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Research Article

Islamic Religious Education in Religiously Diverse Schools: Teachers' Pedagogical Practices and Challenges in Indonesia

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Abstract

Religiously diverse schools raise important questions about how Islamic Religious Education (IRE) can maintain its theological and pedagogical purposes while responding to the rights and experiences of learners from different religious backgrounds. This article reviews scholarship on IRE, multicultural education, religious education equality, interreligious competence, and teachers' pedagogical practices in plural settings. It uses an integrative, narrative literature review, combining peer-reviewed studies on Indonesian religious education with conceptual work on multicultural education, especially James A. Banks' five dimensions. The literature was examined thematically in relation to four connected areas: religious identity and educational purpose; classroom pedagogy and interreligious interaction; equity and institutional support; and the contribution of multicultural education theory. The review indicates that inclusive religious education requires more than tolerance as an individual attitude. It depends on the interaction of teachers' professional judgment, access to religion-specific instruction, dialogue across difference, and school policies concerning time, facilities,

resources, and protection from discrimination. Banks' framework provides a useful analytical lens because it links classroom practice to knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and school culture. The article proposes a context-sensitive framework for examining IRE in religiously diverse schools and identifies a need for comparative research that foregrounds teachers' practices in settings where Muslim learners are a numerical minority. The review does not claim to establish causal effects or to report new field data.

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education; religious diversity; multicultural education; interreligious competence; teachers' pedagogy

Abstrak

Sekolah dengan keragaman agama memunculkan pertanyaan penting mengenai bagaimana Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) dapat mempertahankan tujuan teologis dan pedagogisnya sekaligus merespons hak dan pengalaman peserta didik dari latar belakang agama yang berbeda. Artikel ini mengkaji literatur tentang PAI, pendidikan multikultural, kesetaraan pendidikan agama, kompetensi antaragama, dan praktik pedagogis guru dalam lingkungan yang plural. Artikel ini menggunakan metode tinjauan literatur naratif integratif dengan menggabungkan penelitian yang telah melalui proses penelaahan sejawat tentang pendidikan agama di Indonesia dan kajian konseptual mengenai pendidikan multikultural, khususnya lima dimensi pendidikan multikultural yang dikembangkan oleh James A. Banks. Literatur dianalisis secara tematik berdasarkan empat bidang yang saling berkaitan, yaitu identitas keagamaan dan tujuan pendidikan; pedagogi kelas dan interaksi antaragama; kesetaraan dan dukungan kelembagaan; serta kontribusi teori pendidikan multikultural. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan agama yang inklusif membutuhkan lebih dari sekadar toleransi sebagai sikap individual. Pendidikan tersebut bergantung pada interaksi antara pertimbangan profesional guru, akses terhadap pembelajaran agama sesuai keyakinan masing-masing peserta didik, dialog lintas perbedaan, serta kebijakan sekolah terkait waktu, fasilitas, sumber daya, dan perlindungan dari diskriminasi. Kerangka Banks menyediakan perspektif analitis yang bermanfaat karena menghubungkan praktik pembelajaran dengan konstruksi pengetahuan, pengurangan prasangka, pedagogi kesetaraan, dan budaya sekolah. Artikel ini mengusulkan kerangka konseptual yang kontekstual untuk mengkaji PAI di sekolah dengan keragaman agama serta mengidentifikasi kebutuhan akan penelitian komparatif yang menempatkan praktik guru sebagai fokus utama, khususnya di lingkungan sekolah tempat peserta didik Muslim menjadi kelompok minoritas secara jumlah. Kajian ini tidak bertujuan menetapkan hubungan sebab-akibat ataupun melaporkan temuan data lapangan baru.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Agama Islam; keragaman agama; pendidikan multikultural; kompetensi antaragama; pedagogi guru.

