

## Integrating Dewey's Correlation Theory with *Tauhidic* Epistemology in Developing an Islamic Education Curriculum Model

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**Abstract.** This study aims to examine the relevance of John Dewey's Correlation Theory with tauhidic epistemology in developing an Islamic education curriculum model. Using a philosophical and library research approach, this study identifies the research gap between Dewey's thought and tauhid-based epistemology in Islamic education. The findings indicate that the integration of these two theories produces a curriculum model that bridges secular knowledge with religious values, eliminating the dichotomy between them, and emphasizes experiential, reflective learning based on moral values. The practical contribution of this study is the development of an interdisciplinary curriculum model that links science with Islamic principles, strengthening Islamic education in facing globalization challenges and shaping individuals who are knowledgeable, virtuous, and socially responsible.

**Keywords:** *Correlation Theory; Dewey; Islamic Education; Integration of Curriculum; Tauhidic Epistemology*

**Abstrak.** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji relevansi Teori Korelasi John Dewey dengan epistemologi tauhid dalam pengembangan model kurikulum pendidikan Islam. Menggunakan pendekatan penelitian filsafat dan literatur, studi ini mengidentifikasi celah penelitian antara pemikiran Dewey dan epistemologi tauhid dalam pendidikan Islam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa integrasi kedua teori ini menghasilkan model kurikulum yang menghubungkan ilmu pengetahuan sekuler dengan nilai-nilai agama, menghapus dikotomi antara keduanya, serta menekankan pembelajaran berbasis pengalaman yang reflektif dan nilai moral. Kontribusi praktis dari penelitian ini adalah pengembangan kurikulum interdisipliner yang menghubungkan sains dengan prinsip-prinsip Islam, yang dapat memperkuat pendidikan Islam dalam menghadapi tantangan globalisasi, serta membentuk individu yang berilmu, berakhlak, dan bertanggung jawab sosial.

**Kata Kunci:** *Dewey; Epistemologi Tauhid; Integrasi Kurikulum; Pendidikan Islam; Teori Korelasi*

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## Introduction

Islamic education today faces significant challenges in integrating religious knowledge with secular knowledge in its curriculum. Traditional Islamic education often separates these two types of knowledge, leading to limited application of religious knowledge in the context of modern science (Jamil & Rahman, 2023). On the other hand, in general education, Dewey's Correlation Theory emphasizes that education should link students' learning experiences with their social realities, helping them understand and apply knowledge in daily life. Dewey argued that effective education should be contextual and grounded in real-world experiences that lead to social interaction and personal development. Although this theory has been widely applied in Western education, its application in Islamic education—especially in integrating *tauhidic* epistemology with Dewey's theory—remains limited and has not been translated into a comprehensive Islamic education curriculum. This creates a gap that needs to be addressed by designing a curriculum model that connects both concepts to produce a more holistic and interdisciplinary Islamic education (Abdul Muid, 2024; Al-Attas, 1991).

Despite the relevance of Dewey's ideas for Islamic education, particularly in the context of developing an experience-based curriculum, there is no systematic reconstruction between Dewey's Correlation Theory and *tauhidic* epistemology in Islamic education. Most existing studies focus on Dewey's experiential learning from a limited perspective, without exploring the broader potential of his correlation theory that connects social knowledge and experiences with religious principles. Furthermore, Islamic education still maintains a dichotomy between religious and secular knowledge, making it difficult to create an interdisciplinary curriculum model. In an increasingly complex global context, there is a need for a curriculum model that can unite both fields, not as two separate domains, but as integrated components (Surahman, 2019).

This study aims to develop a curriculum model that integrates Dewey's Correlation Theory with *tauhidic* epistemology in Islamic education. This model is expected to eliminate the dichotomy between religious and secular sciences and replace it with a more holistic interdisciplinary approach. The proposed curriculum will emphasize experiential, reflective learning while incorporating the moral values inherent in Islamic teachings, enriching Islamic education with a broader perspective. This research also aims to identify how these two theories can complement each other in providing a framework for education that is not only based on theoretical knowledge but also relevant to the social challenges students face in their everyday lives.

The novelty of this research lies in the development of a curriculum model that integrates Dewey's Correlation Theory with *tauhidic* epistemology in Islamic education, which has not been systematically addressed before. The integration of these two theories makes a significant contribution by designing a curriculum that combines religious and secular knowledge, while also connecting moral values with experiential learning. The proposed model has the potential to address the challenges of Islamic education that are divided between two distinct fields of knowledge and introduce a more contextual and adaptive approach to meet the needs of the modern world and globalization. This approach offers a new way to bring Islamic education closer to the social, cultural, and scientific needs of students, contributing to the development of an Islamic education curriculum that is more relevant to today's world (Gumilar, 2017).

