

## Transformation of Learning Based on the Ulul Ilmi Model: Integration of Islamic Values and 21st Century Skills in Higher Education Curriculum Development Towards Golden Indonesia 2045

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### Abstract

The transformation of learning in higher education is an urgent need to face global challenges and realize the vision of Golden Indonesia 2045. This article aims to examine and formulate the development of a higher education curriculum based on the Ulul Ilmi Model that integrates Islamic values with 21st-century skills. The Ulul Ilmi Model is understood as a learning paradigm that emphasizes the unity between spiritual depth, intellectual breadth, and analytical acumen in the educational process. The research method used is a systematic literature study with a qualitative-analytical approach to relevant primary and secondary sources, including studies of the Qur'an, Islamic educational thought, national education policies, and literature on 21st-century skills. The results of the study indicate that the integration of Islamic values such as monotheism, morality, scientific ethos, and social responsibility with 21st-century skills including critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, and digital literacy can shape the profile of graduates who are intellectually superior, have character, and are adaptive to changing times. The implementation of the Ulul Ilmi Model in curriculum development encourages holistic, contextual learning, and is oriented towards strengthening character and global competence. This article is expected to provide a conceptual contribution to the development of a higher education curriculum that is based on Islamic values and is responsive to the demands of the nation's future towards Golden Indonesia 2045.

**Keywords:** Islamic values, 21st century skills, curriculum development, higher education, Golden Indonesia 2045.

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## INTRODUCTION

The curriculum is a tool or key in the formal education process. It is not surprising that this tool is always overhauled or reviewed to keep up with the development of science and the times (Hidayat 2018)(Wahyuni 2016). Therefore, the curriculum must also always develop. The curriculum constitutes a fundamental element within the educational system, as it plays a crucial role in directing the achievement of educational objectives while simultaneously serving as a framework for instructional implementation across all educational levels and institutions. Consequently, educators are required to comprehend curriculum development, given that it represents a central pedagogical construct that shapes educational practices and processes (Aminuddin 2010). So that in the curriculum, it will be illustrated how the efforts made can help students develop their potential both cognitively, affectively, psychomotorly, and spiritually.

One essential element of the curriculum is the formulation of educational objectives. Given that existing educational goals tend to be fragmented and that learning outcomes have not yet fully aligned with the intended targets, there is a need for innovative approaches in redefining these objectives. This reconsideration should be grounded in a renewed understanding of human existence as servants of Allah, a perspective that has been extensively addressed within Qur'anic teachings on the purpose of education (Hakim 2012). This orientation offers a strategic breakthrough in the development of Islamic education curricula.

The Islamic perspective views human beings as noble creations of Allah who are endowed with reason and assigned the role of *khalifah* on earth, responsible for managing its resources and advancing civilization (Aziz et al. 2021). All aspects of the human body are arranged in the most optimal and harmonious manner, with each part assigned a specific form

and function, as affirmed by Allah "*Indeed, We have created man in the best form.*" (Qs. At-Tiin [95]: 4)

According to Sayyid Qutb, as explained in *Tafsir Jalalain*, this verse illustrates Allah's care in creating human beings in the most excellent condition, characterized by the finest arrangement, form, and balance, as repeatedly emphasized throughout the Qur'an (Hidayat, Abdussalam, and Fahrudin 2016). Thus, the development of human potential will have an influence on the changing times, such as the birth of technological advances in the world.

Global changes characterized by technological advancements, social disruption, and the complexity of 21st-century challenges demand higher education to undertake fundamental transformations in learning systems and curriculum development (Septikasari and Frasandy 2018). Universities are no longer sufficiently oriented to the mastery of knowledge alone, but are required to produce graduates who have the ability to think critically, creatively, communicatively, collaboratively, and have strong character and integrity (Prihadi 2018)(Aji 2016). In the Indonesian context, these challenges are increasingly relevant in line with national commitment to realizing the vision **Indonesia Gold 2045**, namely the creation of superior human resources who are globally competitive, have noble character, and have an Indonesian personality.

