



DECONSTRUCTING ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM: A PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE ANALYSIS OF SPIRITUAL VALUE REDUCTION

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the reduction of spiritual values in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum within contemporary Islamic educational practice through a philosophy of science perspective. It aims to deconstruct the epistemological, ontological, and axiological foundations that shape the current curriculum and contribute to the marginalization of spiritual dimensions. Employing a qualitative philosophical inquiry with a critical-reflective paradigm, this study utilizes a deconstructive approach inspired by Jacques Derrida and is based on document and textual analysis of curriculum materials and relevant scholarly works. The findings reveal that the IRE curriculum is dominated by cognitive and positivistic orientations, resulting in a shift from transformative to merely informative learning. This condition leads to the formalization of religious knowledge, where spiritual internalization is weakened and reduced to normative understanding. Epistemologically, the curriculum reflects a dichotomy between religious and general knowledge, while axiologically it fails to cultivate holistic character formation. The study implies the need for a philosophical reconstruction of the IRE curriculum by integrating cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions to restore its role as a transformative educational process grounded in Islamic values.

Keywords: Curriculum Deconstruction, Islamic Education, Islamic Epistemology, Philosophy of Science, Spiritual Values

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in Indonesia, particularly through Islamic Religious Education (IRE), is normatively intended to cultivate faithful, morally grounded, and spiritually conscious students (Abdellah, 2020). However, contemporary IRE practices remain largely dominated by cognitive-oriented and formalistic learning, limiting the development of reflective spirituality and ethical consciousness among students. Within this framework, IRE is not merely intended as a process of knowledge transmission, but as a transformative educational endeavor aimed at shaping students' religious consciousness and ethical character (Abdullah et al., 2023).

However, in contemporary educational practice, a significant shift has occurred in which the IRE curriculum is increasingly reduced to the transmission of cognitive and normative knowledge (Aini et al., 2025). The affective, spiritual, and transcendental dimensions receive insufficient attention, resulting in a learning process that emphasizes knowing rather than being (Achruh et al., 2024). Consequently, religious education often produces students who understand religious doctrines conceptually yet demonstrate limited spiritual internalization in everyday attitudes, ethical behavior, and social responsibility. This condition reflects the persistence of formalistic learning approaches that prioritize knowledge transmission over transformative spiritual formation.

This phenomenon is further intensified by globalization and digital transformation, which increasingly orient education toward instrumental rationality, measurable achievement, and technical competencies. As a result, reflective and spiritual dimensions of learning are frequently marginalized within contemporary educational practices. As a result, various moral challenges emerge, including declining religious sensitivity, the rise of consumerist culture, and ethical crises within digital spaces (Shalehah, Kamila Rahma et al., 2025). These developments indicate that the problem of IRE is not merely pedagogical, but also deeply philosophical.

Moreover, this condition cannot be separated from the persistent dichotomy of knowledge within the national education system, where religious sciences are separated from general sciences. Such separation contributes to the marginalization of spiritual values within curriculum structures, positioning religious knowledge as an isolated discipline rather than an integrated worldview guiding ethical and social life (Kharisma et al., 2025). Consequently, Islamic education experiences epistemic fragmentation that weakens the integration of knowledge, spirituality, and morality.

In addition, the implementation of IRE learning remains largely verbalistic, teacher-centered, and insufficiently supported by transformative pedagogical

innovation. Learning activities commonly emphasize memorization, textual explanation, and normative instruction while providing limited opportunities for dialogical learning, critical reflection, experiential engagement, and contextual meaning-making among students. Such pedagogical tendencies reflect a fundamental contradiction between the philosophical ideals of Islamic education, namely the formation of *insan kamil* (the holistic human being), and the practical orientation of formal education, which increasingly operates within pragmatic, instrumental, and materialistic frameworks (Aljanazrah et al., 2022). In this context, Islamic education risks losing its emancipatory and humanistic functions because spirituality is treated merely as symbolic knowledge rather than as a transformative force capable of shaping students' worldview, ethical consciousness, and social responsibility.

