

Reconstructing Islamic Education Curriculum Relevance: A Synthesis of K13, Merdeka Curriculum, and Love-Based Curriculum

Faisal Amir Toedien¹, Zamsiswaya²

Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia^{1,2}

326904102426@students.uin-suska.ac.id¹, Zamsiswaya@uin-suska.ac.id²

Received: September 23, 2026	Revised: : October 10, 2026	Accepted: October 12, 2026	Online: October 13, 2026
------------------------------	-----------------------------	----------------------------	--------------------------

Abstract

Keywords:

Islamic Education Curriculum; Curriculum Relevance; Merdeka Curriculum; Love-Based Curriculum.

Curriculum transformation in Islamic education requires a broader understanding of relevance beyond policy change and curriculum replacement. This study aims to reconstruct the relevance of the Islamic education curriculum by examining the transformation of the 2013 Curriculum (K13), the Merdeka Curriculum, the Love-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta/KBC), and emerging technological and artificial intelligence challenges. The study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with thematic analysis of 34 scholarly and policy sources. Data were analyzed through identification, categorization, cross-source comparison, and synthesis to trace recurring patterns across curricular orientations. The findings reveal four interconnected dimensions of curriculum relevance. Competence, strongly reflected in K13, emphasizes knowledge, skills, attitudes, and character. Context, strengthened through the Merdeka Curriculum, highlights flexibility and responsiveness to learners and educational environments. Humanity, foregrounded in KBC, emphasizes love, empathy, dignity, diversity, and social harmony. Future readiness, emerging from technological and AI developments, requires adaptability, technological literacy, critical judgment, and ethical responsibility. These dimensions are cumulative and interdependent rather than separate or hierarchical. The study contributes an integrated conceptual framework that reconstructs curriculum relevance as the interaction of competence, context, humanity, and future readiness. This framework provides a conceptual basis for developing Islamic education curricula that remain contextually responsive, humanizing, technologically adaptive, and grounded in Islamic ethical and spiritual values.

Abstrak

Kata kunci:
Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam; Relevansi Kurikulum; Kurikulum Merdeka; Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta

Transformasi kurikulum Pendidikan Islam membutuhkan pemaknaan relevansi yang lebih luas daripada sekadar perubahan kebijakan dan pergantian kurikulum. Penelitian ini bertujuan merekonstruksi relevansi kurikulum Pendidikan Islam dengan mengkaji transformasi Kurikulum 2013 (K13), Kurikulum Merdeka, Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta (KBC), serta tantangan perkembangan teknologi dan kecerdasan buatan. Penelitian menggunakan Systematic Literature Review (SLR) dengan analisis tematik terhadap 34 sumber ilmiah dan dokumen kebijakan. Data dianalisis melalui tahap identifikasi, kategorisasi, perbandingan antarsumber, dan sintesis untuk menemukan pola yang berulang dalam berbagai orientasi kurikulum. Hasil penelitian menghasilkan empat dimensi relevansi yang saling berkaitan. Kompetensi, yang kuat dalam K13, menekankan pengetahuan, keterampilan, sikap, dan karakter. Konteks, yang diperkuat melalui Kurikulum Merdeka, menekankan fleksibilitas dan responsivitas terhadap kebutuhan peserta didik serta lingkungan pendidikan. Kemanusiaan, yang semakin eksplisit dalam KBC, menempatkan cinta, empati, martabat, keberagaman, dan harmoni sosial sebagai orientasi pendidikan. Kesiapan masa depan, yang muncul dari perkembangan teknologi dan AI, menuntut kemampuan adaptasi, literasi teknologi, berpikir kritis, dan tanggung jawab etis. Keempat dimensi tersebut bersifat kumulatif dan saling bergantung, bukan terpisah atau hierarkis. Penelitian ini berkontribusi melalui kerangka konseptual integratif yang merekonstruksi relevansi kurikulum sebagai keterhubungan kompetensi,

konteks, kemanusiaan, dan kesiapan masa depan dalam pengembangan Pendidikan Islam yang tetap berlandaskan nilai etis dan spiritual Islam.

This is an open-access article under the [CC BY-SA](#) license.



Copyright:

© 2026 by the authors.