INTRODUCTION

Religious diversity is a defining feature of many educational settings, but it does not automatically produce equitable or constructive learning. Schools bring together learners with different beliefs, religious practices, cultural experiences, and expectations about the role of religion in public life. In such settings, religious education must address two connected responsibilities: enabling learners to understand and practise their own tradition, and preparing them to participate respectfully in a society where other traditions are present. These responsibilities are particularly significant in Indonesia, where religious education forms part of the national school curriculum and where schools vary considerably in their religious composition and institutional character.¹

¹Robert Jackson, *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality: Issues in Diversity and Pedagogy* (London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004); Council of Europe, *Signposts: Policy and Practice for Teaching about*

Islamic Religious Education (IRE), commonly referred to in Indonesia as Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI), is often discussed in relation to religious knowledge, worship, moral development, and the formation of Muslim identity. These purposes remain central when Muslim learners attend schools where they constitute a minority. Yet the educational setting may require teachers to make practical decisions about lesson schedules, learning materials, access to facilities, relationships with other teachers, and the language used to explain religious differences. Such decisions are not merely logistical. They shape whether learners experience religious education as substantive, equitable, and connected to their everyday school lives.

Research on religious education in multireligious Indonesian schools has identified persistent challenges in providing instruction for students from different religious backgrounds. Utami, for example, discusses barriers associated with the availability of teachers, school budgets, student numbers, and local conditions. The study demonstrates that respectful coexistence does not, by itself, guarantee equal access to religion-specific instruction. Other work on religious education in Indonesia has examined the influence of institutional arrangements and local contexts on the delivery of religious learning. These studies suggest that teachers' practices should be analysed alongside the policies and resources that enable or constrain them.²

Multicultural education offers a framework for connecting classroom pedagogy with institutional conditions. Banks' work is particularly relevant because it treats multicultural education as more than adding information about cultural groups. Its five dimensions address content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure. Taken together, these dimensions make it possible to examine how a religious subject can retain its distinctive commitments while responding to unequal participation, stereotypes, and the everyday realities of a plural school.³

This article develops a literature-based account of teachers' pedagogical practices and challenges in IRE in religiously diverse schools in Indonesia. It asks three questions: (1) How does the literature conceptualise the educational purposes of IRE in religiously diverse settings? (2) What pedagogical and institutional factors shape teachers' efforts to sustain religious learning while respecting difference? (3) How can multicultural education theory guide further analysis of these practices? The article's contribution is conceptual rather than empirical. It synthesises relevant scholarship and proposes an analytical framework for future research, including comparative studies of schools in which Muslim learners are a numerical minority.

Religions and Non-Religious World Views in Intercultural Education, written by Robert Jackson (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2014).

²Pratiwi Tri Utami, "Raising Religious Inherency: The Role of Interreligious Competence in Achieving Religious Education Equality in Multireligious Public Schools in Indonesia," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 9 (2022): article 271, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-022-01298-y>.

³James A. Banks, *An Introduction to Multicultural Education*, 6th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2019).

METHOD

This article uses an integrative narrative literature review. This approach is appropriate for a topic that draws on empirical studies, theoretical literature, and education-policy discussions rather than a single uniform body of quantitative evidence. The purpose is to develop a coherent conceptual map of how religious education, teachers' pedagogy, interreligious relations, and school-level equity have been discussed in relevant scholarship. The review is not presented as a systematic review or meta-analysis because it does not claim exhaustive retrieval, formal risk-of-bias assessment, or statistical aggregation.

The literature was selected for its relevance to four areas: (a) Islamic and religious education in Indonesia; (b) educational equality and access to religion-specific instruction; (c) multicultural education and religious pluralism; and (d) teacher practices, interreligious competence, and school culture. Priority was given to peer-reviewed journal articles, established scholarly books, and research that directly addressed Indonesian schooling or provided a clearly applicable conceptual framework. Banks' multicultural education framework was included as the principal theoretical lens. Utami's study was treated as a key empirical reference because it directly addresses the provision of religious education in multireligious Indonesian schools.⁴

The analysis proceeded thematically. First, the selected literature was read to identify its main research questions, conceptual assumptions, methods, and findings. Second, recurring ideas were grouped into themes concerning religious identity, pedagogical adaptation, interreligious interaction, educational equity, and institutional support. Third, these themes were compared with Banks' five dimensions to identify the explanatory value and limits of the framework for IRE. Finally, the themes were synthesised into a conceptual framework that connects teachers' classroom decisions with school policies and the wider religious composition of the learning environment.