Previous studies have attempted to reconstruct the IRE curriculum through curriculum reform, digital integration, and pedagogical innovation. However, most studies remain focused on technical and instructional aspects rather than examining the deeper epistemological foundations of Islamic education. These studies emphasize the importance of integrating Islamic values with modern pedagogical approaches, strengthening digital literacy, and promoting character education (Ali et al., 2024). While these contributions are valuable, they predominantly focus on technical and methodological aspects of curriculum development (Intan Berliana et al., 2025).

However, such approaches often overlook the epistemological and philosophical assumptions underlying the construction and orientation of the curriculum itself. The curriculum is frequently treated as a neutral and technical entity, rather than as a product shaped by specific epistemological, ontological, and axiological assumptions (Putra, 2022). This limitation reveals a critical gap in the literature, particularly regarding the limited exploration of how modern epistemological paradigms shape the orientation and objectives of Islamic Religious Education within formal schooling.

Specifically, critical inquiry into how positivistic paradigms influence the epistemological structure and pedagogical orientation of IRE remains limited. This study therefore seeks to examine the epistemological foundations of IRE and the influence of modern positivistic paradigms on contemporary religious education. The dominance of positivistic epistemology, which prioritizes objectivity, formal rationality, and empirical measurement, has contributed to the marginalization of subjective, reflective, and transcendental dimensions of knowledge (Abedi Sarvestani, 2025). As a consequence, previous efforts at curriculum reconstruction

risk remaining superficial, as they do not address the foundational assumptions that shape the curriculum (Dendodi et al., 2024).

In response to this gap, this study proposes a deconstructive approach grounded in the philosophy of science to critically examine the underlying structures and paradigms of the IRE curriculum. This approach seeks not only to identify the manifestations of spiritual value reduction but also to uncover its philosophical roots, thereby opening new possibilities for a more integrative and transformative reconstruction of the curriculum.

Therefore, this study aims to deconstruct the IRE curriculum through a philosophy of science perspective in order to analyze the reduction of spiritual values in contemporary Islamic educational practice. Specifically, it seeks to: (1) deconstruct the structural and paradigmatic dimensions of the IRE curriculum; (2) analyze the philosophical roots of spiritual value reduction; (3) identify its implications for students' character formation; and (4) propose recommendations for reconstructing the curriculum based on holistic spiritual values.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a philosophical inquiry design (Creswell, 2016), aiming to deconstruct the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum through the lens of philosophy of science in order to uncover the reduction of spiritual values in contemporary Islamic educational practice (Bakker, 2011). The study is grounded in a critical-reflective paradigm that seeks to examine the underlying assumptions embedded within the construction of the curriculum, particularly across ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions. This approach enables the researcher not only to describe the phenomenon but also to critically interrogate the structures of knowledge that underpin educational practices. In this context, the study adopts a deconstructive approach inspired by Jacques Derrida to reveal latent meanings and epistemological biases within the IRE curriculum.

The data sources in this study consist of qualitative materials obtained through document analysis and library research, including the Indonesian Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum, national curriculum frameworks, secondary-level IRE textbooks, educational policy documents issued by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and scholarly literature on curriculum development, Islamic educational philosophy, and the epistemology of religious education. These documents were purposively selected to examine how philosophical and positivistic paradigms shape the epistemological orientation, curriculum structure, and pedagogical practices of Islamic Religious Education

within formal schooling contexts. (Hamzah, 2020). Data collection techniques involve document analysis and textual analysis to identify conceptual structures, embedded values, and epistemological tendencies within the IRE curriculum (Alhamid & Anufia, 2019). This process is further enriched by engaging with the intellectual contributions of prominent Islamic scholars such as Attas, (1999) and Al Ghazali, (2003), which serve as normative foundations for understanding spirituality-based education.