However, the reality of higher education shows that there is a gap between academic achievement and the formation of student character. Learning tends to focus on cognitive aspects and technical skills, while the internalization of spiritual and moral values is often marginalized (Abdussalam et al. 2021). As a result, graduates have the potential to excel intellectually but are weak in the dimensions of ethics, social responsibility, and spiritual sensitivity (Wijaya & Hariani, 2015). This condition is a serious challenge for universities, especially Islamic-based educational institutions, to formulate learning models and curricula that are able to integrate Islamic values with the demands of global competence.

Islamic values actually have great potential as the foundation for the development of holistic education. Concept *Ulul Ilmi* in the Qur'an depicts a knowledgeable human being who not only has intellectual intelligence, but also spiritual depth, sharpness of thought, and moral awareness (Budiyanti, Rizal, and Sumarna 2016). The Ulul Ilmi model represents the integration of faith, knowledge, and charity that is relevant to be used as a learning paradigm in higher education. This model emphasizes the importance of a learning process that encourages reflection, critical reasoning, moral development, and the practice of knowledge in real life.

On the other hand, 21st century skills that include critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy are the main competencies that must be possessed by higher education graduates in order to be able to adapt to global changes (Septikasari and Frasandy 2018). The challenge is how these skills are developed without neglecting Islamic values as an ethical and spiritual foundation. Therefore, a curriculum approach is needed that is not dichotomous between modern science and religious values, but integrative and transformative.

Previous studies have highlighted the dynamic transformation of cultural and religious values in contemporary society. Islami et al. (2021) found that Sundanese local wisdom values such as politeness, mutual respect, and reverence for elders play a significant role in shaping national character, yet these values face serious challenges amid rapid technological development and social change. Similarly, Parhan, Khairulimam, and Nurfitriyani (2021) emphasized that processes of social and digital transformation have altered the modes of internalizing religious values, particularly among younger generations, without eliminating their essential spiritual substance. These findings indicate that while values remain foundational, their transmission and embodiment require adaptive educational approaches.

In line with these perspectives, other scholars argue that higher education institutions must respond to value shifts by integrating character education with 21st century competencies.

Prasetyowati et al. (2025) underline that curriculum transformation in higher education should combine ethical–religious foundations with critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy to ensure graduates remain value-oriented while being globally competitive. Likewise, Rahman (2025) stress that value-based learning models grounded in Islamic epistemology can serve as an effective framework for harmonizing spiritual depth and modern scientific reasoning in higher education.

Based on this conceptual background, this study focuses on the transformation of learning based on the Ulul Ilmi Model as an effort to integrate Islamic values and 21st century skills within higher education curriculum development. The research aims to formulate the concepts, principles, and implications of applying the Ulul Ilmi Model in a higher education curriculum capable of producing graduates with strong character, high competence, and readiness to contribute to the realization of Golden Indonesia 2045. The results of this study are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of learning policies and instructional practices in higher education, particularly in the context of Islamic education

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach using a descriptive–analytical library research design. Qualitative descriptive–analytical is a research approach that describes a phenomenon systematically and then analyzes it critically to understand meanings, relationships, and implications based on non-numerical data (Aziza et al. 2024). Qualitative research is appropriate for studies that aim to understand concepts, meanings, and values in depth rather than to measure variables statistically. Through this approach, the study seeks to explore and interpret the philosophical foundations, principles, and implications of the Ulul Ilmi Model in higher education. This approach was chosen to examine in depth the concept of the Ulul Ilmi Model and its relevance in the integration of Islamic values and 21st century skills in the development of the higher education curriculum towards a Golden Indonesia 2045. Research data were obtained from relevant primary and secondary literature sources, including Qur'anic verses and commentaries related to the concept of *ulul ilmi*, national education policy documents, as well as scientific literature on Islamic education, curriculum development, and 21st century skills. Data collection is carried out through documentation techniques by searching, selecting, and reviewing written sources that are directly related to the focus of the research. Data analysis was carried out using content analysis techniques through the stages of data reduction, theme categorization, and interpretation and synthesis of concepts to formulate a learning transformation framework based on the Ulul Ilmu Model. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation of sources by comparing various references from relevant disciplines to ensure the consistency and conceptual validity of the research findings. The results of the analysis are then used to formulate the implications of the application of the Ulul Ilmi Model in the development of an integrative, holistic, and oriented higher education curriculum that is oriented towards strengthening the character and competencies of the 21st century in order to realize a Golden Indonesia 2045.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### A. PAI Curriculum Paradigm

