

## APPLICATION OF THE EKOLISTIC WAY CURRICULUM IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LEARNING TO SHAPE STUDENTS' CHARACTER AT MA'HAD TEE BEE SURABAYA

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### Abstract

This study aims to describe and analyze the application of The Ekolistic Way Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning and its impact on shaping students' character at Ma'had Tee Bee Surabaya. The research approach used is descriptive qualitative with data collection methods through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies. The results show that this curriculum is implemented holistically through the integration of three main pillars: (1) making God the center (spiritual), (2) humanizing humans (social), and (3) naturalizing nature (ecological). The learning process is not only cognitive but also emphasizes exemplary behavior, habituation, and the creation of a contextual educational environment. The character formed in students reflects values such as discipline, empathy, social responsibility, and environmental care. The success of the curriculum implementation is supported by community commitment, the exemplary role of central figures, and a sustainable mentoring system. This study concludes that The Ekolistic Way Curriculum can be a transformative character education model relevant to modern educational challenges

Keywords: the ekolistic way curriculum, islamic religious education, student character, holistic education, ma'had tee Bee

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### INTRODUCTION

Education in the modern era is confronted with multidimensional challenges, ranging from moral degradation and social disintegration to ecological crises (Zulfa, 2020). These issues indicate that education cannot be limited to the transfer of cognitive knowledge alone, but must also encompass the holistic formation of character, integrating spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions (Lickona, 1992). Character education is understood as a deliberate effort to cultivate virtues and ethical values that enable individuals to act responsibly toward themselves, others, and their environment (Lickona, 1992). However, conventional educational models often treat these dimensions in isolation,

leading to fragmented learning experiences that fail to prepare learners for complex real-world challenges.

In response, there is a growing emphasis on holistic educational frameworks that integrate values across learning domains. Several studies have explored this integrative approach from different angles. For instance, Wiliyanti (2023) emphasized the pivotal role of community participation in strengthening character education programs, though the study focused more on the social dimension outside formal curricula (Wiliyanti, 2023). Similarly, research by Zulfa (2020) highlighted the critical link between education quality, human resource development, and national character building, underscoring the systemic nature of character formation. From an Islamic philosophical perspective, Nasr (1996) provided a foundational argument for viewing environmental stewardship as an integral part of religious consciousness, offering a theoretical bridge between spirituality and ecology. However, while these studies contribute valuable insights, there remains a paucity of empirical research examining how these diverse dimensions are systematically operationalized within a single, locally-developed curriculum framework in Islamic educational institutions.

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in Indonesia have long served as centers for character education based on religious and moral values. These institutions possess the cultural and structural potential to develop integrative learning models that align spiritual teachings with social and ecological consciousness. Within this context, Ma'had Tee Bee Surabaya has pioneered the implementation of The Ekolistic Way Curriculum, a framework developed from the philosophical insights of KH. Miftachul Ludfie Muhammad. This curriculum is structured around three foundational pillars:

- (1) Making God the Center (spiritual dimension)
- (2) Humanizing Humans (social dimension).
- (3) Naturalizing Nature (ecological dimension).

These pillars are systematically integrated into the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum, aiming to foster a balanced, ethically grounded, and environmentally aware generation.

Furthermore, the curriculum's approach aligns with behavioral theories such as Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior, which posits that behavioral change is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control—all of which are shaped through the curriculum's holistic and experiential methods (Ajzen, 2005). Theoretically, this approach resonates with social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), which underscores the role of social interaction and cultural context in shaping cognitive and moral development. Furthermore, experiential learning theory (Kolb, 2014) supports the curriculum's emphasis on learning through direct engagement, reflection, and application. The curriculum also aligns with the concept of communities of practice (Wenger, 1999), where learning occurs through participation in shared, value-driven activities within the *pesantren* environment.

This study, therefore, seeks to address the identified research gap by investigating the implementation of this innovative curriculum in IRE learning at Ma'had Tee Bee Surabaya. Specifically, the research aims to:

- (1) Describe the structure and content of The Ekolistic Way Curriculum in IRE
- (2) Analyze its role in shaping students' character
- (3) Identify the supporting factors and challenges in its execution.

By examining this pedagogical model, this study contributes to the broader discourse on holistic and contextual character education, offering insights that may inform curriculum development in diverse educational settings.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design at Ma'had Tee Bee Surabaya. Data were collected through three main techniques:

1. In-depth interviews with 14 informants consisting of caregivers (2 people), teachers (8 people), and senior students (4 people).
2. Participatory observation of IRE learning processes and dormitory life dynamics over 3 months.
3. Documentation studies of curriculum books, institutional archives, activity photos, and students' daily notes.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman through stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M, 1994). Data validity was strengthened by source and method triangulation.