Data analysis was conducted through an interpretive-critical approach involving data reduction, document classification, thematic categorization, and critical philosophical interpretation of curriculum texts, educational policies, and scholarly literature to examine how positivistic and modern paradigms shape the epistemological orientation, curriculum structure, and pedagogical practices of Islamic Religious Education (Miles and Huberman., 2020). The analysis focuses on three principal domains within the philosophy of science: ontology (the nature of knowledge within the IRE curriculum), epistemology (the processes of acquiring and transmitting knowledge), and axiology (the values and purposes of education). To ensure validity and credibility, the study employs source and theoretical triangulation, as well as researcher reflexivity in interpreting the data (Arikunto & Jabar, 2014). Through this methodological framework, the study is expected to generate a deep and critical understanding of the problem of spiritual value reduction in the IRE curriculum, while also providing a conceptual foundation for a more integrative and transformative curriculum reconstruction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Reduction of Spiritual Values in the Structure of the IRE Curriculum

The findings of this analysis indicate that the issue at hand is not merely a technical problem of curriculum design, but rather reflects a fundamental paradigmatic crisis within contemporary Islamic educational practice. The reduction of spiritual values in the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum signifies a shift in educational orientation from being inherently transformative to merely informative (Abdillah et al., 2023). Analysis of curriculum documents indicates that Islamic Religious Education primarily emphasizes cognitive and informational dimensions of learning. Consequently, religious education often remains at the level of *knowing* the acquisition of doctrinal knowledge without progressing toward *being*, namely the internalization of spiritual values within students' ethical consciousness and everyday practices (Wakhidah & Erman, 2022). In the framework of Islamic education, however, the success of learning is not solely

measured by conceptual mastery, but by the extent to which values are internalized in students' consciousness and behavior.

Furthermore, the dominance of instructional content presented in the form of concepts, definitions, and legal norms indicates that the IRE curriculum has undergone excessive formalization. Religion is reduced to a set of rules to be understood and memorized, rather than a way of life to be experienced and internalized (Aslan & Wahyudin, 2020). This condition limits opportunities for spiritual reflection within the learning process, preventing students from acquiring authentic religious experiences. In the long term, this may result in a generation that is cognitively literate in religion but lacks spiritual depth. In other words, a gap emerges between the normative dimensions of Islamic teachings and the lived realities of students.

From the perspective of philosophy of science, this phenomenon reflects the strong influence of positivistic epistemology in shaping the IRE curriculum. Knowledge is positioned as an objective entity to be transmitted in a systematic, measurable, and standardized manner, thereby neglecting the subjective, intuitive, and transcendental dimensions of learning (Agarwal & Verma, 2023). This paradigm implicitly shifts the essence of knowledge in Islam, which is inherently integrative, encompassing reason, heart, and revelation (Putra, 2022). Such a condition has long been critiqued by Al Ghazali, (2003), who emphasized that true knowledge is that which leads to divine awareness and the purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*), rather than merely instrumental rational knowledge.

Therefore, the reduction of spiritual values in the IRE curriculum can be understood as a logical consequence of the misalignment between modern epistemological paradigms and the worldview of Islamic education. When the curriculum is constructed upon the assumption that knowledge can be separated from values and spirituality, religious education loses its essence as a process of forming a holistic human being. In this context, reconstruction efforts must go beyond pedagogical adjustments and address the philosophical foundations of the curriculum by restoring the balance between cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions. In doing so, IRE can reclaim its role as a transformative process of consciousness rather than merely a mechanism for knowledge transmission.

Deconstructing the Epistemology of the IRE Curriculum

The deconstructive analysis reveals that these findings point to a more fundamental problem, namely a distortion in the way the nature of knowledge is understood within Islamic education. The dichotomy between religious and general knowledge is not merely an issue of curricular categorization, but rather a reflection of an epistemological rupture that separates revelation from the realities of life

(Maksudin, 2015). In this context, education no longer functions as a means of integrating meaning, but instead operates as a mechanism for the differentiation of knowledge. As a consequence, students experience a disconnection between what they learn in the classroom and the social realities they encounter in their everyday lives.