Licensee: LP3M Al-Urwatul Wutsqo Jombang, Indonesia. This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike (CC BY-SA) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

Corresponding Author:

Faisal Amir Toedien

UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia; 326904102426@students.uin-suska.ac.id

Introduction

Curriculum change is integral to educational development, driven by shifts in students' needs, societal transformations, technological advances, and emerging demands for future competencies (Hakim et al., 2024; Hasan & Aziz, 2023; Hasan & Sintasari, 2025). In Islamic education, such change should not be understood merely as the revision of curricular structures, policies, or instructional instruments, but as a fundamental question of how the curriculum maintains its relevance to learners and contemporary challenges. A relevant Islamic education curriculum is expected not only to develop knowledge and skills but also to cultivate character, critical thinking, independence, creativity, and Islamic values that guide students in their personal and social lives. Therefore, curriculum relevance needs to be grounded in educational needs while remaining responsive to social change and contemporary developments (Ismail, 2024). This challenge has become increasingly complex with the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI), which is transforming how knowledge is accessed and processed while simultaneously requiring adjustments in competencies, pedagogy, and curriculum design (George, 2023; Pedro et al., 2019)

The development of Indonesia's curriculum reflects changing orientations in responding to these demands. The 2013 Curriculum (K13) emphasized competence and character by integrating spiritual and social attitudes, knowledge, and skills (Fadillah et al., 2026; Laila et al., 2025). The Merdeka Curriculum subsequently broadened this orientation by emphasizing flexibility, contextual learning, and greater opportunities for developing students' potential, creativity, independence, and critical thinking (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024). More recently, the Love-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta/KBC) has introduced a more explicit emphasis on the human dimension of education through love, empathy, respect for diversity, and the creation of harmonious educational environments (Cahyati et al., 2025). This orientation has gained policy support through the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education No. 6077 of 2025 and has increasingly become a subject of contemporary Islamic education scholarship (Hamdanah et al., 2026). These

developments indicate a gradual expansion of curriculum orientation from competence toward context and humanity.

Despite these developments, previous studies have generally examined K13, the Merdeka Curriculum, and KBC as relatively separate curricular phenomena. Research on K13 has predominantly addressed curriculum implementation, instructional practices, and competency achievement, while studies on the Merdeka Curriculum have emphasized flexibility, independence, creativity, critical thinking, and contextual learning. Meanwhile, the emerging literature on KBC has primarily focused on character formation, humanism, religious moderation, and social harmony (Fahrudin et al., 2026; Novita et al., 2026). Consequently, limited attention has been given to understanding these curricular developments as an interconnected transformation that reflects an expanding conception of relevance in Islamic education. Moreover, technological development and AI suggest that curriculum relevance can no longer be confined to competence, context, and humanity but must also address students' readiness to navigate the future in adaptive, critical, ethical, and value-oriented ways (Bozkurt et al., 2024; Walter, 2024)

Addressing this gap, this study proposes that curriculum transformation in Islamic education should be understood not simply as a sequence of policy replacements but as a process of accumulating and expanding dimensions of relevance. K13 provides a foundation of competence, the Merdeka Curriculum broadens relevance through context, KBC strengthens the dimension of humanity, and technological and AI developments introduce the need for future readiness. These four dimensions are not conceptualized as mutually exclusive stages in which one replaces another; rather, they represent interconnected and cumulative dimensions of curriculum relevance. This perspective distinguishes the present study from previous scholarship that has predominantly examined each curriculum separately and provides an integrative lens for interpreting curriculum transformation in Islamic education.

Accordingly, this study aims to reconstruct the relevance of the Islamic education curriculum by analyzing the transformation of curricular orientations from K13 through the Merdeka Curriculum to the Love-Based Curriculum and relating these developments to contemporary technological and AI challenges. The novelty of this study lies in the construction of a four-dimensional framework of Islamic education curriculum relevance: competence, context, humanity, and future readiness. Derived from a synthesis of curricular developments and contemporary educational challenges, this framework offers a more integrative perspective for understanding a relevant Islamic education curriculum – one that develops competent and contextually responsive learners while fostering humanity and preparing them to navigate future changes without losing their Islamic ethical and spiritual foundations.