The review has limitations. It is a narrative synthesis, not a registered systematic review. The selection of literature may therefore omit relevant studies, particularly publications in languages or databases not represented in the search process. The article also distinguishes between evidence reported by published studies and interpretations developed through synthesis. It does not claim that all schools or teachers in Indonesia experience the same conditions. The proposed framework should be tested, refined, and contextualised through empirical research.

⁴Jackson, Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality; Robert Jackson, Siebren Miedema, Wolfram Weisse, and Jean-Paul Willaime, eds., *Religion and Education in Europe: Developments, Contexts and Debates* (Münster: Waxmann, 2007).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Religious education, identity, and educational purpose

The literature suggests that religious education in a plural setting should not be reduced to either private belief formation or generic citizenship instruction. Religion-specific learning provides students with access to the concepts, practices, texts, and moral vocabularies of their own tradition. At the same time, schooling takes place in a shared social environment where students encounter people whose beliefs and practices differ from their own. The educational challenge is therefore to protect meaningful religious learning while ensuring that the school environment does not normalise discrimination or social exclusion.⁵

In Indonesia, religious education is embedded in a national framework that recognises students' entitlement to religious instruction. The policy principle of receiving religious education in accordance with one's religion raises practical questions about the availability of teachers, the organisation of classes, and the distribution of resources. Utami shows that schools may face difficulties in providing instruction for every religious group, especially where student numbers are small or qualified teachers are difficult to recruit. This evidence cautions against assuming that a school's general commitment to tolerance necessarily guarantees equitable educational provision.⁶

For IRE teachers, identity formation should be understood as a pedagogical responsibility that involves more than transmitting information. Teachers select examples, interpret religious concepts, respond to learners' questions, and connect formal content with everyday conduct. In religiously diverse schools, these practices can help Muslim students develop a confident understanding of Islam while learning to participate in shared school activities respectfully. This does not require the teacher to present all religions as doctrinally equivalent. It requires clarity about the subject's own perspective and care in representing people who hold different beliefs.

The distinction between religious commitment and hostility toward difference is central. A strong religious identity does not logically require prejudice against other religious groups. However, classroom materials and teaching practices can either reinforce simplistic representations or encourage careful, context-sensitive understanding. The literature therefore supports analysing how teachers frame religious identity, how they respond to questions about other traditions, and how they connect moral teaching with social responsibility. These questions are more precise than evaluating a teacher's practice solely through broad labels such as tolerant or intolerant.⁷

⁵Jackson, *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality*; Council of Europe, Signposts.

⁶Republic of Indonesia, Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, art. 12(1)(a); Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Regulation No. 16 of 2010 concerning the Management of Religious Education in Schools, https://simpuh.kemenag.go.id/regulasi/pma_16_10.pdf; Utami, "Raising Religious Inherency."

⁷Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1954).

Pedagogical adaptation and teachers' professional judgment

Teachers in religiously diverse schools operate within practical constraints. Class size, instructional time, availability of teaching materials, student attendance, facilities, and coordination with school administrators can influence the way a lesson is organised. Adaptation may involve using discussion, case-based learning, guided reflection, digital resources, small-group instruction, or individual mentoring. These methods are not inherently inclusive. Their educational value depends on whether they support the learning objectives, respect students' needs, and provide meaningful access to the subject matter.⁸

Equity pedagogy, in Banks' framework, offers a useful way to examine whether teaching strategies enable students to participate and learn. For IRE, the relevant questions include whether Muslim students receive adequate instructional time, whether teachers have suitable resources, whether learning materials are accessible, and whether assessment practices reflect the stated objectives of the subject. Where Muslim students are a minority, teachers may need to coordinate with school leaders to arrange schedules or spaces for religious learning. These decisions should be analysed as part of educational provision rather than treated as incidental administrative matters.⁹

Pedagogical adaptation also involves professional judgment about the boundaries of dialogue. A teacher may discuss ethical issues, community life, or social cooperation in ways that invite students to consider different perspectives. Yet a discussion should not pressure learners to disclose personal beliefs, defend their religion, or participate in religious practices outside their own commitments. A respectful learning environment recognises that dialogue can improve understanding without requiring agreement on theological questions. Teachers need both subject knowledge and the ability to manage disagreement without humiliating or marginalising students.¹⁰

Digital learning resources may broaden access to materials and support independent study, especially when a school has limited physical resources. However, technology cannot replace the need for qualified instruction, appropriate supervision, and reliable content. Teachers must assess the credibility of digital materials and ensure that students can distinguish educational explanation from polemical or inaccurate representations of religion. Future research should therefore examine not simply whether teachers use digital tools, but how those tools affect access, interpretation, and participation in IRE.¹¹

⁸Geneva Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 3rd ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2018); Sonia Nieto, *The Light in Their Eyes: Creating Multicultural Learning Communities*, 10th anniversary ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010).