At a deeper level, the deconstructive approach opens up space to interpret the curriculum as a non-neutral text, one that is embedded with interests and underlying assumptions. The findings further reveal that the privileging of formal rationality within the IRE curriculum reflects the influence of modern educational logic, which positions reason, standardization, and measurable achievement as central sources of epistemic legitimacy (Raḥmān, 2002). This orientation is reflected in curriculum structures emphasizing competency attainment and cognitive assessment while giving comparatively limited attention to reflective spirituality and ethical experience. Within the framework of philosophy of science, this signifies a reduction of the Islamic epistemological dimension, which fundamentally recognizes intuition, revelation, and spiritual experience as valid sources of knowledge (Abdusattarova, 2025). When formal rationality is elevated as the primary standard, the inner dimension central to Islamic education is consequently marginalized.

This orientation significantly reshapes the meaning of religious learning within formal schooling contexts. Analysis of curriculum objectives and learning practices shows that religion is predominantly constructed as an academic subject centered on conceptual understanding and normative compliance rather than as a reflective process that cultivates students' spiritual awareness, moral identity, and meaningful social engagement. Religion is no longer understood as a way of life integrated into human existential consciousness, but is instead reduced to an academic object of study detached from lived religious experience. From the perspective of Attas, (1999), this phenomenon reflects a condition of *loss of adab*, namely the inability to place things in their proper order within the hierarchy of knowledge. When *adab* is lost, knowledge no longer guides individuals toward truth, but instead risks producing a vacuum of meaning.

Therefore, this analysis underscores that the problem of the IRE curriculum cannot be resolved merely through methodological improvements or instructional innovations. What is required is an epistemological reconstruction that reintegrates rational, spiritual, and revelational dimensions into a coherent unity. Islamic Religious Education must be restored to its essential function as a process of cultivating *tawhidic* consciousness, in which knowledge is not only understood but also internalized and practiced (Makiah, 2021). In this way, the IRE curriculum can

function not merely as a vehicle for the transmission of knowledge, but as a medium for fostering authentic and contextually grounded religious awareness.

Conceptual Reconstruction of the IRE Curriculum Based on Spirituality

Based on the results of the deconstructive analysis, this study proposes the necessity of reconstructing the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum through the integration of cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions. The curriculum should not merely be positioned as an administrative instrument that regulates objectives, content, and assessment, but rather as a system of meaning that shapes students' orientations of thought and consciousness (Al-Razi et al., 2024). When the curriculum is designed solely to meet cognitive achievement standards, it produces learners who possess knowledge of religious teachings without necessarily embodying them as the basis for attitudes and actions. Therefore, the integration of cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions is not simply a matter of adding components, but of restructuring the curriculum so that each learning process is oriented toward a clear transformation of values (Heri & Ruswandi, 2022).

Furthermore, the findings indicate that the shift from teaching religion to experiencing religion requires more contextual, dialogical, and reflective pedagogical approaches (Agarwal & Verma, 2023). Such approaches include reflective discussion, experiential learning, and value-based inquiry that enable religious learning to function as a transformative process rather than merely the transmission of doctrinal knowledge. Education should no longer focus merely on the delivery of content, but on the creation of meaningful experiences that enable students to feel, understand, and internalize religious values within real-life contexts. In this regard, the thought of Komarudin, (2022), becomes particularly relevant, as it emphasizes the importance of balancing rationality and spirituality in the educational process. Rationality is essential for understanding teachings in a logical manner, while spirituality provides meaning and direction to such understanding. Without this balance, education risks producing individuals who are intellectually competent yet lacking in moral and spiritual depth.

Moreover, the integration of *tawhidic* values across the entire learning process serves as a foundational principle for overcoming the persistent dichotomy of knowledge. *Tawhid* should not be understood merely as a theological concept, but as an epistemological principle that unifies all forms of knowledge within a singular consciousness of divine unity (Mustofa et al., 2025). Through this approach, all learning content whether religious or secular can be oriented toward cultivating students' ontological awareness as beings in relation to God. The implication is that the IRE curriculum functions not only as a means of transmitting knowledge, but

also as a framework for shaping a holistic world view, in which knowledge, values, and action are integrated into a coherent and interconnected unity (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Implications of Spiritual Value Reduction for Students' Character Formation

The reduction of spiritual values within the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum has direct implications for students' character formation. The findings indicate that the impact of this reduction operates at the level of consciousness formation rather than merely at the level of observable behavior. When religion is taught primarily as a set of concepts and rules, students develop a declarative form of understanding they know what is right, yet lack the inner motivation to actualize it. From a rational standpoint, this occurs because the learning process fails to provide a bridge between knowledge and lived experience, preventing values from being genuinely internalized (Putri, 2022). As a result, a persistent gap emerges between religious knowledge and moral action, which, over time, undermines personal integrity.