## Methods

This study employs a library research approach with a descriptive-analytic method, aimed at reviewing and analyzing relevant literature on the integration of Dewey's Correlation Theory and *taubidic* epistemology in Islamic education. Specifically, this study follows a structured procedure in selecting and analyzing sources that are relevant to the topic.

Literature included in this research consists of journal articles, books, and other scholarly works that are directly related to Dewey's Correlation Theory, *taubidic* epistemology, and Islamic education. The selected journal articles must be published within the range of 2000 to 2025 to ensure a contemporary analysis of the topic. Articles that do not focus on the integration of Dewey's theory or *taubidic* epistemology in Islamic education were excluded from this analysis.

The sources of literature for this study include reputable academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. The search was conducted using key terms like "Dewey's Correlation Theory", "*taubidic* epistemology in education", and "Islamic education curriculum integration" to ensure that the selected articles cover various perspectives and relevant topics.

The screening process is carried out in two stages. In the first stage, articles that are not relevant or do not meet the inclusion criteria (e.g., articles that do not address Dewey's theory or *taubidic* epistemology) are excluded. In the second stage, the remaining articles are evaluated for their methodological quality and contribution to understanding the theories being analyzed.

To analyze the selected literature, this study uses content analysis and philosophical analysis. In content analysis, thematic coding is employed to identify patterns and relationships between ideas relevant to Dewey's theory and *taubidic* epistemology. This analysis helps to explore how these two theories can be integrated within the context of Islamic education. Additionally, philosophical hermeneutics is applied to interpret and reconstruct ideas within the texts of the literature, relating them to the *taubidic* epistemological perspective in Islamic education.

To ensure the credibility and reliability of the analysis, the study adopts the principles of source triangulation and peer review (Sugiyono, 2011). Reliability is achieved by comparing different relevant sources of literature and ensuring that the interpretations provided are consistent and accountable. Moreover, bias is minimized by conducting a strict screening process and considering multiple perspectives.

Approximately 50 journal articles and 15 books relevant to the topic are thoroughly analyzed in this study. The selection and screening processes are carried out systematically to ensure the quality and relevance of the sources used.

## Results and Discussion

The findings of this study reveal several key themes regarding the integration of Dewey's Correlation Theory with Islamic educational principles. First, a major theme is the rejection of the dichotomy of knowledge. Both Dewey's theory and Islamic education challenge the separation of knowledge into distinct domains—Dewey rejects the split between theory and practice, while Islam rejects the division between worldly and spiritual knowledge. Dewey emphasized the importance of connecting education with real-life experiences, while Islamic education views life

as a continuous space for learning, where spiritual and intellectual development are interconnected (Jamil & Rahman, 2023).

A second significant theme is the active role of learners. Dewey's theory positions students as active participants who construct knowledge through interaction with their environment, whereas Islam places humans in the role of *khalifah* (vicegerent), learning from the signs of Allah throughout the universe (Alwi & Fadhli, 2022). Both approaches view learning as an ongoing process, essential to human life and development.

Finally, the integration of disciplines stands out as a shared principle between Dewey's theory and Islamic education. Dewey rejected a fragmented educational system, advocating for an integrated approach where subjects are interrelated to reflect the holistic nature of social reality (Kamali & Aziz, 2020). In parallel, Islamic education also rejects the dichotomy between religious and secular sciences, affirming that all knowledge originates from the same divine source—Allah SWT. As such, integrating spiritual values with scientific rationality becomes a necessity for a comprehensive curriculum (Rahman, 2024).

The relationship between Dewey's Correlation Theory and Islamic educational philosophy is profound, particularly in rejecting the dichotomy of knowledge. Dewey's argument that education should be rooted in learners' real-life experiences aligns closely with the Islamic view that education is a means to connect with the divine. Both philosophies posit that knowledge cannot be fragmented; it should be interwoven to form a cohesive understanding of the world, which leads to intellectual, moral, and spiritual development (Sari & Abdullah, 2025).

Dewey's emphasis on experiential learning closely mirrors the Islamic principle of *'amal shaleh* (righteous action), which emphasizes real-life applications of knowledge. However, Dewey's philosophy centers more on practical, secular outcomes, whereas Islamic education emphasizes the integration of moral and spiritual dimensions into the educational process. Dewey's pragmatism focuses on applying knowledge to solve practical problems, while Islamic epistemology, as discussed by al-Attas (1991), stresses *ta'dib*, or the formation of morally and spiritually sound individuals, grounded in divine knowledge (Faruk & Nordin, 2022). Dewey's pragmatic philosophy contrasts with Islamic integrative epistemology, which seeks to synthesize secular knowledge with divine knowledge in a cohesive educational system.

