

INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: FROM MEMORIZATION TO CONTEXTUAL LEARNING

Ibrahim Ibnuroso¹, Darwis², Abd. Khoir³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Muhammadiyah Indonesia, Bekasi

Ibrahimibnuroso322@gmail.com

darwis@unismabekasi.ac.id

juragankhoir2@gmail.com

ABSTRAK

Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di Sekolah Dasar cenderung bersifat tekstual dan normatif, sehingga sering kali belum mampu menjembatani pemahaman peserta didik terhadap ajaran Islam dengan penerapannya dalam kehidupan nyata. Pendekatan interdisipliner menjadi solusi strategis atas persoalan ini. Berdasarkan teori Allen F. Repko, pembelajaran interdisipliner merupakan proses integratif yang menggabungkan berbagai perspektif keilmuan untuk menjawab persoalan kompleks secara menyeluruh. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi pustaka untuk menganalisis konsep-konsep teoretis dan kebijakan pendidikan yang relevan terkait PAI dan pembelajaran interdisipliner. Melalui integrasi PAI dengan mata pelajaran lain seperti IPA, IPS, Bahasa Indonesia, dan Seni Budaya, nilai-nilai keagamaan dapat dikontekstualisasikan dan diinternalisasi secara lebih bermakna dalam kehidupan sehari-hari siswa. Pendekatan ini juga selaras dengan arah Kurikulum Merdeka yang menekankan pembelajaran berbasis proyek dan penguatan karakter. Artikel ini merekomendasikan penguatan kapasitas guru dalam merancang model pembelajaran interdisipliner sebagai strategi untuk menanamkan pendidikan karakter Islami sejak dini.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Agama Islam, Pendekatan Interdisipliner, Sekolah Dasar, Repko, Kurikulum Merdeka

ABSTRACT

The teaching of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at the elementary school level tends to be textual and normative, which often fails to bridge students' understanding of Islamic teachings with their real-life applications. The interdisciplinary approach offers a strategic solution to this issue. Based on the theory of Allen F. Repko, interdisciplinary learning is an integrative process that combines multiple disciplinary perspectives to address complex problems in a comprehensive manner. This study employs a qualitative library research method to analyze theoretical perspectives and relevant educational policies related to

IRE and interdisciplinary learning. By integrating IRE with other subjects such as Science, Social Studies, Language, and Arts, religious values can be contextualized and meaningfully embedded in students' daily experiences. This approach aligns with the direction of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes project-based learning and character development. This article recommends that teachers be empowered to design interdisciplinary learning models as a means to nurture Islamic character education from an early age.

Keywords: *Islamic Religious Education, Interdisciplinary Approach, Elementary School, Repko, Merdeka Curriculum*

INTRODUCTION

The use of digital technology is one of the global issues related to various dimensions of life. It shows the complexity of life's challenges that require humans to continue to strive to expand knowledge as a tool to study and overcome life's problems. (Nimawati et al., 2020). In this case, Azizah revealed that the main target that is focused on when various problems occur in society is education (Azizah, 2019). Some of the educational problems that still need attention and handling are the issue of the dichotomy of science, the disconnection of modern reality from religion, and the distance of science from religious values.

In the context of Islamic education, Chanifudin revealed that the reality of global issues has confronted Islamic religious education with various problems such as integration crises, economic, moral, cultural and the like. This situation requires the role of educational (Islamic) thinkers to respond to it optimally (Chanifudin, 2017). In addition, the fundamental problem related to this challenge is the belief that the complexity of change in modern society is often unpredictable. Some of these conditions further show the need for special attention so that education becomes more relevant to the needs of the community.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in elementary schools has an important role in shaping the character and spirituality of students from an early age. However, in practice, PAI learning is often still textual and focused on memorization alone, so it is not yet able to fully touch the aspects of contextual and applicative understanding in daily life. In fact, the reality of children's lives in the modern era is full of multidimensional challenges that require a more comprehensive and relevant approach to teaching.

In this context, an interdisciplinary approach is a strategic alternative to increase the effectiveness of PAI learning. According to Repko (2012), an interdisciplinary approach is the process of answering a question or solving a complex problem by combining perspectives from various disciplines. In education, this approach can bridge between religious materials and other fields of knowledge such as science, social, language, and even art, so that Islamic values can be understood in the context of students' real lives.