Methods

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with thematic analysis to examine the transformation of curriculum relevance in Islamic education

across the 2013 Curriculum (K13), the Merdeka Curriculum, and the Love-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta/KBC) (Triandini et al., 2019). The literature search covered publications from 2020 to 2026 and was conducted through Google Scholar, Crossref, and relevant scholarly journal databases, complemented by official policy documents issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. The search used combinations of Indonesian and English keywords, including “Islamic education curriculum,” “curriculum relevance,” “2013 Curriculum,” “Kurikulum 2013,” “Merdeka Curriculum,” “Kurikulum Merdeka,” “Love-Based Curriculum,” “Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta,” “artificial intelligence in Islamic education,” and “AI and Islamic education curriculum.” Sources were included when they directly addressed Islamic education curriculum relevance, K13, the Merdeka Curriculum, KBC, or contemporary technological challenges relevant to curriculum development; were accessible in full text; and contained findings, concepts, or policy information relevant to the research questions. Duplicate publications, sources outside the research focus, documents without sufficient analytical information, and publications that did not contribute to the conceptual synthesis were excluded.

The literature selection was conducted sequentially through identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion (Pati & Lorusso, 2018). Records retrieved from the searches were first checked for duplication and screened based on titles, abstracts, and their relevance to the research focus. Potentially relevant publications were subsequently examined in full text to determine their eligibility according to the predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. This procedure resulted in a final corpus of 34 sources, consisting of scholarly articles and relevant policy documents. Sources directly addressing K13, the Merdeka Curriculum, KBC, and Islamic education curriculum relevance constituted the primary analytical material, while studies addressing technological development, artificial intelligence, character, humanism, and future educational needs were used to extend the interpretation. For each included source, information concerning publication year, research focus, methodological approach, key concepts, and major findings or arguments was extracted and organized for further analysis. The literature selection procedure was documented in a flow diagram representing the stages of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and the final inclusion of 34 sources.

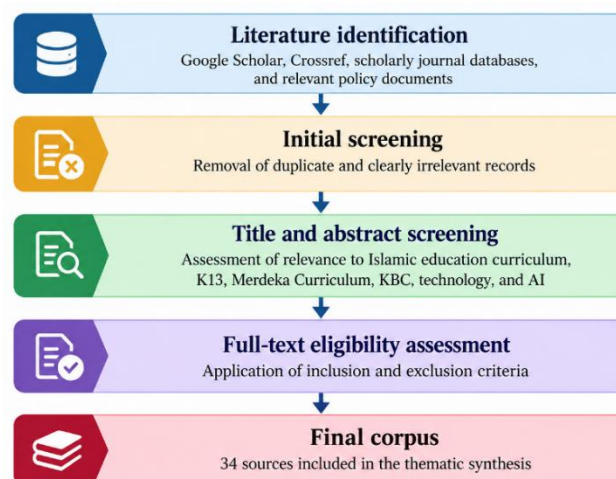


Figure 1. Literature Selection Process

Data were analyzed thematically through four interconnected stages: identification, categorization, comparison, and synthesis. Identification involved extracting key ideas concerning curriculum relevance and changes in curricular orientation. The findings were subsequently categorized into five themes: Islamic education curriculum relevance, K13, the Merdeka Curriculum, KBC, and technological and future educational challenges. Cross-source comparison was then conducted to identify similarities, differences, continuities, and shifts among the reviewed studies, followed by a synthesis that integrated these patterns into a conceptual reconstruction of curriculum relevance. K13 was primarily interpreted through competence and character, the Merdeka Curriculum through flexibility and contextuality, KBC through humanity, empathy, and social harmony, and technological and AI developments through future readiness. To strengthen the trustworthiness of the review, conclusions were derived from converging patterns across multiple sources rather than from individual studies. This analytical process ultimately generated the four-dimensional framework of competence, context, humanity, and future readiness.

Result And Discussion

Result

The systematic review of 34 sources indicates that the relevance of the Islamic education curriculum has undergone a gradual expansion rather than a complete replacement of previous curricular orientations. Cross-source comparison revealed four recurring thematic patterns: competence, context, humanity, and future readiness. These dimensions emerged from the dominant concerns identified within different curricular phases and contemporary educational challenges. The literature on the 2013 Curriculum (K13) predominantly emphasizes competence and character; studies of the Merdeka Curriculum extend this orientation toward flexibility and contextual responsiveness; research on the Love-Based Curriculum (*Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta/KBC*) foregrounds humanity, empathy, and social harmony; while studies on technological development and artificial intelligence introduce adaptability, ethical awareness, and future preparedness. This pattern indicates that curriculum relevance in Islamic education has progressively expanded while retaining elements established in earlier curricular orientations.

