and multicultural approaches in a practical way.

**Keywords:** inclusive education, islamic education, democracy, multiculturalism, educational design.

### INTRODUCTION

Since its inception, Islamic education has fostered spiritual, moral, intellectual, and social development with the goal of fostering the full human being, or insan kamil [1]–[3]. Islamic education, which has its roots in the Qur'an and Sunnah, has always aimed to create people who are virtuous (akhlaq), God-conscious (taqwa), and socially responsible (khalifah). However, new issues brought about by modern global realities call for the adaptation of conventional Islamic education to a variety of sociocultural contexts [4]–[6].

Muslim students engage with individuals from many cultural, religious, and ideological backgrounds more frequently in this age of global migration, cross-cultural interactions [7]–[9], and digital connectedness [10]–[13]. Today's Islamic education must focus on developing students who are polite, open-minded, and capable of making constructive contributions to multicultural societies, all while remaining deeply rooted in their faith [14]–[17]. In addition to maintaining Islamic authenticity [18]–[20], this necessitates an

educational framework that integrates multicultural competencies like empathy, inclusion, and cultural awareness with democratic ideals like discourse, participation, equality [21]–[23], and critical engagement [24]. The goal of this essay is to provide an inclusive framework for Islamic education that combines the diversity of Islamic heritage with modern democratic and multicultural ideas [25], [26].

By doing this, it hopes to equip students to be moral global citizens who can confidently represent their Islamic identity [27]–[30]. Despite the growing body of literature on Islamic education, democracy, and multiculturalism, existing studies largely examine these dimensions in isolation and remain predominantly normative, offering limited empirical insight into how democratic and multicultural principles are systematically integrated within Islamic educational institutions. This paper argues that inclusive Islamic education can be effectively designed through a coherent framework that synthesizes Islamic epistemological foundations with democratic participation and multicultural pedagogies, as evidenced by institutional practices in contemporary Islamic education [31]–[33].

This study offers a novel contribution by proposing an integrative model that moves beyond theoretical discourse toward a practice-oriented synthesis of Islamic epistemology, democratic values, and multicultural pedagogy. Unlike prior studies that treat these elements separately, this research highlights how they can be operationalized cohesively within institutional settings, emphasizing curriculum design, participatory learning methods, and culturally responsive teaching. The novelty lies in bridging normative Islamic principles with empirical educational practices, demonstrating that inclusivity and faithfulness to Islamic teachings are not contradictory but mutually reinforcing [34]–[36].

The implications of this study are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it enriches the discourse on Islamic education by positioning it within contemporary global educational paradigms. Practically, it provides educators, policymakers, and institutions with a framework to develop learning environments that nurture tolerant, critical, and socially engaged Muslim students. Ultimately, this approach supports the formation of balanced individuals capable of navigating diversity while upholding strong Islamic values.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Islamic education has long been conceptualized as a holistic system aimed at developing the spiritual, intellectual, moral, and social dimensions of human beings. Rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah, it emphasizes the formation of *insan kamil* through the integration of knowledge, faith, and action. Traditionally, Islamic education focused on transmitting religious knowledge and cultivating moral character, often within relatively homogeneous cultural settings. However, contemporary global dynamics have shifted educational priorities, requiring Islamic education to respond to increasingly diverse and pluralistic societies [37]–[39].

In parallel, the concept of inclusive education has gained prominence as an approach that ensures equal access, participation, and respect for diversity in educational settings. Inclusive education is not limited to accommodating learners with different abilities but also encompasses cultural, religious, and social diversity. Within this framework, multicultural education promotes understanding, tolerance, and appreciation of differences, while democratic education emphasizes participation, dialogue, critical thinking, and equality. These approaches aim to prepare learners to function effectively in diverse and interconnected societies. Recent scholarly discussions highlight the need to integrate Islamic educational principles with democratic and multicultural values. Islamic teachings inherently support concepts such as justice, consultation, human dignity, and social responsibility, which resonate with the principles of inclusive and democratic education. The concept of *shura* (consultation), for instance, aligns with participatory decision-making, while *adl* (justice) and *rahmah* (compassion) underpin inclusive and equitable practices [40], [41].