⁹Banks, *An Introduction to Multicultural Education*; James A. Banks and Cherry A. McGee Banks, eds., *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*, 10th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2019).

¹⁰Council of Europe, *Signposts*; Jackson, Miedema, Weisse, and Willaime, eds., *Religion and Education in Europe*.

¹¹UNESCO, *Global Citizenship Education: Topics and Learning Objectives* (Paris: UNESCO, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.54675/DRHC3544>.

Interreligious interaction and prejudice reduction

Multireligious schools create opportunities for students to encounter religious difference in ordinary social life. Such contact does not automatically reduce prejudice. The quality of interaction depends on school norms, teacher guidance, opportunities for cooperation, and the presence or absence of unequal status. Banks' dimension of prejudice reduction directs attention to the attitudes and assumptions that shape how students perceive one another. In IRE, this dimension can guide analysis of classroom examples, teacher responses to stereotypes, and the ways students work together on shared tasks.¹²

Interreligious competence is a useful complementary concept. It concerns the ability to communicate and interact across religious differences with awareness, respect, and appropriate adjustment. Utami connects interreligious competence with questions of religious education equality in Indonesian schools. Her analysis is important because it links interpersonal attitudes with structural conditions. A student may show respect toward classmates of other religions while still attending a school that cannot provide adequate instruction in the student's own religion. Conversely, the formal availability of religious classes does not guarantee respectful interaction. Educational equality and interreligious competence therefore need to be considered together, while remaining analytically distinct.¹³

Teachers can support constructive interaction by establishing clear expectations against ridicule and discrimination, selecting examples that do not reduce religious groups to stereotypes, and creating opportunities for cooperation around shared educational tasks. They can also distinguish between describing a religious tradition and endorsing every practice associated with it. This distinction matters because students need accurate knowledge as well as the social skills required to engage with difference. Respectful pedagogy does not require the removal of substantive religious content; it requires that content to be taught without denigrating other groups.

Contact and dialogue should also be understood within the limits of the school context. Students may have different levels of comfort discussing religion, and some topics may require careful facilitation. Teachers should avoid treating a student as a representative of an entire religious community. They should also avoid assuming that all members of a religion share identical beliefs or practices. These precautions can reduce the burden placed on minority students and help create a learning environment where difference can be discussed without turning individual students into objects of scrutiny.

Institutional support and the conditions of equitable provision

The literature indicates that school-level conditions can enable or constrain teachers' pedagogical decisions. The availability of qualified religious teachers is one such condition. Others include budget allocations, instructional schedules, learning spaces, access to teaching materials, communication among religious education teachers, and procedures for responding to discrimination. Utami identifies teacher availability, student numbers, budget limitations, and local conditions as barriers to the provision of religion-specific education in

¹²Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*.

¹³Utami, "Raising Religious Inherency."

some Indonesian schools. These factors show why educational equality cannot be assessed only by examining the content of lessons.¹⁴

Institutional accommodation should not be equated with preferential treatment. Where students have different religious needs, fair arrangements may require differentiated provision. A school may need to schedule separate religious instruction, coordinate the use of facilities, or provide access to qualified teachers. The fairness of these arrangements depends on whether they respond to legitimate educational needs and preserve students' equal standing within the school. A uniform procedure can produce unequal outcomes when students' circumstances differ.