K13: Competence and Character as the Foundation of Relevance

The literature on K13 consistently positions competence as a central dimension of curriculum relevance. In Islamic education, competence encompasses spiritual and social attitudes, knowledge, skills, learning activities, and assessment. Studies by Nasikha, 2022; Neliwati et al., 2023; Nisa et al., 2021; Waizah & Herwani, (2021), indicate that K13 required Islamic education teachers to align instructional planning, learning activities, teaching materials, and assessment with competency-oriented outcomes. These findings suggest that curriculum relevance during the K13 period

was primarily understood in terms of the curriculum's capacity to equip students with integrated knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Competence and character therefore constitute the foundational layer upon which subsequent dimensions of curriculum relevance developed.

Merdeka Curriculum: Expanding Relevance toward Context

The Merdeka Curriculum extends the competence orientation by placing greater emphasis on flexibility, students' needs, creativity, critical thinking, local contexts, and curriculum development at the institutional level. Studies of this curriculum demonstrate a shift from relatively standardized competency implementation toward learning that is more responsive to differences among students and educational settings. Research by Aminah & Syaifuddin, 2023; Anwar et al., 2023; Mansur et al., 2024; Maryamah et al., 2023; Nadiva, 2023; Wasehudin et al., (2023) consistently associates curriculum relevance with flexibility, contextual learning, student characteristics, and institutional needs.

This pattern does not indicate that competence became less important under the Merdeka Curriculum. Rather, competence became increasingly connected to the contexts in which students learn and develop. Curriculum relevance therefore expanded from the question of what students should master to include how competencies should be developed according to learner needs, educational environments, and local contexts. In this sense, context constitutes an additional dimension of relevance rather than a replacement for competence.

Love-Based Curriculum: Strengthening the Human Dimension

A further expansion is evident in the literature on KBC. The reviewed studies consistently associate KBC with love, empathy, humanism, character, tolerance, acceptance of diversity, and social harmony. Studies by Cahyati et al., 2025; Fahurian et al., 2026; Faruq, 2025; Kamali et al., 2025; Rohmah et al., 2025; Sunarya & Sassi, 2026) demonstrate that the relevance of Islamic education cannot be limited to competency achievement and contextual adaptation. It must also address the quality of human relationships created through education.

The reviewed KBC literature consequently reveals a distinct humanity dimension. Love is not positioned merely as an additional moral value but as an orientation shaping educational relationships and the broader learning environment. Curriculum relevance therefore expands toward the capacity of education to cultivate empathy, respect for differences, dignity, tolerance, and harmonious social relations. This dimension complements competence and context by emphasizing the human and relational purposes of Islamic education.

Technology and AI: Extending Relevance toward Future Readiness

The fourth pattern emerged from studies addressing technological transformation and artificial intelligence. The literature indicates that AI creates new

demands for competencies, curriculum development, implementation readiness, educator capacity, infrastructure, ethical considerations, and technological literacy. (Lee & Kwon, 2024; Nkolika, 2025a; Sapawi & Yusoff, 2025a), for example, demonstrate that AI integration involves not only technical knowledge but also pedagogical adaptation and ethical considerations. In Islamic education, these challenges become particularly important because technological adaptation needs to remain connected to moral and spiritual orientations.

Afifatun et al. (2025) further connect AI integration with pedagogy, curriculum, and spirituality through the perspective of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, indicating that technological adaptation and Islamic values do not need to be positioned as opposing educational priorities. Together with studies by Lestari et al. (2023) and Musyafa et al. (2025), these findings extend curriculum relevance toward future readiness, understood not simply as digitalization but as the capacity to respond critically, adaptively, ethically, and spiritually to technological change.

Synthesis of the Reviewed Sources

To clarify how these conceptual categories emerged from the systematic review, the 34 sources were mapped according to their research focus, major findings, curricular phase or contemporary issue, and corresponding dimension of relevance. For analytical clarity and space efficiency, Table 1 presents 15 representative sources that most clearly illustrate the recurring patterns identified across the complete corpus. The table functions as an analytical trace showing how recurring findings across different groups of literature contributed to the construction of the four dimensions.