Despite these conceptual compatibilities, existing studies often treat Islamic education, democracy, and multiculturalism as separate domains. Many discussions remain theoretical and normative, with limited attention to how these principles are implemented in real educational contexts. There is also a tendency to perceive tension between maintaining Islamic identity and embracing pluralism, particularly in minority or secular environments. Therefore, there is a growing need for an integrated framework that bridges these perspectives in practical and context-sensitive ways. Such a framework should demonstrate how Islamic educational institutions can embody inclusivity while remaining faithful to their epistemological foundations, thereby contributing to the development of ethically grounded and socially responsive learners [42], [43].

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative empirical research design with an exploratory approach, drawing on interpretivist assumptions as articulated by Creswell. The qualitative approach was selected to capture in-depth understandings of how inclusive Islamic education is designed and implemented within democratic and multicultural contexts. The research was conducted in selected Islamic educational institutions operating in socially and culturally diverse settings, chosen purposively based on their explicit commitment to Islamic values and their engagement with inclusive, democratic, and multicultural educational practices. The fieldwork was carried out over a defined research period to allow sustained engagement with institutional contexts and educational actors.

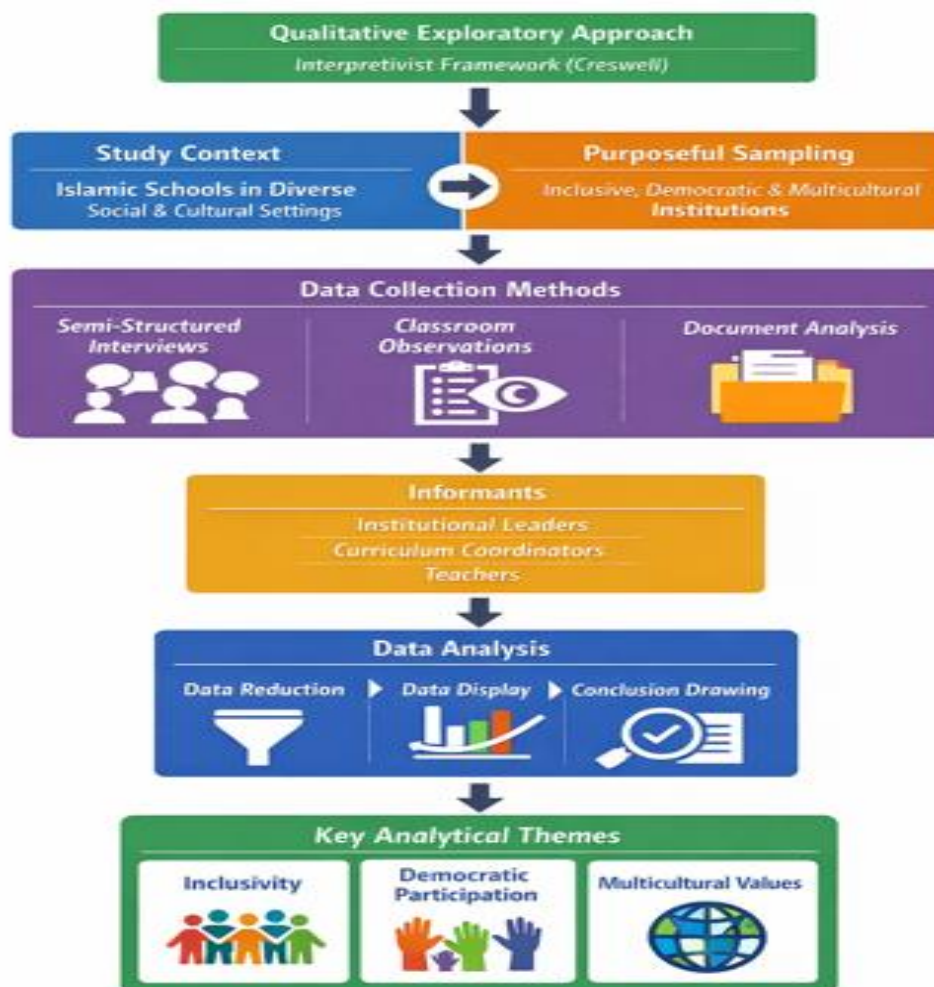


Figure 1. Research Methodology

Data were collected through multiple qualitative techniques, including semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, to ensure data triangulation and credibility. Interview informants consisted of institutional leaders, curriculum coordinators, and teachers who were directly involved in educational planning and instructional implementation. Observations focused on teaching–learning processes, classroom interactions, and participatory practices, while documents included institutional policies, curriculum guidelines, lesson plans, and official reports. Informants were selected purposively to represent both policy-level and classroom-level perspectives on inclusive Islamic education.

The data comprised textual, observational, and documentary materials related to curriculum design, pedagogical practices, and institutional governance. Data analysis was conducted thematically following the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Patterns and themes related to inclusivity, democratic participation, and multicultural values were identified through iterative coding and cross-case comparison. This analytical process enabled the study to generate contextualized and empirically grounded insights into how Islamic educational institutions operationalize inclusive education within diverse socio-cultural and political environments.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Thematic analysis, a qualitative technique that is ideal for finding, examining, and deciphering meaningful patterns in big, complicated datasets, was used in the data analysis. Both deductive and inductive coding techniques were used in the analysis. While inductive codes developed naturally from participant narratives and the gathered field data, deductive codes were drawn from the accepted theoretical frameworks on Islamic education, democratic pedagogy, multiculturalism, and inclusivity.