School culture is also expressed through informal practices. The way administrators respond to requests, how teachers coordinate across subject areas, and whether students can report discrimination safely all influence the lived experience of inclusion. A written policy may state a commitment to respect diversity, but its meaning depends on implementation. Research should therefore compare formal documents with observed practices and participants' accounts. This triangulation helps distinguish institutional aspirations from the conditions students and teachers actually experience.¹⁵

The institutional perspective also broadens the analysis of teacher challenges. When a school lacks a qualified teacher or an appropriate timetable, an individual teacher may have limited capacity to resolve the problem. It would be inaccurate to interpret every shortcoming as a failure of teacher competence. A more adequate analysis distinguishes individual pedagogical decisions from structural constraints and examines how these levels interact. This distinction has practical implications for professional development and education policy: training may improve teaching, but it cannot independently solve shortages of staffing, funding, or facilities.

Banks' five dimensions as an analytical framework for IRE

Banks' framework provides a structured way to connect the themes identified in the literature. Content integration directs attention to how religious learning relates to social and cultural realities. Knowledge construction focuses on how explanations, examples, and assumptions shape students' understanding. Prejudice reduction examines stereotypes and intergroup attitudes. Equity pedagogy concerns the distribution of learning opportunities and the suitability of teaching strategies. An empowering school culture and social structure directs attention to institutional rules, resources, relationships, and participation.¹⁶

The framework should not be applied mechanically. IRE has a distinctive subject matter, including religious texts, theological commitments, worship, and moral formation. A multicultural analysis should therefore examine how these purposes are realised, not assume that they should be replaced by a generic model of diversity education. For example, content integration in IRE need not mean combining doctrines from different religions. It may instead

¹⁴Utami, "Raising Religious Inherency"; Ministry of Religious Affairs, Regulation No. 16 of 2010.

¹⁵UNESCO, *A Guide for Ensuring Inclusion and Equity in Education* (Paris: UNESCO, 2017); UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and Education: All Means All* (Paris: UNESCO, 2020).

¹⁶Banks, *An Introduction to Multicultural Education*.

involve connecting Islamic ethical concepts with real social questions while accurately explaining the limits and context of the comparison.¹⁷

Similarly, knowledge construction should not imply that all religious claims are interchangeable or that teachers must suspend the commitments that define the subject. It asks how learners encounter interpretations, how teachers explain the grounds for claims, and how classroom discussion handles difference. Equity pedagogy should consider the needs of Muslim learners without treating non-Muslim students as outsiders to the school community. Prejudice reduction should address harmful stereotypes without suppressing legitimate questions or disagreement. The school-culture dimension then tests whether the institution supports these pedagogical aims through policies and resources.

The five dimensions are best used together. A school may provide accurate IRE content but offer insufficient time for minority students to study it. Another may arrange adequate religious instruction but lack clear procedures for addressing discriminatory remarks. A third may promote interfaith events without ensuring that students have access to qualified teachers in their own religion. These hypothetical examples illustrate why a single indicator cannot capture the quality of religious education in a plural environment. An integrated analysis is needed to identify both strengths and unresolved challenges.¹⁸

A proposed conceptual framework

The synthesis supports a context-sensitive framework with three connected levels. The first is the school context, including religious composition, institutional type, available resources, and local social relations. The second is teachers' pedagogical practice, including the teaching of religious content, adaptation of methods, management of classroom interaction, and responses to student questions. The third is institutional support, including teacher availability, schedules, facilities, policies, and school culture. These levels interact rather than operate as a simple linear sequence.

Banks' five dimensions provide the analytical bridge across the three levels. Content integration and knowledge construction help analyse curriculum and classroom explanation. Prejudice reduction guides attention to stereotypes and intergroup relations. Equity pedagogy focuses on access and participation. Empowering school culture and social structure connect classroom practice to institutional arrangements. This framework makes it possible to examine both recurring patterns and differences between schools without assuming that all sites should adopt identical practices.

For future empirical work, the framework suggests several lines of inquiry. Researchers can examine how teachers define the goals of IRE when Muslim students form a minority; how teachers adapt instruction while maintaining subject integrity; how students experience classroom dialogue and school-level accommodation; and how school leaders allocate time, staffing, and facilities. Cross-site comparison can then determine which practices recur across contexts and which depend on local conditions. Such analysis should

¹⁷Jackson, *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality*.

¹⁸Banks, *An Introduction to Multicultural Education*; Banks and Banks, eds., *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*.

draw on interviews, observations, teaching documents, and school policies rather than rely on a single source of evidence.