## **RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Research Result**

Based on data analysis, the research findings can be grouped into three main aspects: curriculum form, implementation patterns, and impact on student character.

#### **1. Form and Content of The Ekolistic Way Curriculum**

The Ekolistic Way Curriculum at Ma'had Tee Bee is based on the works of KH. Miftachul Ludfie, especially the book "The Ekolistic Way" (Luthfi, 2016), which is integrated into IRE materials and local content. The curriculum is structured in stages (ULA equivalent to elementary, WUSTHA to junior high, ULYA to senior high) with materials emphasizing three dimensions: spiritual, social, and ecological. IRE learning is not only focused on understanding religious texts but also on applying values in real life. For example, students are taught the concept of khalifah fil ardh (Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 30), which is then implemented in greening and environmental conservation activities.

#### **2. Curriculum Implementation in IRE Learning**

The curriculum is implemented through holistic and contextual approaches. The learning process involves:

- a) Exemplary (uswah hasanah): Teachers and caregivers serve as models in applying Ekolistic values.
- b) Habituation (habit formation): Values such as discipline, honesty, and environmental care are habituated through daily activities in the dormitory.
- c) Experiential learning: Students are directly involved in social and environmental projects, such as mutual cooperation, waste recycling, and community service. Observation results show that this method is effective in internalizing character values. Students not only understand concepts theoretically but are also able to apply them in social interactions and environmental care.

#### **3. Impact on Student Character Formation**

The character formed in students reflects the three curriculum pillars:

- a) Strong spirituality: Students show discipline in worship, trust in God (tawakkal), and deep faith.
- b) Social-empathetic attitudes: Formation of respect, cooperation, empathy, and social responsibility.
- c) Ecological care: Students are active in maintaining cleanliness, planting plants, and managing resources sustainably. Interview data with teachers and caregivers confirm that this curriculum successfully shapes students who are not only academically intelligent but also virtuous and sensitive to the environment.

#### 4. Supporting Factors and Challenges

The success of curriculum implementation is supported by:

- a) Strong commitment from the entire pesantren community.
- b) Exemplary role of central figures (Romo Guru, caregivers, and teachers).
- c) Conducive pesantren environment as a community of practice.

Challenges faced include

- a) Heterogeneity of students' backgrounds requiring more personal mentoring.
- b) Limited facilities for ecological activities.
- c) Dependence on central figures requiring regeneration strategies.

#### Discussion

Based on the research findings, the implementation of The Ekolistic Way Curriculum at Ma'had Tee Bee Surabaya demonstrates a model of character education that is both holistic and theoretically grounded. This discussion interprets the findings through the lens of the key theoretical frameworks referenced in the introduction, namely Lickona's character education theory, Vygotsky's social constructivism, Kolb's experiential learning, Wenger's communities of practice, and Nasr's view on religion and nature.

#### 1. **The Integration of Spiritual, Social, and Ecological Dimensions: A Theoretical Synthesis**

The curriculum's tri-pillar structure spiritual, social, and ecological provides a practical framework for integrated character education. This integration aligns directly with Lickona's (1992) model, which posits that character formation requires the harmonious development of moral knowing (cognitive understanding), moral feeling (emotional engagement), and moral action (behavioral manifestation). In this context:

- a. Moral Knowing is cultivated through the study of religious texts and ecological principles within the IRE syllabus, providing students with the intellectual foundation for their values.
- b. Moral Feeling is nurtured through the emotional resonance of communal worship, social activities, and direct interaction with nature, fostering empathy, love for God's creation, and social responsibility.
- c. Moral Action is realized through concrete practices such as congregational prayer, mutual cooperation (gotong royong), and environmental stewardship projects.

This holistic approach also resonates with Nasr's (1996) assertion that religion provides an ontological framework for understanding and caring for the natural order (Nasr, 1996). By framing ecological care as a form of worship (ibadah), the curriculum elevates environmental responsibility from a secular duty to a spiritual imperative.