Table 1. Representative Synthesis of Reviewed Sources and Dimensions of Curriculum Relevance

Source	Main Focus/Key Finding	Curriculum Phase/Issue	Relevance Dimension
Nasikha (2022)	Integration of attitudes, knowledge, skills, and competency-oriented learning	K13	Competence
Neliwati et al. (2023)	Adaptation of Islamic education teaching and assessment to competency requirements	K13	Competence
Nisa et al. (2021)	Competency achievement through curriculum implementation	K13	Competence
Anwar et al. (2023)	Transition toward greater curricular and institutional flexibility	K13–Merdeka transition	Competence–Context
Astuti et al. (2024)	Flexible and contextual learning responsive to	Merdeka Curriculum	Context

Nadiva (2023)	students' needs Creativity, critical thinking, and learner- centered curriculum orientation	Merdeka Curriculum	Context
Wasehudin et al. (2023)	Curriculum adaptation to institutional and learner needs	Merdeka Curriculum	Context
Cahyati et al. (2025)	Love-based education, character, and humane educational relationships	KBC	Humanity
Faruq (2025)	Humanistic and value- oriented Islamic education	KBC	Humanity
Rohmah et al. (2025)	Love as an epistemological foundation of Islamic education	KBC	Humanity
Sunarya & Sassi (2025)	Religious moderation and social harmony	KBC	Humanity
Afifatun et al. (2025)	Integration of AI, curriculum, pedagogy, and Islamic spirituality	Technology/ AI	Future Readiness
Lee & Kwon (2024)	AI competence, educational application, and ethical considerations	AI	Future Readiness
Nkolika (2025)	AI-supported personalization and curriculum optimization with implementation challenges	AI	Future Readiness
Sapawi & Yusoff (2025)	Curriculum and competency adaptation to AI development	AI	Future Readiness

Source: Authors' synthesis of representative studies from the 34-source review corpus.

The mapping demonstrates that the four dimensions were derived from recurring patterns across the literature rather than imposed as predetermined categories. Competence appears most consistently within K13 studies; context becomes increasingly prominent within Merdeka Curriculum research; humanity is explicitly strengthened within KBC scholarship; and future readiness emerges from studies addressing technology and AI. Importantly, several studies bridge more than one category, particularly those examining curricular transitions, demonstrating that the dimensions are interconnected rather than mutually exclusive. This cross-source pattern provides the analytical basis for reconstructing curriculum relevance as a cumulative multidimensional concept.

Four-Dimensional Reconstruction of Islamic Education Curriculum Relevance

Based on the thematic categorization and cross-source comparison, the transformation of curriculum relevance can be reconstructed as a cumulative process. The first dimension, competence, concerns the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and thinking abilities students need to develop. The second, **context**, emphasizes that such competencies need to be developed in relation to students' characteristics, institutional conditions, social environments, and local potential. The third, humanity, extends relevance toward empathy, dignity, respect for differences, harmonious relationships, and the humanizing purpose of education. The fourth, future readiness, addresses students' capacity to respond to technological change and AI critically, adaptively, ethically, and spiritually. These dimensions are strongly reflected across the source clusters identified in the review.

The chronological-conceptual relationship among these dimensions can be summarized as follows.

Table 2. Chronological-Conceptual Framework of the Four Dimensions of Curriculum Relevance

Stage	Dominant Orientation	Dimension of Relevance
K13	Competence and character	Competence
Merdeka Curriculum	Flexibility and contextuality	Competence + Context
Love-Based Curriculum	Love, humanism, character, and harmony	Competence + Context + Humanity
AI Challenges	Adaptation, technological literacy, and ethics	Competence + Context + Humanity + Future Readiness

Source: Authors' synthesis of the reviewed literature, 2020–2026.

The results therefore demonstrate that the transformation of the Islamic education curriculum should not be interpreted merely as the replacement of one policy document by another. Instead, it reflects **an** expansion in the meaning of curriculum relevance: from what students need to master, to how learning responds to context, to how education humanizes learners, and finally to how learners are prepared for a rapidly changing future. The four dimensions are cumulative rather than hierarchical; competence remains necessary when contextuality is strengthened, both remain relevant when humanity is emphasized, and all three remain essential when Islamic education responds to technological and AI-related challenges. This synthesis provides the analytical foundation for the subsequent discussion of curriculum relevance as an integrated educational framework.