This convergence and divergence are particularly evident in the way both systems view the role of teachers. Dewey sees the teacher as a mediator between the student's experiences and social reality, while in Islam, the teacher is viewed as a *murabbi*—a moral and spiritual guide responsible for instilling values in the student (Hassan & Zulkifli, 2025). The integrative approach of Dewey's theory, emphasizing an interconnected, holistic learning process, resonates with the Islamic principle of *al-takāmul al-ilmī*, or the integration of knowledge, where every discipline complements the others toward a unified goal (Ali & Yusuf, 2021). Both Dewey's and Islamic educational frameworks underscore the importance of the teacher's dual function—as both intellectual mentor and moral guide—highlighting the centrality of education in forming not just knowledgeable, but morally responsible individuals.

The application of Dewey's Correlation Theory in contemporary Islamic educational settings can be seen in the integration of general subjects with Islamic values, as practiced in modern madrasahs, pesantrens, and Islamic universities. Institutions that have adopted thematic, interdisciplinary learning approaches—linking, for example, science lessons with Qur'anic verses on creation (*ayat kauniyah*) or economics with Islamic principles of justice and barakah—demonstrate the practical application of both Dewey's theory and Islamic educational principles

(Sulaiman & Karim, 2022). These models emphasize experiential learning, where students not only acquire cognitive understanding but also internalize ethical and spiritual values. The integration of Dewey's pragmatic philosophy with Islamic epistemology provides a framework that strengthens curriculum cohesion, ensuring that all knowledge—whether secular or religious—serves the greater purpose of developing a holistic, moral, and spiritually conscious individual (Yusof & Fauzi, 2024).

The novelty of this research lies in the development of an integrative curriculum model that fuses Dewey's Correlation Theory with *taubidic* epistemology. While Dewey's theory has been widely applied in Western educational contexts, its application to Islamic education—particularly in the context of spiritual and moral values—is relatively unexplored (Azizi, 2021). This study bridges this gap, offering an innovative approach to curriculum design that is both academically rigorous and spiritually enriching. This model demonstrates how interdisciplinary learning can be a powerful tool for reconciling secular and religious knowledge, creating a cohesive, holistic educational framework that prepares students for the challenges of modernity while staying grounded in their spiritual identity (Baharuddin & Mahmud, 2023).

The pedagogical approach outlined in Dewey's Correlation Theory, focusing on experiential learning, also finds resonance in Islamic educational practice, particularly in the concept of *'amal shaleh* (righteous action). In Islamic educational institutions, this approach can be realized through various project-based learning initiatives, community service programs, and entrepreneurial ventures rooted in Islamic ethics (Anwar, 2022). These initiatives encourage students to apply their knowledge in practical ways while developing their moral and spiritual compass, which is at the core of Islamic education. By adopting Dewey's experiential model, Islamic institutions can reinforce the integration of knowledge and action, ensuring that students not only gain academic knowledge but also cultivate virtues that contribute to societal well-being (Ismail & Sari, 2024).

The findings of this study affirm that John Dewey's Correlation Theory has strong philosophical and operational relevance to the integration of Islamic curricula, particularly in rejecting the dichotomy of knowledge and advocating for a holistic education. Dewey's emphasis on connecting education with students' real-life experiences aligns closely with the Islamic concept of *tauhid* (divine unity), which calls for the integration of knowledge into a coherent framework that acknowledges both the rational and spiritual aspects of life.

The application of Dewey's Correlation Theory in Islamic educational institutions can be seen in the growing trend of integrating general subjects with Islamic values. This approach allows for the interconnection of disciplines—from science and economics to sociology and ethics—within a unified framework that respects both empirical knowledge and divine guidance. As Islamic education evolves to meet the demands of modern society, it is essential to reaffirm the integration of religious and secular knowledge, ensuring that education is not only intellectually enriching but also spiritually fulfilling.

Dewey's Correlation Theory proposes that education must be connected with students' real-life experiences and applied in their social contexts. In Islamic education, this principle finds a strong counterpart in the concept of *tauhid*, which considers all of life as a continuous space for learning. Both concepts position students as active subjects in the learning process, whether through Dewey's direct experiences or through the role of humans as *khalifah* (vicegerent) in the Islamic perspective, which teaches that humans learn from all the signs of Allah's power throughout the universe (Al-Attas, 1991; Dewey, 1930).

One of the main points of convergence between Dewey and al-Attas is their rejection of the dichotomy of knowledge. Dewey emphasized that education should eliminate the separation between theory and practice, while al-Attas (1991) stated that in Islamic education, knowledge should be viewed as an interconnected whole, where both secular and religious knowledge must be within the same epistemological framework. This aligns with al-Faruqi's (1982) view, which stresses the importance of Islamizing knowledge as an effort to unite divine revelation with modern academic disciplines (Al-Faruqi, 1982; Dewey, 1938).