**Table 1.** Implementation of Three Pillars of The Ekolistic Way Curriculum in IRE Learning

Curriculum Pillar	Activity Form	Data Source	Observation Results
Spiritual (Making God the Center)	Congregational prayer, Al-Qur'an recitation,	Interview with caregiver (RM1/W/G/5/4/2025)	Students show discipline and solemnity in worship

Curriculum Pillar	Activity Form	Data Source	Observation Results
	morning-evening dzikir		
Social (Humanizing Humans)	Mutual cooperation, social service, group discussions	Participatory observation (April 2025)	Growth of empathy and cooperation among students
Ecological (Naturalizing Nature)	Greening, waste recycling, garden management	Participatory observation and field notes (April 2025)	Students actively maintain cleanliness and plant trees

## 2. The Pesantren as a Community of Practice: The Role of Exemplars and Habituation

The success of the curriculum is deeply rooted in the social architecture of the pesantren, which functions as a robust community of practice (Wenger, 1999). Learning occurs not in isolation but through sustained participation in the shared rituals, norms, and daily life of the institution. Within this community, the role of teachers and caregivers as More Knowledgeable Others (MKO) is crucial (Vygotsky, 1978). Their exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*) provides a living model within the students' Zone of Proximal Development, scaffolding their moral and behavioral growth. This aligns with Vygotsky's emphasis on social interaction as the primary driver of cognitive and affective development. Furthermore, systematic habituation transforms abstract values into ingrained habits. The daily routines of cleanliness, punctuality, and collective worship are not merely rules but embodied practices that shape character through repetition and social reinforcement as it seen in table 2.

**Table 2.** Examples of Exemplary Behavior and Habituation in Pesantren Life

Value Instilled	Form of Teacher Exemplary	Form of Student Habituation	Data Source
Honesty	Teacher is always honest in speech and action	Students are encouraged to admit mistakes and avoid lying	Interview with teacher (RM1/W/IW/3/3/2025)
Discipline	Teacher is punctual in teaching and worship	Students follow activity schedules orderly	Activity schedule observation

Value Instilled	Form of Teacher Exemplary	Form of Student Habituation	Data Source
Environmental Care	Teacher participates in environmental cleaning activities	Students regularly clean dormitories and plant trees	Participatory observation (April 2025)

### 3. Experiential Learning as the Engine for Internalization

The curriculum's methodology strongly embodies Kolb's (2014) experiential learning cycle. Knowledge transmission is coupled with direct experience, ensuring deeper internalization. For instance, learning about the concept of *khalifah fil ardh* (Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 30) is not confined to classroom discussion (Abstract Conceptualization). Students engage in tree planting (Concrete Experience), reflect on its environmental and spiritual benefits (Reflective Observation), and then initiate new projects like waste management (Active Experimentation). This cycle ensures that values are not merely understood but are lived and refined through action, leading to authentic character development.

**Table 3.** Siklus Experiential Learning in Ecological Activities

Experiential Learning Stage	Student Activity	Results Achieved
Concrete Experience	Students directly participate in planting trees and managing waste	Real experience involving senses
Reflective Observation	Students discuss the benefits of the activity for the environment	Growth of awareness about the importance of preserving nature
Abstract Conceptualization	Teacher links the activity with Qur'anic verses (Q.S. Ar-Rum: 41)	Conceptual understanding of ecological responsibility in Islam
Active Experimentation	Students design cleanliness projects in other areas	Ability to apply concepts in new contexts

### 4. Challenges and Pathways for Sustainable Implementation

While theoretically coherent and practically effective, the curriculum's implementation faces challenges that require strategic management. The heterogeneity of student backgrounds calls for differentiated mentoring, aligning with Vygotsky's concept

of tailoring support to individual ZPDs. Furthermore, the strong reliance on central figures poses a sustainability risk. To institutionalize the curriculum beyond charismatic leadership, a systematic approach is needed. This includes codifying teaching practices, establishing continuous teacher training programs, and strengthening peer-learning mechanisms within the community of practice to ensure the transfer of ethos across generations of educators.

## CONCLUSION

The Ekolistic Way Curriculum has proven effective as a holistic and integrative character education model. Through exemplary behavior, habituation, and contextual learning approaches, this curriculum successfully shapes students' character that is strong spiritually, socially, and ecologically. Its implementation at Ma'had Tee Bee shows that integrating Islamic values with environmental awareness can answer modern educational challenges. For sustainability, it is necessary to strengthen mentoring systems, diversify learning strategies, and institutionalize values to avoid dependence on individual figures.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

For other educational institutions, The Ekolistic Way Curriculum can be adopted by adjusting to the local context. For further researchers, it is recommended to explore the long-term impact of this curriculum on students' lives after pesantren and its effectiveness in various educational settings.

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