Discussion

From Curriculum Change to the Expansion of Curriculum Relevance

The findings suggest that curriculum transformation in Islamic education is better understood as an expansion of relevance rather than a succession of disconnected curricular models. This interpretation challenges a linear view in which the introduction of a new curriculum implies that the orientation of the previous curriculum has become irrelevant. The competence and character orientation emphasized in K13 remains necessary within the Merdeka Curriculum, while contextual flexibility does not lose its significance when KBC introduces stronger humanistic and relational concerns. Likewise, technological and AI-related demands do not replace competence, context, or humanity but require these dimensions to operate within a rapidly changing educational environment. Curriculum transformation therefore represents a cumulative process in which new dimensions of relevance emerge in response to educational challenges without eliminating previously established dimensions.

This interpretation extends existing discussions of curriculum relevance. Previous studies generally associate relevance with the alignment between curriculum content, learner needs, educational objectives, societal expectations, and changing environments (Ismail, 2024; Triwardhani et al., 2020). Such perspectives remain important, but the findings of this review indicate that relevance in Islamic education involves more than correspondence between curriculum and external needs. Relevance also concerns the type of human being education seeks to develop and the ethical basis through which learners respond to change. In this respect, KBC scholarship introduces an important development by positioning love, empathy, dignity, diversity, and social harmony within the curricular discourse (Cahyati et al., 2025; Faruq, 2025; Rohmah et al., 2025). At the same time, the emergence of AI requires relevance to incorporate adaptability, technological literacy, critical judgment, and ethical responsibility (Lee & Kwon, 2024; Sapawi & Yusoff, 2025). The concept of relevance consequently moves from simple curricular responsiveness toward a multidimensional relationship among competence, educational context, human values, and future change.

The Interdependence of Competence, Context, Humanity, and Future Readiness

The conceptual significance of the four dimensions lies not merely in their identification but in their **interdependence**. Competence provides the foundational capacity required for meaningful learning and participation in society, but competence alone may become disconnected from learners' actual conditions if it is not situated within context. Context therefore makes competence responsive by connecting learning with student characteristics, institutional conditions, social realities, and local environments. However, contextual responsiveness does not automatically guarantee that education will be humanizing. The humanity dimension introduces an ethical and

relational direction by ensuring that competence and contextual adaptation contribute to empathy, dignity, respect for diversity, and harmonious relationships.

Future readiness further extends this relationship. Technological competence without contextual awareness may encourage the adoption of technology without considering whether it addresses actual educational needs, while technological adaptation without humanity may reduce education to efficiency, automation, and measurable performance. The literature on AI demonstrates that technological integration raises questions concerning ethics, educator competence, curriculum adaptation, and the preservation of educational values (Afifatun et al., 2025; Nkolika, 2025b; Sapawi & Yusoff, 2025b). Future readiness should therefore not be interpreted simply as the ability to use emerging technologies. Within Islamic education, it represents the ability to navigate change through the combined operation of competence, contextual judgment, human responsibility, and Islamic ethical and spiritual values.

The relationship among the four dimensions can thus be understood as cumulative and reciprocal rather than hierarchical. Competence enables learners to act; context determines where and how that competence becomes meaningful; humanity provides the ethical and relational orientation for its use; and future readiness enables these capacities and values to remain responsive amid change. At the same time, future challenges may generate new competency requirements, changing contexts may redefine what forms of competence are necessary, and human values provide boundaries for determining which adaptations are educationally desirable. This reciprocal relationship distinguishes the proposed framework from a chronological description of curriculum change. It transforms the four dimensions into an integrated conceptual structure for evaluating curriculum relevance.

Reconstructing Curriculum Relevance in Islamic Education

The conceptual novelty of this study therefore does not lie in proposing competence, contextuality, humanity, or future readiness as entirely new educational concepts. Each has been discussed within different strands of curriculum and educational scholarship. The contribution lies instead in reconstructing their relationship within a single framework of Islamic education curriculum relevance. Existing studies on K13 largely emphasize competence and character; studies of the Merdeka Curriculum emphasize flexibility and contextual responsiveness; KBC scholarship foregrounds humanistic and relational values, and emerging research on AI emphasizes adaptation, technological competence, and ethics. The systematic synthesis conducted in this study demonstrates that these orientations can be interpreted not as isolated concerns but as interconnected dimensions of what makes a curriculum relevant.