Etymologically, the term *curriculum* is derived from the Greek words *curir*, meaning “runner,” and *curere*, meaning “racecourse,” which were originally used in the context of athletic activities (Lase 2019). The term *curriculum* originally refers to the distance a runner must

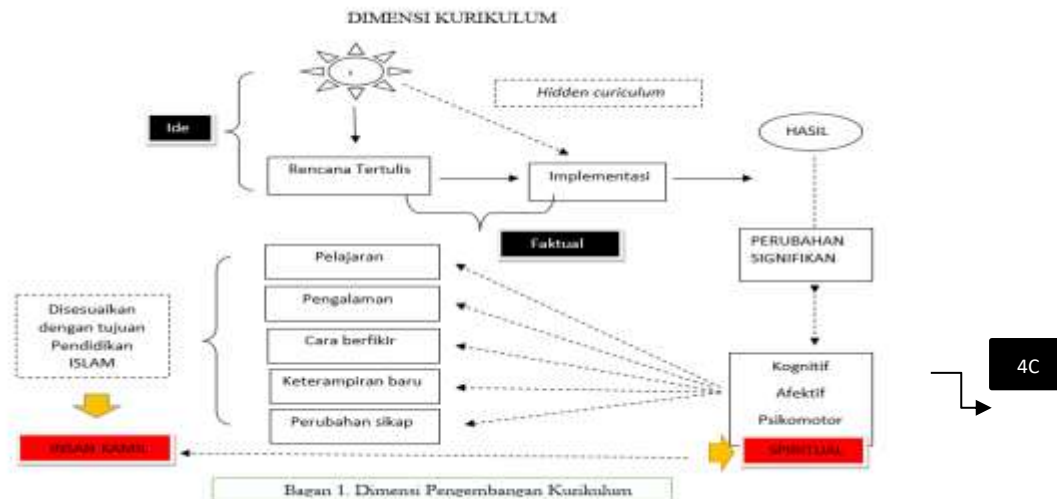
complete from the starting point to the finish line in order to obtain an award. This concept was later adapted into the educational context to represent a structured school program, encompassing the set of subjects that learners are required to undertake (Nugroho and Etikasari 2018).

In terminological terms, Ahmad Tafsir defines the curriculum in two main senses. First, it refers to a set of subjects that students are required to study at schools or higher education institutions in order to obtain a particular qualification. Second, it denotes a collection of subjects offered by an educational institution or specific academic department. More broadly, the curriculum may be understood as an educational program that systematically plans and organizes learning materials and experiences, developed in accordance with established norms and serving as a guideline for educators and learners in achieving educational objectives (Hasan 2015).

Based on various expert perspectives on the concept of the curriculum, it can be concluded that the curriculum represents a pedagogical framework that embodies educational ideas translated into practice. It is manifested through the systematic planning of objectives, content organization, learning materials, and instructional methods that serve as guidelines for the teaching and learning process. Through this framework, the curriculum is expected to promote meaningful development in learners' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Accordingly, the curriculum constitutes an integral component of education and instruction, playing a strategic role in the realization of educational goals.