To have a comprehensive grasp of the data, transcripts and documents were read several times during the first familiarization phase of the analysis. After that, the data was divided into useful groups using open coding. Axial coding was used to improve these original codes by grouping related codes into more general thematic groups. Overarching themes were developed through this process, such as the balancing act between grassroots innovations and institutional restraints, the synergy between faith and pluralism, identity disputes in Western secular environments, and teacher agency in adopting inclusive pedagogy.

Cross-case analysis was conducted to identify both shared patterns and context-specific divergences among the three institutions. This comparative process illuminated how different socio-political and cultural environments influenced the ways Islamic educational institutions conceptualize and operationalize inclusivity [44], [45].

### **Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations**

Several tactics were used to guarantee the study's credibility. Data triangulation, extended fieldwork, and member checking- in which participants examined and confirmed new findings-all improved credibility. By carefully recording the study process and creating a transparent audit trail, reliability was preserved. Thick, in-depth explanations of every educational context improved transferability by enabling other researchers and practitioners to evaluate how well the findings applied to their own contexts. Peer debriefing with academic colleagues who offered outside viewpoints on the data interpretation and researcher reflexivity helped to attain confirmability.

Throughout the entire research procedure, ethical considerations were closely monitored. Before beginning fieldwork, institutional ethics approval was acquired. All participants gave their informed consent after being informed about the study's goals, methods, confidentiality policies, and their freedom to discontinue participation at any moment. By adopting pseudonyms and leaving out identifying information from the final report, anonymity was

preserved. In order to ensure that the study process adhered to both academic integrity and Islamic ethical norms, extra care was taken to respect cultural and religious sensitivity in all data collection operations [46], [47].

### **Multiple Case Studies: Comparative Analysis of Inclusive Islamic Educational Practices**

The research adopted a multiple case study approach to facilitate an in-depth, contextual, and comparative understanding of how inclusive Islamic education is practiced across different cultural, political, and national settings. This method allows for both cross-case synthesis and deep contextual insights, aligning with the complexity of educational phenomena that are deeply embedded in socio-political and theological frameworks [48].