From an axiological perspective within the philosophy of science, the goal of education extends beyond the acquisition of knowledge toward the transformation of values into habitual practices embodied in action. When the spiritual dimension is not systematically integrated, the curriculum tends to produce outcomes that are easily measurable but shallow in meaning (Mundofi, 2026). Logically, an evaluation system that prioritizes cognitive aspects will encourage learning strategies oriented toward test performance rather than character formation. This condition explains why educational outcomes often appear formalistic: students may meet academic standards, yet fail to demonstrate moral consistency in real-life contexts.

Furthermore, this situation can be understood as a crisis of meaning in religious education, where the learning process no longer connects knowledge with the existential purposes of human life. The critique of Freire, (1970) is particularly relevant here, as he argues that education which fails to cultivate critical consciousness ultimately produces individuals who are morally passive. From a rational perspective, without reflective experience and emotional engagement, religious values lack the motivating force necessary to guide behavior (Mundofi & Hayati, 2023). Therefore, restoring the function of the IRE curriculum requires strengthening learning experiences that enable students not only to understand, but also to feel and embody these values holistically in their everyday lives. This condition is further illustrated in the table below.

Table 1. Implications of Spiritual Value Reduction on Students' Character Formation

Aspect	Ideal Condition	Condition under Spiritual Value Reduction	Implications for Character Formation
Religious Understanding	Religion is understood as a system of values to be internalized and practiced	Religion is understood as normative knowledge (memorization and concepts)	A gap emerges between knowledge and behavior
Learning Orientation	Oriented toward the formation of meaning and consciousness	Oriented toward academic achievement and test results	Character formation becomes superficial and formalistic
Affective & Spiritual Dimension	Internalized through religious experience and reflection	Limited opportunities for reflection and spiritual experience	Weak moral sensitivity and empathy
Integration of Values in Life	Religious values serve as guidance in daily life	Religious values are disconnected from real-life contexts	Inconsistency between religious attitudes and social behavior
Educational Goals	Self-transformation toward morally virtuous individuals	Mere transmission of religious knowledge	Character fails to develop holistically
Moral Awareness	Emerges from internal self-awareness	Dependent on external control (rules/punishment)	Morality becomes situational and unstable
Meaning of Religious Education	A process of liberation and spiritual enlightenment	A formal academic obligation	A "crisis of meaning" in religiosity emerges

The table above clearly demonstrates that the reduction of spiritual values in the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum does not merely affect the technical aspects of the learning process, but also has direct consequences for the weakening of students' overall character formation. When the spiritual dimension is not fully integrated into the structure and practice of learning, the orientation of education shifts from the internalization of values toward a purely cognitive and formalistic transfer of knowledge. As a result, students tend to understand religion at a conceptual level without corresponding internalization and practice in their daily lives. In such conditions, religious education loses its strategic role as a means of self-transformation and moral consciousness formation. Consequently, the outcome is not individuals with strong character, but rather those who possess

theoretical knowledge of religious teachings without the ability to actualize them authentically in attitudes and behavior.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the central problem within the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum is fundamentally epistemological rather than merely pedagogical or technical. The dominance of cognitive-oriented learning reflects the increasing influence of modern educational rationality, which privileges measurable knowledge, standardization, and instructional efficiency while simultaneously positioning spirituality and ethics as pedagogically peripheral. This condition resonates with Al-Attas's concept of the *loss of adab*, which describes the epistemic disorder that emerges when knowledge becomes detached from its moral and spiritual foundations (Al-attas, 1984). From this perspective, the crisis of Islamic education reflects not only a failure of curriculum implementation but also a deeper fragmentation in the hierarchy, meaning, and purpose of knowledge itself..