As a systematically designed educational program, the curriculum comprises organized learning materials and experiences developed in accordance with prevailing norms and serves as a guideline for educators and learners in achieving educational objectives. Owing to its structured nature, the curriculum holds a distinct role and function within the educational process, particularly in shaping student development. When examined in relation to social and cultural contexts, and considering schools as social institutions, it can be identified that the curriculum performs at least three fundamental and significant roles. (Yaacob, Mahmud, and Ching 2019) in his book "*Fundamentals of Curriculum Development*" It is explained that the curriculum performs three essential roles, namely conservative, critical–evaluative, and creative roles. These roles should function in a balanced and integrated manner in order to drive educational change toward a more constructive future. In addition, the curriculum carries six key functions: the adaptive function, integrative function, differentiating function, propaedeutic function, selective function, and diagnostic function. All of these functions must be implemented comprehensively to ensure their effectiveness. The execution of these curricular functions significantly influences students' growth and development and should be grounded in philosophical, sociological, and psychological foundations. Furthermore, considerations of scientific and technological development are also necessary in curriculum design, as they align with the educational philosophy and objectives established by the respective educational institutions (Sofwan Nugraha & Supriadi and Saepul Anwar, 2014).

The concept of curriculum can be understood through several conceptual frameworks. One perspective views the curriculum as encompassing academic content, learners' educational experiences, and the structured design of learning programs. Another approach interprets the curriculum as a body of knowledge, an organized system, and a formal blueprint that guides educational practice. Additionally, some scholars propose a broader framework that positions the curriculum as an interrelated continuum, beginning with abstract ideas or concepts, translated into documented plans, implemented through instructional processes, and ultimately reflected in learning outcomes (Firman 2015). The description of the dimensions of this curriculum, the author can visualize it in the form of the following chart:



As illustrated in Chart 1, the curriculum occupies a strategic position as the core element that drives the entire educational process, given its inseparable relationship with teaching and learning activities. Within the educational framework, the curriculum functions as a conceptual instrument designed to transmit values, knowledge, and experiences from previous generations to subsequent ones, ensuring their continuity, preservation, and further development. Owing to this role, the curriculum holds a decisive position in the formulation of effective educational planning, with the expectation that its implementation aligns with predetermined objectives and contributes to meaningful transformation within the educational landscape. Consequently, curriculum development is oriented toward integrating spiritual dimensions into educational aims, so that the resulting graduates embody holistic human qualities and are capable of mastering 21st-century competencies encompassing cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and spiritual domains in support of the vision of Indonesia Emas 2045.

### B. Formulation of the Ulul Ilmi Model as a Basis for the Integration of Islamic Values and Skills in the 21st Century

Within the Ulul Ilmi model, learning is designed with a student-centered orientation. Instructional activities emphasize questioning and inquiry-based approaches, in which learners are encouraged to investigate and explore objects of study through critical and analytical processes. This approach enables students to construct understanding independently and fosters deeper, more meaningful learning experiences (Utomo 2018). Learners are expected to formulate and organize relevant questions related to the subject of study in a systematic manner, enabling them to reprocess and internalize acquired knowledge and subsequently translate it into concrete actions.

*Ulul Ilmi* is a person who has knowledge who always uses his mind to observe, study, and think critically about a phenomenon that occurs, so that his mind is able to lead to the discovery of solutions to problems that occur. According to Halpen, critical thinking is empowering cognitive skills or strategies in determining goals, this is related to the approach *Inquiry* in the learning process (Tyagita and Iriani 2018). Approach *Inquiry* is a teaching approach that seeks to lay the foundation and develop a scientific way of thinking. This approach makes students learn more on their own and develop creativity in solving problems. There are five stages taken in implementing the *Inquiry* namely: (1) Formulation of problems to be solved by students. (2) Determining provisional answers or better known as hypothesis. (3) Students look for information, data, and facts needed to answer the problem (hypothesis). (4) Draw conclusions from answers or generalizations in new situations (Fuad Hasan 2015).

In addition, there are several advantages obtained from learning that emphasizes the process of critical thinking skills, namely: (1) learning is more economical, namely that what is obtained and the teaching will last a long time in the minds of students, (2) tends to increase the

enthusiasm for learning both in educators and students, (3) it is hoped that students can have a scientific attitude, (4) and students have the ability to solve problems both during the teaching and learning process in the classroom or in facing real problems that he will experience (Ahmatika 2017). Thus, the selection of the approach *Inquiry Seen right in model applications Ulul Ilmi* in the PAI learning process at the university level, in order to support IKU that emphasizes the learning process should lead to the implementation of *Case method*.