Research gaps and implications

The literature reviewed here points to a need for more studies that place teachers' pedagogical decisions at the centre of analysis while also examining institutional conditions. Research on equality in religious education identifies structural barriers, while multicultural education theory provides concepts for analysing teaching and school culture. Further work can bring these perspectives together in specific school contexts, including settings where Muslim learners are numerically a minority. Such research should avoid claiming that one local case represents all Indonesian schools.¹⁹

A second need concerns the relationship between stated commitments and classroom practice. Policy documents may affirm the right to religious education and respect for diversity, but researchers need to examine how these principles are translated into timetables, access to teachers, learning activities, and responses to discriminatory behaviour. Comparative case studies can reveal the ways schools interpret similar principles under different resource conditions. They can also show where teachers' individual initiatives compensate for institutional gaps and where structural barriers remain beyond their control.

A third need is methodological. Future studies should describe how literature-based concepts are operationalised in fieldwork and how emerging categories are distinguished from theoretical categories. When Banks' dimensions guide analysis, researchers should retain empirical findings that do not fit neatly within a single dimension. This approach avoids forcing complex school experiences into predetermined labels. It also makes the theoretical contribution more credible because the framework is used to interpret evidence rather than to predetermine results.

For policy and practice, the review suggests that professional development should address both subject-specific pedagogy and the management of religious diversity. Teachers need support in explaining Islamic concepts accurately, facilitating discussion, responding to stereotypes, and adapting learning activities. School leaders also need clear procedures for coordinating religion-specific instruction, allocating resources, and handling discrimination. These measures should be developed in response to local conditions and evaluated through evidence of actual access and learning, rather than through policy statements alone.²⁰

Analytical propositions for future research

The synthesis supports several propositions that can guide empirical investigation without treating them as established causal findings. First, the quality of IRE in a religiously diverse school should be assessed through both substantive access to instruction and the social conditions under which instruction takes place. Access includes the availability of a qualified teacher, sufficient learning time, appropriate materials, and opportunities to ask

¹⁹Jackson, *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality*; Jackson, Miedema, Weisse, and Willaime, eds., *Religion and Education in Europe*.

²⁰Christine E. Sleeter and Carl A. Grant, *Making Choices for Multicultural Education: Five Approaches to Race, Class, and Gender*, 6th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2009); Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching*; UNESCO, *A Guide for Ensuring Inclusion and Equity in Education*.

questions. Social conditions include whether students can participate without ridicule, whether teachers respond to stereotyping, and whether institutional procedures protect religious difference. These dimensions are related but should not be collapsed into a single measure of tolerance.²¹

Second, teacher agency is likely to operate within institutional limits. Teachers may adapt teaching methods, provide individual guidance, or coordinate with colleagues, but these efforts cannot always compensate for shortages of qualified staff, restricted budgets, or inflexible timetables. Studies should therefore distinguish between teacher-level practices and school-level conditions. This distinction can prevent the analysis from attributing structural problems to individual teachers and can clarify which challenges require professional development and which require administrative or policy action.

Third, religious identity and interreligious competence should be examined as related but distinct educational concerns. Identity concerns the learner's developing understanding of and relationship with a religious tradition. Interreligious competence concerns the ability to communicate and act appropriately across religious difference. One does not automatically produce the other. Research should investigate the ways teachers connect Islamic knowledge and ethical formation with respectful participation in a diverse school community, while avoiding assumptions that students must dilute their convictions to demonstrate openness.

Fourth, the effects of school culture may be visible in ordinary arrangements rather than only in formal diversity programmes. Timetables, access to rooms, the handling of religious celebrations, procedures for reporting discrimination, and coordination among subject teachers can communicate whether minority students are recognised as full members of the school. Future studies should compare written policies with classroom observation and participants' accounts. This can reveal whether inclusion is embedded in routine institutional practice or depends primarily on individual goodwill.