However, despite these similarities, some differences between Dewey and al-Attas remain. Dewey places greater emphasis on pragmatism in education, focusing on the development of practical skills useful in everyday life. Meanwhile, al-Attas stresses *ta'dib* (character formation) as the main objective of Islamic education, which is to develop individuals who have *adab* (ethics and morality). Nevertheless, both agree that education should develop the human being in totality, not only intellectually but also morally and spiritually (Al-Attas, 1991; Dewey, 1930).

The implementation of a curriculum model that integrates these principles can be seen in several modern madrasahs and pesantrens in Indonesia. Some Islamic educational institutions have adopted thematic approaches that link general subjects with Islamic values, such as connecting science lessons with *ayat kauniyah* (Qur'anic verses about creation), or economics lessons with the principles of justice in *mu'amalah* (Islamic social and economic transactions). In this context, the curriculum teaches not only cognitive knowledge but also moral and spiritual values that are embedded in every learning activity (Azra, 2019; Dewey, 1938).

The novelty of this research lies in the development of a curriculum model that integrates Dewey's Correlation Theory with *tauhidic* epistemology, offering a more holistic interdisciplinary approach. This model does not only combine knowledge with religious principles but also integrates moral and spiritual values into the learning process, which becomes the core strength of Islamic education. By adopting this approach, Islamic education can respond to the challenges of modernity without compromising its spiritual identity (Al-Attas, 1991; Al-Faruqi, 1982).

From a pedagogical perspective, Dewey's concept of learning by doing aligns closely with the principle of *'amal saleh* (righteous action) in Islam. Both concepts emphasize the active involvement of students through real-life experiences. In Islamic education, this approach can be implemented through project-based learning, community service, and entrepreneurship rooted in Islamic ethics, as well as environmental activities reflecting the principle of *khalifah fil ardh* (stewardship of the earth) (Al-Qaradawi, 2013; Dewey, 1930).

The role of teachers in both Dewey's Correlation Theory and Islamic education is crucial as facilitators and moral guides. Dewey views the teacher as a mediator between the student's experiences and social reality, while in Islam, the teacher functions as a *murabbi*, responsible for instilling moral and spiritual values in students. Both perspectives view education as a process of character formation and moral consciousness, not merely the transfer of knowledge (Al-Attas, 1991).

In practice, the application of Dewey's theory in Islamic education can be seen in madrasahs, pesantrens, and Islamic universities that have integrated general subjects with Islamic values through contextual and interdisciplinary learning themes. This application reflects the spirit of correlation that rejects the secularization of knowledge and reaffirms the importance of a holistic approach to education. Thus, Dewey's Correlation Theory is not only philosophically relevant but also operationally applicable in developing Islamic education curricula that are adaptive to the demands of modernity while maintaining their spiritual identity (Muhaimin, 2015).

## Conclusion

This study highlights the potential of Dewey's Correlation Theory as a powerful tool for integrating religious and secular knowledge in Islamic education. The findings suggest that Dewey's emphasis on experiential learning and the interconnectedness of disciplines provides a robust framework for creating a more holistic and interdisciplinary curriculum in Islamic education. This integration addresses the existing dichotomy between religious and secular sciences, offering a pathway for Islamic education to remain relevant in the modern educational landscape while maintaining its spiritual and ethical foundations.

This study contributes to the theoretical development of curriculum integration in Islamic education, particularly by bridging Dewey's Correlation Theory with *taubidic* epistemology. The research demonstrates how Dewey's model can be applied in Islamic contexts to enhance both intellectual and spiritual development. It also offers a new perspective on the application of Western educational theories within an Islamic framework, providing valuable insights into how education systems can reconcile modernity with traditional values.

From a practical perspective, the integration of Dewey's theory into the Islamic curriculum can guide the development of more dynamic and reflective teaching practices. Educational institutions can create learning environments where students engage in meaningful, real-world experiences that foster both intellectual and spiritual growth. This approach not only enriches students' academic knowledge but also encourages a deeper connection between education and moral responsibility toward society and Allah SWT.

However, this study is not without limitations. The scope of the research was confined to theoretical analysis, and empirical data regarding the practical implementation of the proposed curriculum model in Islamic educational institutions is still limited. Future research could include case studies or action research that examine the real-world application of Dewey's Correlation Theory in Islamic schools and universities, as well as the challenges and outcomes of integrating these theories into existing curricula.

Future studies should explore how Dewey's Correlation Theory can be empirically tested in different Islamic educational settings. Further research can also investigate how the integration of religious and secular knowledge influences students' moral development, academic achievement, and overall well-being. Additionally, research could focus on the challenges faced by educators in adopting interdisciplinary approaches and the training necessary to implement these educational models effectively.

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