In line with the complexity theory put forward by Morin (2007), the child's world is not only influenced by one dimension of values, but also by various social, cultural, and technological influences. Therefore, the interdisciplinary approach in PAI is not only about integrating materials, but also aims to foster a holistic and contextual way of thinking, which will strengthen the internalization of religious values in various aspects of students' lives. Therefore, this study aims to examine the application of an interdisciplinary approach in Islamic education in elementary schools and assess the extent to which this approach can improve the understanding and application of Islamic values in the lives of students in a complete and meaningful way.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a library *research method*. The qualitative approach was chosen because the purpose of this study is to understand the meaning, concept, and relevance of the interdisciplinary approach in the learning of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in depth, not to measure or test the quantitative relationship between variables. This research is also exploratory and conceptual, so the qualitative approach allows researchers to explore theoretical arguments, interpret key ideas, and construct understandings in a reflective and contextual manner.

DISCUSSION

A. Interdisciplinary Approach

Saleh defines an approach as a perspective or paradigm contained in a field of knowledge that is subsequently used in understanding religion. According to him,

this meaning was born because the basic meaning of the word approach is behavior and a person's way of approaching (in activities) research with something being researched. So that from this activity a person's view of something is born (Asingkily, 2021, p. 18).

Meanwhile, according to Rani Rahim, the approach in the realm of learning is one of the ways teachers carry out learning so that the concepts presented can be adapted to students. An approach is considered an operational step that is designed in such a way as to achieve certain learning goals, therefore the approach in learning is a powerful strategy that is commonly used in the learning process (Rahim et al., 2021, pp. 2-3).

Allen F. Repko in his book *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory* (Repko, 2012) explains that an interdisciplinary approach is a systematic process used to answer questions, solve problems, or overcome complex topics, which cannot be adequately handled by one discipline alone. According to Allen F. Repko (2012), an interdisciplinary approach is a systematic process used to answer questions, solve problems, or examine topics that are too complex to be adequately handled by one discipline alone. Repko emphasized that the integration of various scientific perspectives can result in a more comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon. The urgency of this approach lies in the limitations of each discipline in looking at a problem partially, while the issues of education and student development are multidimensional.

B. The Urgency of an Interdisciplinary Approach in Islamic Religious Education

Islamic education as a discipline that has a strong spiritual character, it is time to increase life skills by adjusting to 21st century skills, namely communication, collaboration, criticism and creative thinking skills.

However, currently Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in elementary schools faces quite serious challenges in terms of the relevance and effectiveness of learning. In practice in various schools, PAI learning tends to focus on cognitive aspects, such as memorization of Qur'anic verses, hadiths, and definitions of religious terms. Although important, this overemphasis on memorization is not necessarily able to foster contextual religious attitudes and behaviors in students'

daily lives. Many students are able to pronounce religious postulates fluently, but do not have a deep understanding of how to apply these values in social interactions.

In answering the challenges of learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in elementary schools which tend to be textual, normative, and regardless of the context of children's lives, an interdisciplinary approach can be proposed as an alternative solution that is applied and strong theoretical. Repko states that:

“Interdisciplinary research is required because disciplines are inadequate by themselves to address complex problems, and because integration of insights enables us to construct more comprehensive understandings.”

This statement underlines that each discipline has limitations in explaining the complexity of the problem in its entirety. Therefore, in the context of basic education that targets the moral, social, and spiritual development of children at the same time, PAI cannot be separated from other sciences that help students relate Islamic values to the reality of their lives.

For example, the value of trust and responsibility in Islam can be related in science lessons when discussing environmental conservation, so that children understand that destroying nature is not only an ecological problem, but also a form of disobedience to religious orders. The values of justice and tolerance in Islam can be strengthened through social studies lessons, especially when students learn about the social and cultural diversity in Indonesia. Even Mathematics lessons can be a medium to strengthen the value of honesty through simple transactions that are fair and transparent. This approach allows the values of PAI not to stand alone, but to connect and internalize more deeply through diverse learning experiences.

Furthermore, the interdisciplinary learning process as described by Repko includes systematic steps, starting from formulating problems, determining relevant disciplines, reviewing the literature, creating *common ground*, to producing new and more comprehensive integration of understanding². In practice in elementary schools, this approach can be realized through integrative thematic learning that combines PAI with other subjects in one major theme. For example, in the theme "Love of the Fatherland", teachers can integrate monotheistic material (as the basis of love for Allah's creation), the history of the independence struggle (IPS), and

compile a religious drama script (Indonesian) as a form of expression of religious and national values.

With this kind of approach, PAI learning becomes not only filling in the cognitive aspects of students, but also touching on the affective and psychomotor dimensions, thus contributing directly to the formation of a real Islamic character in daily behavior. This is very much in line with the direction of the Independent Curriculum which prioritizes project-based learning and character strengthening through the Pancasila Student Profile.