The selection of a learning model is informed by interview findings that reflect students' learning needs and the mapping of their character development. Appropriately chosen models have the potential to optimize learning outcomes. The successful implementation of any learning model largely depends on educator competence, as educators are required to continuously develop four core competencies: pedagogical, social, personal, and professional competence. Therefore, in applying a learning model, educators are expected to employ diverse instructional strategies that effectively support the attainment of learning objectives.

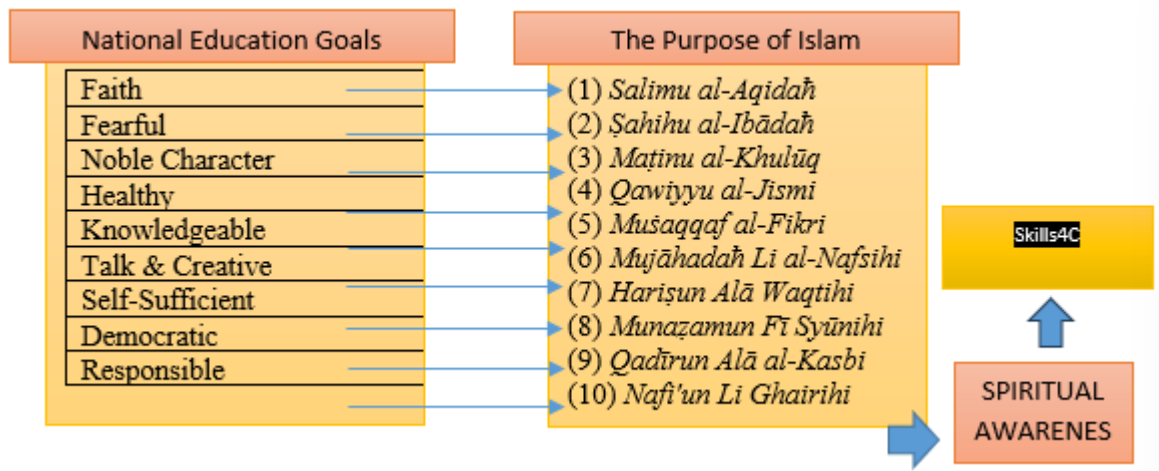
Based on its instructional orientation, the *Ulul Ilmi* model employs several strategic components. First, it involves the clear formulation of learning objectives and competency standards aimed at cultivating *Ulul Ilmi* character traits in learners. Second, it requires the selection of learning approaches that are considered effective and efficient in accordance with students' characteristics. Third, the model integrates Qur'anic-based learning principles, including *Rahmaniyyah*, *Takamuliyyah*, *Shumuliyyah*, *Tawazuniyyah*, and *Rabbaniyyah*. Fourth, it emphasizes the systematic arrangement of learning stages, procedures, methods, and techniques. Finally, it establishes norms and minimum benchmarks to evaluate learning outcomes and determine the criteria for instructional success.

The *Ulul Ilmi* model formulated by the author is structured as an integrated system in which each component functions in a complementary manner. This model adopts a student-centered approach and applies a pedagogical–spiritual strategy grounded in the five principles outlined in the preceding discussion, combined with instructional methods adjusted to the learning material. The methods employed include, first, the *uswah hasanah* approach, which emphasizes the educator's role as a moral exemplar; its effective application requires educators to demonstrate strong religious attitudes that can be internalized by students. Second, the *ibrah mau'idzah* method is utilized to convey values, lessons, and moral guidance derived from Islamic teachings within classroom learning. Third, the *targhib* and *tarhib* method is applied as a means of reinforcing character development by highlighting rewards and consequences as articulated in the Qur'an concerning commendable and reprehensible behaviors..