Operationalising the framework

For practical use, the proposed framework can be translated into questions for data collection. Under content integration, researchers can ask how teachers connect Islamic concepts with everyday social issues and whether examples represent religious difference accurately. Under knowledge construction, they can examine how teachers explain the basis of interpretations, respond to questions, and guide reflection. Under prejudice reduction, they can observe how teachers address stereotypes, exclusion, or disrespectful language. Under equity pedagogy, they can examine instructional time, access to teachers, learning resources, participation, and assessment. Under empowering school culture and social structure, they can review leadership decisions, facilities, coordination procedures, and responses to discrimination.

These questions should remain flexible rather than operate as a rigid checklist. Researchers should allow new themes to emerge from the data and report cases that do not fit the initial framework. The same observed practice may relate to more than one dimension.

²¹Republic of Indonesia, Law No. 20 of 2003, art. 12(1)(a); Utami, "Raising Religious Inherency."

For example, providing a separate timetable for IRE may reflect equity pedagogy because it protects instructional access, and it may also reflect school culture because it demonstrates institutional recognition of religious needs. The analytic task is to explain the relationship between these dimensions, not merely assign a label.

The framework also supports comparison across schools. Within-site analysis can first describe the local context, teacher practices, and institutional arrangements. Cross-site analysis can then identify recurring patterns and meaningful differences. Such comparison should not rank schools without a clear evidentiary basis. Instead, it should explain how the interaction of resources, leadership, student composition, and pedagogical decisions shapes the possibilities available to teachers. The framework is therefore suited to qualitative case studies and may also inform the later development of observation guides or interview protocols.

Implications for teacher education and school leadership

Teacher education programmes can draw on this synthesis by combining subject-specific preparation with skills for teaching in diverse environments. For IRE teachers, this may include accurate explanation of Islamic concepts, reflective use of teaching materials, facilitation of discussion, and strategies for addressing prejudice without humiliating learners. Training should also prepare teachers to recognise when a problem requires administrative support rather than an individual classroom intervention. This broader preparation is especially relevant when teachers work in schools where their subject or the students they teach constitute a numerical minority.²²

School leaders have a complementary responsibility. They can establish transparent procedures for scheduling religious instruction, coordinating teachers, allocating facilities, and responding to discrimination. They can also review whether formal commitments to religious inclusion are reflected in actual access to instruction. Such measures should be developed in consultation with teachers and relevant school communities, while maintaining equal respect for students of all religions. A policy that is clear, feasible, and consistently implemented can reduce the burden on individual teachers to negotiate basic arrangements informally.²³

Finally, future research should report the context and evidence behind its conclusions with precision. Researchers should state which groups were consulted, how school documents were analysed, how observations were conducted, and how interpretations were checked. They should also distinguish the participants' own explanations from the researcher's theoretical interpretation. This transparency is essential when studying religion because findings can be misrepresented if the complexity of local practice is reduced to broad claims about tolerance, conflict, or inclusion.

²²Gay, Culturally Responsive Teaching; Sleeter and Grant, Making Choices for Multicultural Education.

²³Ministry of Religious Affairs, Regulation No. 16 of 2010; Republic of Indonesia, Law No. 20 of 2003, art. 12(1)(a).

CONCLUSION

This literature review examined how scholarship conceptualises Islamic Religious Education in religiously diverse schools, with particular attention to teachers' pedagogical practices and challenges in Indonesia. The synthesis indicates that the quality of IRE in plural settings depends on the relationship between substantive religious learning, teachers' professional judgment, interreligious interaction, and institutional support. Respect for religious diversity is necessary, but it does not by itself ensure equitable access to religion-specific instruction.

Banks' five dimensions of multicultural education offer a useful framework for analysing these relationships. Their value lies in connecting classroom content and interaction with educational equity and school culture. The framework must nevertheless be adapted carefully to the distinctive aims of IRE. It should support analysis of how Islamic identity is taught and practised in plural settings, not replace the subject's religious commitments with a generic account of multiculturalism.²⁴

The article proposes a three-level conceptual framework linking school context, teachers' pedagogical practices, and institutional support. This framework can guide comparative empirical studies, including research in schools where Muslim students are a numerical minority. Because this article uses a narrative literature review, it does not establish causal effects or report new field findings. Future research should test and refine the proposed framework through transparent literature selection and contextualised empirical investigation.

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²⁴Banks, *An Introduction to Multicultural Education*; Banks and Banks, eds., *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*.

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