#### **Rationale for Multiple Case Study Design**

The selection of multiple cases serves several critical purposes:

- a. To capture diversity in the operationalization of inclusive Islamic education across differing cultural contexts.
- b. To examine how Islamic educational philosophy interacts with national legal, political, and multicultural realities.
- c. To provide rich, triangulated data from varied educational ecosystems, enhancing both the validity and applicability of findings.
- d. To explore contextualized challenges and successes, offering valuable insights for educational policy makers, curriculum developers, and institutional leaders across the Islamic world and diaspora.

The cases were chosen through purposeful sampling, focusing on schools that demonstrate a conscious effort to integrate Islamic teachings with democratic and multicultural educational practices.

#### **Case Study 1: Indonesia - The Pesantren Model in a Pluralistic Democracy**

The first case study centers on an Islamic private school in Java, Indonesia, a nation renowned for its commitment to religious pluralism embedded in the national philosophy of Pancasila. In this context:

- a. The school's curriculum integrates Qur'anic studies, Arabic language, Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), and theology (aqidah) alongside national core subjects mandated by both the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education.
- b. It promotes interfaith dialogue programs involving students from other religious backgrounds (Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism), fostering mutual understanding and respect.
- c. Civic education emphasizes democratic participation, human rights, and constitutional responsibilities framed within an Islamic ethical worldview.
- d. Extracurricular activities such as community service (pengabdian masyarakat), charity drives (zakat and sadaqah), and environmental conservation projects reflect Islamic values of social responsibility (mas'uliyah) and stewardship (khalifah).

Despite being firmly rooted in Islamic tradition, the school creates a safe pedagogical space for diversity, where students engage with global contemporary issues while retaining a strong Islamic moral identity [49]–[51]. This hybrid model reflects Indonesia's broader strategy of unifying religious diversity within its national fabric [52].

## **Case Study 2: United Kingdom - Negotiating Identity in a Secular Multicultural Society**

The second case study was conducted at an Islamic secondary school situated in Greater London, UK, operating under the oversight of Ofsted and subject to British education standards. This school represents the growing phenomenon of Muslim minority education within secular, multicultural Western societies.

Key features of this school include:

- a. A hybrid curriculum combining the British National Curriculum (mathematics, sciences, humanities, and language arts) with daily Islamic studies (Qur'an, Seerah, Islamic jurisprudence, and moral education).
- b. Identity negotiation is a central pedagogical challenge. Students are taught to embrace both British citizenship values (democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect) and Islamic ethical commitments (taqwa, adab, ukhuwwah).
- c. Special programs address Islamophobia, racial discrimination, and anti-Muslim prejudice, empowering students with confidence, resilience, and interfaith competencies.
- d. The school organizes interfaith dialogue programs with local churches, synagogues, and civic institutions to foster bridge-building and civic engagement.
- e. Teachers are trained to implement dialogical pedagogy, where respectful debate, inquiry-based learning, and student voice are promoted within an Islamic adab framework.

This case study highlights the intricate balancing act Islamic schools must perform in secular Western democracies, where inclusion, integration, and religious identity coexist within a complex socio-political landscape.

## **Case Study 3: South Africa - Post-Apartheid Reconciliation through Islamic Ethics**

The third case study explored an Islamic K-12 school located in Cape Town, South Africa- a country shaped by its unique post-apartheid policies on reconciliation, equality, and non-discrimination.

Distinctive features of this institution include:

- a. An inclusive curriculum that integrates Islamic ethics with South Africa's constitutional values of equality, human dignity, and racial reconciliation.
- b. Lessons on apartheid history, restorative justice, and social cohesion are framed within Qur'anic teachings on justice (adl), mercy (rahmah), and human dignity (karamah).
- c. Active anti-xenophobia and anti-discrimination initiatives empower students to challenge lingering racial and cultural prejudices.
- d. Students engage in community outreach addressing poverty, unemployment, and social inequality as part of their civic responsibility rooted in Islamic conceptions of social justice.
- e. The school collaborates with non-Muslim schools and civic organizations to promote intercultural education and peacebuilding, ensuring that learners develop both strong Islamic identities and a global ethical vision.