Technique refers to the practical manner in which a particular method is implemented, whereas tactics relate to an individual's personal style in applying methods or techniques during instruction. In the design of the *Ulul Ilmi* model, the applied techniques and tactics place emphasis on three key aspects: reinforcement in delivering the *ibrah-mau'idzah* method, affirmation in implementing the *targhib-tarhib* method, and appreciation in applying the *uswah hasanah* approach. These tactics are closely associated with educators' classroom performance, encompassing both verbal and non-verbal expressions. Consequently, this instructional pattern is conceptualized as the *Ulul Ilmi* model. The model is highly applicable to the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning process, as it is grounded in strong divine values, in line with Islamic learning principles that serve as strategic efforts to enhance the quality of education.

This orientation is consistent with the aims of national education as stipulated in Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which emphasizes the development of learners' potential to become individuals who possess faith and piety toward God Almighty, demonstrate noble character, maintain physical and mental well-being, are knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent, and capable of participating as democratic and responsible members of society (Muchsin, Sulthon, & Wahid, 2010, p. 11).

The above explanation indicates that the purpose of Islamic education built from *Ulul Ilmi* has a deeper emphasis on attitudes, namely spiritual character that will encourage abd 21 skills. The author can visualize the alignment of these goals in the form of the following chart:



**Chart 3. Alignment of National Education Goals with Islamic Goals**

The author assumes that the objectives articulated in Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System inherently reflect Islamic values. The distinctive substance of the Qur'an further enriches and strengthens these values, particularly as reflected in the concept of *Insan Kamil*, which emphasizes a profound spiritual dimension. The realization of this ideal is pursued through several interconnected spiritual stages: *mujāhadah*, understood as earnest striving to deepen awareness of Allah; *muhāsabah*, which involves reflective evaluation of acquired knowledge to ensure harmony between faith and practice; *murāqabah*, referring to conscious devotion to Allah as an expression of lived knowledge; *muhabbah*, denoting love for Allah grounded in reverence and admiration; and *ma'rifatullāh*, which signifies attaining true knowledge of Allah through the affirmation of His oneness.

This process culminates in the attainment of *ma'rifatullāh*, which aligns with the doctrine of monotheism and is consistent with the foundational principles of the Islamic education curriculum, including universality or comprehensiveness, integration with religious values, and balance among all educational components (Idris 2017). Furthermore, monotheistic values play a significant role in shaping curriculum principles across philosophical, sociological, and psychological foundations. Beyond this function, the concept of monotheism serves as the driving force behind the structural development of the Islamic education curriculum. By placing monotheism at its core, Islamic education not only maintains an organic and systemic connection with Islamic teachings but also establishes a distinct identity that differentiates it from other educational models. Consequently, Islamic Religious Education is expected to foster individuals who consistently strive to strengthen their faith, piety, and moral integrity, while actively contributing to the advancement of civilization through the mastery of 21st-century competencies in preparation for the vision of Indonesia Emas 2045.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the conceptual study and literature analysis that has been carried out, it can be concluded that the transformation of learning and the development of the higher education curriculum based on *the Ulul Ilmi Model* is a strategic need in answering the challenges of 21st century education while supporting the realization of the vision of a Golden Indonesia 2045. The curriculum does not only function as an academic tool, but also as a pedagogical

formulation that plays an important role in developing the potential of students as a whole, including cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and spiritual aspects. The Ulul Ilmi model offers an integrative paradigm that unites faith, knowledge, and charity through the strengthening of Islamic values such as monotheism, morals, scientific ethos, and spiritual awareness, which are in line with the development of 21st century skills, namely critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy. This integration affirms that Islamic values are not an obstacle to progress, but rather an ethical and spiritual foundation that strengthens students' global competence. Through a student-centered, inquiry-based, and pedagogical approach supported by Quranic pedagogic strategies, the Ulul Ilmi Model is able to encourage reflective, contextual, and meaningful learning. Thus, the Ulul Ilmi Model can be used as an alternative and transformative paradigm in the development of higher education curriculum, especially Islamic education, which is not dichotomous between religious values and the demands of the times. The implementation of this model is expected to be able to produce superior human resources with character, global competitiveness, and make a real contribution to realizing a Golden Indonesia 2045.

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