Thus, the interdisciplinary approach is not only a solution to the limitations of monodisciplinary methods, but also a new pedagogical framework that is more effective and adaptive, especially to bring to life the values of the Islamic religion in the context of basic learning that is comprehensive, active, and relevant to the lives of students.

The application of an interdisciplinary approach in PAI is also in line with the principles of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes project-based learning, differentiation, and strengthening the Pancasila student profile. Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, and compassion can be directly associated with learning in other subjects.

Thus, an interdisciplinary approach in PAI learning is not only theoretically relevant, but also practically important. This approach can be a pedagogical solution that is responsive to the changing times, while still upholding the basic values of Islam. The urgency of its implementation is not only because of the demands of the curriculum or educational policy, but because of the fact that religious learning that is lively, applicative, and integrated with the lives of students is a real need in meaningful basic education.

C. Interdisciplinary Approach as a Strategy to Strengthen PAI in Elementary Schools

To overcome the problem of the lack of relevance of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning with the real lives of elementary school students, an interdisciplinary approach is a strategic solution that can be applied in learning design. This approach allows teachers to integrate religious material with other fields of knowledge thematically and contextually, so that Islamic values are not

only conveyed theoretically, but also experienced and practiced in various learning situations. Some examples include:

1) Contextual Integration between Subjects

One form of concrete implementation of the interdisciplinary approach is to integrate PAI material with themes and content from other subjects. For example:

- The concepts of tawakal and effort in Islam can be integrated into Natural Science (IPA) lessons through learning about the process of photosynthesis, to show that humans must work (striving) but the results still depend on the will of Allah.
- The values of justice and empathy can be associated with Social Sciences (IPS) through the study of socio-economic differences, tolerance, and cooperation in society.
- Indonesian language lessons can be used to develop students' literacy skills through the creation of short stories with the theme of the Prophet's exemplary stories.

This approach supports the theory of Repko (2012), who states that interdisciplinarity is not just aligning theories, but integrating perspectives between fields of science to form a new and comprehensive understanding.

2) Project-Based Islamic Learning

Another solution that is applicable is the implementation of *project-based learning* based on Islamic values, which is also in line with the direction of the Independent Curriculum. For example:

- The project "**Islam and Love for the Environment**" is integrated with IPA and PPKn, where students practice the principle of *caliphate fil ardh* (representative of Allah on earth) by planting trees, cleaning the environment, and presenting the importance of protecting nature in an Islamic perspective.
- The "**Sharing and Care**" project to internalize the value of *ukhuwah* and *zakat*, in collaboration with Mathematics (calculating zakat) and Indonesian language (writing reports on social service activities).

This kind of activity not only activates students physically and mentally, but also encourages them to feel the meaning of religious values directly, in accordance with a constructivist and transformative approach to learning (Zuhdi, 2005; Sutrisno, 2020).

3) Strengthening the Role of Teachers as Integration Facilitators

PAI teachers need to be trained to understand how to develop learning tools based on cross-disciplinary integration, including planning lesson plans or thematic modules. This requires an understanding not only of religious material, but also of material from other fields, as well as the ability to relate the two in a unit of learning activities.

Muhaimin (2009) emphasized that the development of an effective PAI curriculum is not enough with mastery of the material, but also requires the ability of teachers to interpret Islamic values in a contemporary and cross-field context.

CONCLUSION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in elementary schools has an important role in shaping children's character, morals, and spirituality from an early age. However, the approach that has been used so far tends to be monodisciplinary and textual, so it does not touch the real life context of students. This leads to limitations in understanding and practicing Islamic values in a complete and functional way in daily life. The interdisciplinary approach, as developed by Allen F. Repko, offers a conceptual and practical framework for addressing these challenges. This approach allows the integration of PAI material with other disciplines such as science, social studies, and Bahasa Indonesia, so that Islamic values can be presented in a more contextual, applicative, and meaningful way. This integration also supports the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes project-based, thematic, and character strengthening of students through the Pancasila Student Profile. Therefore, it is recommended that PAI teachers in elementary schools develop skills to design interdisciplinary-based learning that is thematic and collaborative. Schools and education policy makers also need to provide adequate training, mentoring, and resources so that the implementation of this approach can run optimally. In addition, there is a need for

further research that evaluates the impact of interdisciplinary approaches on students' religious, cognitive, and affective achievements. With these steps, Islamic Religious Education in Elementary Schools will be more relevant, dynamic, and able to equip students with Islamic values that are contextual and adaptive to the development of the times. Thus, interdisciplinarity is not only a teaching method, but also a new paradigm in grounding Islamic values in the midst of the dynamics of 21st century education.

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