This South African model demonstrates how Islamic education can actively contribute to national reconciliation and healing, positioning Muslims as moral agents for social transformation [\[53\]](#), [\[54\]](#).

The findings indicate that inclusive Islamic education is implemented through curriculum integration, participatory teaching methods, and value-based leadership [55], [56]. Institutions emphasize respect for diversity by accommodating different cultural backgrounds and learning needs while grounding educational practices in Islamic ethics. Teachers employ dialogical learning approaches that encourage student participation and critical thinking. Institutional policies support inclusivity through non-discriminatory admission practices and collaborative school cultures. However, the data also reveal challenges such as limited teacher training on inclusive pedagogy and inconsistencies between policy and classroom practice. These findings align with contemporary theories of democratic education and multicultural learning, demonstrating that Islamic education can function as an inclusive system when supported by coherent institutional design and leadership commitment [57], [58].

Several interconnected themes emerged from the data gathered from the various case studies, demonstrating how inclusive principles, which have their roots in Islamic values, democratic pedagogy, and multicultural frameworks, are being operationalized in Islamic educational institutions across a range of cultural backgrounds. The results offer a deep, complex knowledge of the potential and difficulties these institutions confront in developing inclusive educational models that meet modern educational demands while staying true to Islamic epistemology.

### **Integration of Democratic Practices in Islamic Education**

The intentional application of democratic principles through institutional governance and classroom teaching, based on the Islamic concept of shura (consultation), was a recurring theme in all three case studies. These activities were theologically supported by the Qur'anic exhortation to "... and consult them in matters" (Qur'an 3:159). The schools used participatory decision-making processes that maintained Islamic adab (manners), ethical bounds, and communal accountability rather than blindly embracing Western democratic principles [59]–[61].

At the level of governance, school administration established organized avenues for students to actively engage in decision-making [62]–[64]. Peer mediation boards, student councils, and leadership positions in extracurricular activities gave students the opportunity to get involved in institutional issues. Students developed a sense of empowerment, accountability, and ownership as a result of this interactive setting.

In the classroom, dialogical pedagogy was widely practiced. Teachers created spaces for open discussions, debates, and collaborative group projects that encouraged students to voice differing perspectives while maintaining respect and decorum. In accordance with Islamic norms, disagreements were presented as chances for intellectual development. When viewed through the prism of classical Islamic scholarship's adab al-ikhtilaf (etiquette of dispute), this method is consistent with Freire's (1970) Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

One educator from the UK case study underlined: "Our children know that being Muslim does not equate to loneliness. They remain grounded in Islamic etiquette while learning how to appropriately express their thoughts.

Students gained civic awareness, ethical reasoning, and critical thinking abilities through these democratic exercises while maintaining a strong foundation in Islamic values [65], [66]. In addition to improving student academic engagement, the participative ethos fostered moral leadership, civic duty, and spiritual development.

### **Embracing Cultural Diversity in Curriculum**

All three schools demonstrated significant efforts to incorporate multiculturalism into their curricular frameworks, recognizing diversity as a divine gift as emphasized in the Qur'an:

"O mankind! We created you from a single pair of male and female and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another" (Qur'an 49:13).

### **Indonesia Case:**

The incorporation of regional Islamic customs and cultural heritage was one way that multicultural integration was demonstrated in Indonesia. Along with exposure to Muslim cultures around the world, the curriculum combined conventional Islamic studies with local customs from Javanese pesantren, or traditional Islamic boarding schools. Students learned about the diverse contributions made by Muslim thinkers from a range of historical and ethnic backgrounds, such as South Asian, Persian, Andalusian, and Ottoman. Both national identity and a worldwide Islamic consciousness were promoted by this combination.