The findings further suggest that positivistic paradigms have significantly shaped the philosophical orientation of IRE within formal schooling contexts. Modern educational systems tend to construct knowledge as objective, value-neutral, and empirically measurable, leading curriculum structures to prioritize competency attainment, cognitive performance, and quantifiable outcomes (Shalehah, Kamila Rahma et al., 2025). Although such orientations contribute to educational standardization and administrative efficiency, they also risk transforming religion into a purely academic object of study detached from students' existential and spiritual realities. Consequently, religious learning increasingly operates within an instrumental framework that emphasizes informational mastery rather than the cultivation of ethical consciousness and spiritual transformation. This tendency reflects a broader epistemic fragmentation within contemporary education, where knowledge, values, and spirituality are systematically separated (Wakhidah & Erman, 2022).

In contrast, Islamic educational philosophy conceptualizes knowledge as inseparable from moral cultivation, spiritual formation, and human development. Thinkers such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun emphasize that education should not merely transmit information but nurture balanced individuals capable of integrating intellectual, ethical, and spiritual dimensions within social life (Garden, 2013; Iqnaa & Shahzadi Hina, 2024). Within this framework, the reduction of religious education into cognitive achievement alone represents a significant epistemological shift, as the ultimate purpose of education moves away from the formation of holistic human beings toward the production of academically competent individuals. The findings

therefore suggest that the contemporary IRE curriculum reflects an ongoing tension between Islamic holistic epistemology and modern secular-positivistic educational paradigms.

Based on this dialectical tension, this study argues for the philosophical reconstruction of the IRE curriculum through the integration of ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions. Such reconstruction should not be limited to modifying instructional techniques or curriculum content, but must involve reorienting the foundational worldview underlying Islamic education itself. In this regard, the tawhidic worldview becomes essential as an integrative epistemological framework capable of reconnecting knowledge, ethics, spirituality, and lived human experience within educational practice (Afif et al., 2025). Through this integrative orientation, religious education may function not merely as the transmission of doctrinal knowledge but as a transformative process that cultivates reflective spirituality, ethical awareness, and socially grounded religious consciousness.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in repositioning IRE curriculum discourse from a predominantly technical-pedagogical perspective toward a critical epistemological critique of modern Islamic schooling. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on curriculum innovation, instructional effectiveness, or character education, this study highlights how positivistic educational paradigms shape the philosophical structure of religious learning and contribute to the marginalization of spirituality within formal education. By proposing an integrative framework grounded in ontology, epistemology, and axiology, this study expands contemporary discussions in Islamic educational philosophy and offers a conceptual foundation for developing a more holistic, transformative, and spiritually grounded model of Islamic Religious Education in the context of modernity.

CONCLUSION

The core problem of the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum does not lie in the technical aspects of instruction, but rather in the philosophical structure that underpins it, particularly at the epistemological level. The dominance of modern educational paradigms, which tend to be positivistic in nature, has led to the reduction of spiritual values, resulting in IRE learning being oriented more toward the transmission of cognitive knowledge than the internalization of values. This condition is further reinforced by the dichotomy between religious and general knowledge, which generates a crisis of meaning in which religion is understood normatively but insufficiently internalized within students' everyday moral and

social practices. Consequently, a gap emerges between religious understanding and ethical behavior.

Therefore, a reconstruction of the IRE curriculum is necessary, one that is not only pedagogical but also philosophical through the integrated consideration of ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions. The curriculum should be oriented toward the integration of cognitive, affective, and spiritual domains through an approach that emphasizes not only *teaching religion* but also *experiencing religion*. Through this approach, IRE is expected to reclaim its essential role as a transformative process of consciousness that holistically shapes students' intellectual, spiritual, and moral development within real-life contexts. Future studies may further explore the practical implementation of integrative and reflective IRE models across diverse educational settings.

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