This reconstruction also differs from conventional interpretations of curriculum relevance that primarily emphasize correspondence between curriculum content and

the needs of learners, society, or the world of work. Such alignment remains necessary, but the four-dimensional framework expands the analytical question. Curriculum relevance is not only concerned with whether students acquire appropriate competencies, but also whether those competencies respond to their contexts, whether their development contributes to humanizing educational relationships, and whether they enable learners to respond ethically and adaptively to future change. The framework therefore combines responsiveness with normative direction: a curriculum becomes relevant not simply because it adapts to change, but because the adaptation remains educationally meaningful and ethically grounded.

This point is particularly important for Islamic education. Adaptation to social and technological change cannot become the sole criterion of curriculum relevance because Islamic education carries formative purposes related to moral, spiritual, and social development. The humanity dimension prevents relevance from being reduced to functional usefulness, while future readiness prevents Islamic education from becoming disconnected from technological and societal transformation. Competence and context connect these normative and adaptive orientations with actual learning processes. The four dimensions consequently create a conceptual bridge between the instrumental function of curriculum, which prepares learners with necessary capacities, and its formative function, which shapes how those capacities are exercised within human relationships and changing social realities.

This sequence should not be interpreted as a rigid linear progression. Instead, it represents an analytical structure in which each dimension expands and qualifies the meaning of the others. Competence without context risks irrelevance; context without humanity risks becoming merely adaptive; humanity without future readiness risks losing responsiveness to emerging realities; and future readiness without the other three dimensions risks becoming technologically driven without sufficient educational and ethical direction. The relevance of Islamic education curriculum emerges from the interaction of all four.

Accordingly, the framework shifts the discussion from asking “Which curriculum is more relevant?” to asking “What dimensions must be integrated for an Islamic education curriculum to remain relevant?” This shift constitutes the principal conceptual contribution of the study. K13, the Merdeka Curriculum, and KBC become analytical entry points for identifying changes in the meaning of relevance rather than competing curricular models. The resulting framework suggests that a relevant Islamic education curriculum should simultaneously develop competent learners, respond to educational and social contexts, sustain humanizing and value-based relationships, and prepare students to engage critically and ethically with future transformations. In this sense, curriculum relevance is reconstructed as a dynamic, multidimensional, and value-grounded educational framework, rather than merely an indicator of alignment between curriculum policy and contemporary demands.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that curriculum transformation in Islamic education should not be understood merely as the replacement of one curriculum by another, but as a cumulative expansion of curriculum relevance. Through a systematic review of 34 sources, four interconnected dimensions were identified: competence, context, humanity, and future readiness. Competence, strongly reflected in K13, provides the foundation for developing students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and character. The Merdeka Curriculum extends this foundation by strengthening contextual responsiveness and flexibility, while the Love-Based Curriculum adds a more explicit human dimension through love, empathy, respect for diversity, and social harmony. Contemporary technological and AI developments further expand relevance toward future readiness, requiring learners to become adaptive, critical, technologically literate, and ethically responsible. These dimensions should not be interpreted as separate or hierarchical stages but as cumulative and interdependent elements of curriculum relevance.

The principal contribution of this study is the reconstruction of these dimensions into an integrated framework of Islamic education curriculum relevance. Rather than proposing each dimension as an entirely new educational concept, the study demonstrates their conceptual interrelationship and positions them within a unified framework. Curriculum relevance is therefore not limited to alignment with policy changes, learner needs, or societal demands; it also concerns whether competencies are contextually meaningful, humanly and ethically oriented, and capable of preparing learners for future transformations. This framework provides a conceptual basis for curriculum developers, Islamic educational institutions, and policymakers to evaluate curriculum development beyond policy succession and to consider competence, contextual responsiveness, humanity, and future readiness simultaneously.

This study is limited by its reliance on a corpus of 34 literature and policy sources and does not empirically test the proposed framework in educational settings. The relatively recent development of the Love-Based Curriculum and the continuing evolution of AI in education also mean that the available evidence remains developing. Future research should therefore empirically examine the four-dimensional framework across different levels and types of Islamic educational institutions, geographical and sociocultural contexts, and curriculum implementation settings. Quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method studies could further test relationships among the four dimensions and assess the framework's applicability for curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation in Islamic education.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express their appreciation to Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau and all parties who provided academic support and constructive feedback during the preparation of this study.