### **UK Case:**

The Islamic school in the UK actively engaged with the secularism and multiculturalism of Europe. Through an Islamic ethical framework, the curriculum included sections on global citizenship, British values, and interfaith engagement. British civic ideals were considered in accordance with the Qur'anic concepts of justice, compassion, and human dignity rather than as conflicting with Islamic teachings. Students studied the histories of religious minorities in both Islamic and British history, participated in mock interfaith debates, and toured places of worship of other religions.

### **South Africa Case:**

The curriculum of South African schools was heavily influenced by the post-apartheid discourse on racial reconciliation, social justice, and intergroup harmony. Social justice courses were framed within the Qur'anic ideas of *ihsan* (excellence), *rahmah* (mercy), and *adl* (justice). Students examined national and Islamic accounts of oppression and emancipation, examining how Islamic morality may help right historical wrongs and stop contemporary acts of extremism and xenophobia. Diversity is divine, according to the Qur'an, as the South African principal put it. It is essential to teach to prevent extremism and xenophobia [67], [68].

The deliberate inclusion of multicultural perspectives within Islamic education contributed to fostering intercultural competencies, empathy, and global awareness among students. This not only prepared them for respectful cross-cultural interaction but also strengthened their Islamic identity as part of a global ummah while remaining responsible national citizens [69], [70].

### **Holistic Development Grounded in Islamic Values**

A significant commonality across all three institutions was the centrality of *tarbiyah*, the comprehensive nurturing of intellectual, spiritual, ethical, and social dimensions of the learner [71]–[73]. This approach aligns with the classical Islamic conception of education as not merely the transfer of knowledge but as character formation aimed at producing *insan kamil* (the complete human being).

#### **Spiritual Practices:**

Daily routines were anchored in spiritual discipline, including *dhikr* circles, daily Qur'anic reflections, communal prayer sessions, and lessons in prophetic traditions (*sirah*). These practices fostered Allah-consciousness (*taqwa*) and imbued students with a sense of divine accountability.

## Moral Character Education

Structured lessons focused on cultivating akhlaq (morals), amanah (trustworthiness), ukhuwwah (brotherhood), and humility. Character education was not treated as a separate subject but was woven into every aspect of school life, from teacher modeling to peer interactions and conflict resolution.

### Service Learning:

Students were urged to participate in social service projects, environmental stewardship, charity drives (sadaqah), and community engagement initiatives. These exercises gave students real-world opportunities to put Islamic teachings on civic duty, compassion, and social justice into practice. "Our children are learning that being a good Muslim means serving others with sincerity," said an Indonesian father, encapsulating this holistic vision. Students who were not only academically proficient but also spiritually rooted, socially sensitive, and service-oriented were the result of an all-encompassing approach, qualities that are desperately needed in today's Muslim communities navigating globalized cultures.

## Institutional Challenges and Success Factors

Despite the notable successes, each institution faced considerable challenges in implementing inclusive educational models.

### Institutional Challenges:

- a. **Parental Concerns:** Some parents expressed apprehension that the incorporation of multicultural or democratic elements might dilute Islamic orthodoxy or expose students to unwanted secular influences. This tension required careful dialogue to assure parents that the reforms were firmly rooted in Islamic epistemology.
- b. **Teacher Preparedness:** Many teachers lacked the specialized training needed to effectively integrate inclusive pedagogies while remaining faithful to Islamic teachings. The challenge of reconciling classical Islamic knowledge with contemporary educational innovations highlighted the urgent need for targeted professional development programs.
- c. **Community Sensitivities:** Intra-faith differences, such as differing madhhab (jurisprudential schools), sectarian identities, or cultural variations, sometimes complicate curriculum development and school policies.

### Success Factors:

- a. **Transparent Communication:** Ongoing, open dialogue between school leadership, parents, and community stakeholders built trust and minimized resistance to change.
- b. **Leadership Commitment:** Principals and administrators served as visionary leaders who consistently anchored reforms within authentic Islamic principles while embracing educational innovation.
- c. **Teacher Development:** Continuous professional development programs equipped teachers with pedagogical tools to balance Islamic authenticity with modern inclusive methodologies.
- d. **Cultural Adaptation:** Institutions demonstrated flexibility in adapting educational content to their specific sociopolitical and cultural contexts while preserving core Islamic values.

These factors combined to create learning environments that were adaptive, responsive, and rooted in Islamic integrity while being open to societal engagement.

## Impact on Student Identity and Social Engagement

Perhaps the most profound outcome across all case studies was the emergence of students possessing complex, integrated identities. These young Muslims were not trapped between religious conservatism and secular liberalism but rather synthesized both spheres into coherent, confident personal narratives.

Students developed:

- A strong foundation in Islamic faith (iman) and God-consciousness (taqwa).
- Comfort and confidence in navigating multicultural societies with respect and empathy.
- Readiness for respectful interfaith dialogue and coexistence with people of different worldviews.
- Commitment to civic responsibility, volunteerism, and ethical leadership.
- Intellectual tools for critical reasoning, problem-solving, and ethical discernment rooted in Islamic tradition.

One UK student aptly summarized this emerging identity:

“I can be fully Muslim and fully British at the same time.”

This hybrid identity represents a significant educational achievement, demonstrating that inclusive Islamic education can successfully cultivate global citizens who maintain firm spiritual roots while actively contributing to diverse, pluralistic societies.

**Table 1. Comparative Value of the Case Studies**

Context	Key Features	Challenges	Strengths
Indonesia (Java)	Pancasila pluralism; interfaith dialogue; pesantren system	Balancing orthodoxy & pluralism	Strong civic identity, rooted in Islamic literacy
UK (London)	Hybrid curriculum; identity negotiation; anti-Islamophobia programs	Navigating secularism & Islamophobia	Confident dual identity formation
South Africa (Cape Town)	Post-apartheid reconciliation; anti-discrimination; Qur'anic justice ethics	Addressing xenophobia & social inequality	Social justice leadership through Islamic values

These comparative cases offer valuable models for policymakers, educators, and Islamic institutions worldwide striving to implement inclusive, democratic, and multicultural Islamic educational frameworks while remaining authentic to the foundational sources of Islam. Based on the findings, we propose the following tripartite model.

**Table 2. Proposed Model for Inclusive Islamic Learning Design**

Pillar	Description
Faith-Based Core	Qur'an-centered instruction, Hadith ethics, spiritual development (taqwa, salah, khidmah), and Islamic worldview integration across disciplines.
Democratic Practices	Dialogical classrooms, shura-based school governance, civic education, leadership opportunities, critical inquiry, framed by adab and ijtihad principles.
Multicultural Engagement	Curriculum diversification, interfaith dialogue training, cultural literacy modules, anti-discrimination programming, and global

citizenship formation—all grounded in Islamic ethics of justice, dignity, and mercy.

This model provides a balanced framework that preserves Islamic authenticity while fostering skills needed for peaceful pluralistic engagement.

## Analysis

The study provides a comprehensive and empirically grounded analysis of how inclusive Islamic education can be designed and implemented within democratic and multicultural contexts. One of the most significant analytical insights lies in the integration of three major paradigms—Islamic epistemology, democratic participation, and multicultural education—into a coherent and operational framework. Rather than treating these dimensions as separate or even conflicting, the study demonstrates their compatibility and mutual reinforcement within institutional practices. From a methodological perspective, the use of qualitative empirical research strengthens the validity of the findings. Through interviews, observations, and document analysis, the study captures real-life practices rather than relying solely on normative or theoretical assumptions. This allows the research to move beyond abstract discourse and offer practical insights into how inclusivity is enacted in educational settings. The thematic analysis further enables the identification of recurring patterns such as participatory learning, curriculum flexibility, and value-based leadership.

A key analytical contribution of this study is the emphasis on teacher agency and institutional leadership as primary drivers of inclusivity. While policies and curricula provide structural support, the findings reveal that inclusive practices are largely shaped by how teachers interpret and implement these frameworks in the classroom. This highlights the importance of professional development and pedagogical training, particularly in integrating democratic dialogue and multicultural sensitivity within an Islamic ethical framework. The comparative case study approach also enriches the analysis by illustrating how context influences implementation. In Indonesia, inclusivity is closely tied to national pluralism and pesantren traditions; in the United Kingdom, it involves negotiating religious identity within a secular and multicultural society; and in South Africa, it aligns with post-apartheid values of reconciliation and social justice. These variations demonstrate that inclusive Islamic education is not a fixed model but a context-sensitive process that adapts to socio-political realities while maintaining core Islamic principles.

Another important analytical dimension is the curriculum. The study shows that inclusive Islamic education is effectively realized through curriculum integration that combines religious teachings with civic education, global awareness, and intercultural competence. This approach not only strengthens students' Islamic identity but also prepares them to engage constructively in diverse societies. The incorporation of concepts such as *shura* (consultation), *adl* (justice), and *rahmah* (compassion) into educational practices reinforces the argument that Islamic values inherently support inclusivity. However, the study also critically identifies several challenges, including limited teacher preparedness, parental concerns about maintaining religious authenticity, and resource constraints. These challenges indicate that while the conceptual framework is strong, its implementation requires sustained institutional commitment, policy support, and capacity building.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that inclusive Islamic education can be effectively realized when democratic learning practices and multicultural awareness are meaningfully integrated with Islamic ethical foundations. The findings confirm that Islamic education is not inherently at odds with inclusivity, participation, or diversity; rather, it possesses internal philosophical

and ethical resources that strongly support these principles. Concepts such as shura (consultation), adl (justice), and rahmah (compassion) provide a solid normative basis for fostering inclusive and democratic educational environments. A key empirical insight emerging from this research is that inclusivity is shaped more significantly by teacher agency and value-based leadership than by formal institutional policies alone. While policies and curricular frameworks are important, the actual realization of inclusive Islamic education occurs primarily at the level of pedagogical practice and everyday classroom interaction. Teachers play a central role in translating abstract principles into lived experiences through dialogical teaching, participatory learning, and culturally responsive approaches. This highlights the importance of investing in teacher capacity building and continuous professional development as a strategic priority for Islamic educational institutions. Furthermore, the comparative case studies illustrate that inclusive Islamic education is context-sensitive and adaptable. Whether in pluralistic Muslim-majority societies or secular multicultural environments, institutions are able to maintain Islamic authenticity while engaging constructively with diversity. This adaptability underscores the dynamic nature of Islamic education and its relevance in addressing contemporary global challenges, including social cohesion, identity formation, and intercultural understanding. The study contributes to both theory and practice by bridging the gap between normative Islamic teachings and empirical educational realities. It offers a practical and integrative model that can guide educators, policymakers, and institutions in designing inclusive learning environments rooted in Islamic epistemology. Importantly, the findings challenge the assumption that embracing multiculturalism and democratic values leads to the dilution of religious identity; instead, they demonstrate that these elements can coexist in a mutually reinforcing relationship. However, this research is not without limitations. Its qualitative design, limited number of case studies, and specific institutional contexts restrict the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future research should expand to broader geographical settings, include larger and more diverse samples, and employ mixed-method approaches to provide more comprehensive and generalizable evidence. Such efforts are essential to inform policy development and support sustainable educational reform in the field of Islamic education.

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### **Author Contribution**

Jobeda Khanom conceptualized the study, developed the theoretical framework, conducted data collection, analysis, and drafted the manuscript. Md Tarequl Islam contributed to research design, literature review, data interpretation, and critical revision of the manuscript. Both authors approved the final version and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work, ensuring integrity and accuracy throughout the research process and publication stages including responding to reviewers comments and making necessary revisions prior to final acceptance and dissemination.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article. This research was conducted independently without any financial support or commercial influence that could bias the results or interpretations. All findings and

conclusions presented are based solely on academic considerations and ethical research practices in accordance with established scholarly standards and institutional guidelines ensuring transparency accountability and reliability of the study and its contributions to the field of Islamic education research.

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