Ethical Statement

This study did not require ethical approval because it used a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) based exclusively on published scholarly literature and publicly available policy documents. The research did not involve human participants, personal data, or animal subjects.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Statement

The authors used artificial intelligence (AI) tools solely to assist with language editing, grammatical refinement, and improving the clarity and readability of the manuscript. AI was not used to select literature, conduct thematic analysis, synthesize research findings, or develop the proposed four-dimensional framework of curriculum relevance. All substantive analyses, interpretations, and conclusions were reviewed and verified by the authors, who take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the manuscript.

Author Contributions

Faisal Amir Toedien contributed to the conceptualization, literature searching, screening and selection of sources, data extraction, thematic analysis, conceptual synthesis, and preparation of the original manuscript. Zamsiswaya contributed to the conceptualization, methodological guidance, validation of the literature synthesis, development and refinement of the conceptual framework, and critical review and editing of the manuscript. Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Funding Statement

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for profit sectors.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no financial, professional, institutional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have influenced the research process, interpretation of findings, or publication of this study.

REFERENCES

- Afifatun, S., Firdalina, F., Sari, M., Kesumasari, N., Fatmawati, N., & Febridawati, F. (2025). Integration of Artificial Intelligence in Islamic Education: Transformation of Pedagogy, Curriculum, and Spirituality Based on Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah. *BASICA*, 5(2), 135–148. <https://doi.org/10.37680/basicav5i2.9626>
- Aminah, I. A. N., & Syaibani, M. A. Y. (2023). Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam. *JURNAL PENDIDIKAN ISLAM AL-ILMI*, 6(2), 293–303. <https://doi.org/10.32529/al-ilmi.v6i2.2804>
- Anwar, S., Ishomuddin, I., & Faridi, F. (2023). Dynamics of the Islamic Education Curriculum in Madrasah: Study K-13 and Merdeka Curriculum. *JIE (Journal of Islamic Education)*, 8(2), 266–282. <https://doi.org/10.35723/jie.v8i2.365>
- Bozkurt, A., Xiao, J., Farrow, R., Bai, J. Y. H., Nerantzi, C., Moore, S., Dron, J., Stracke, C. M., Singh, L., Crompton, H., Koutropoulos, A., Terentev, E., Pazurek, A., Nichols, M., Sidorkin, A. M., Costello, E., Watson, S., Mulligan, D., Honeychurch, S., ... Asino, T. I. (2024). The Manifesto for Teaching and Learning in a Time of Generative AI: A Critical Collective Stance to Better Navigate the Future. *Open Praxis*, 16(4), 487–513. <https://doi.org/10.55982/openpraxis.16.4.777>
- Cahyati, S., Nurdin, E. S., Ruyadi, Y., Dahliyana, A., Hidayat, M., Warlim, Hakam, K. A., & Ganeswara, G. M. (2025). Ministry Beyond Tolerance: Reframing Interfaith Harmony Through Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta (KBC) IN INDONESIA. *Harmoni*, 24(2), 232–253. <https://doi.org/10.32488/harmoni.v24i2.946>
- Fadillah, A., Irvan, Ismail, M. T., & Nursalim, E. (2026). Development And Changes Of Curriculum In Indonesia. *AL-MANAR : Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Pendidikan Islam*, 15(01), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.36668/jmzpay10>
- Fahrudin, A. H., Afandi, A., Rahman, M., Masrufah, M., Mo'tasim, M., & Musthofa, I. (2026). Love Curriculum in Islamic education: Fostering Tolerance and Religious Moderation. *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education*, 7(2), 338–355. <https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v7i2.2519>
- Fahurian, M. Z., Aslami, K. N. A., Fitri, M. A., Pradana, D., & Abdurrahmansyah. (2026). Menggagas Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta Di Tengah Krisis Moral Peserta Didik. *AL IBTIDAIYAH: Jurnal Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, 7(2), 283–292. <https://doi.org/10.46773/vjyyj497>
- Faruq, U. (2025). Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta Sebagai Strategi Moderasi Beragama Dalam Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia. *Journal of Religious Policy*, 4(2), 217–236.
- George, D. A. S. (2023). Preparing Students for an AI-Driven World: Rethinking Curriculum and Pedagogy in the Age of Artificial Intelligence. *Partners Universal Innovative Research Publication*, 1(2), 112–136. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10245675>
- Hakim, F., Fadlillah, A., & Rofiq, M. N. (2024). Artificial Intellegence (AI) dan Dampaknya Dalam Distorsi Pendidikan Islam. *Urwatul Wutsqo: Jurnal Studi Kependidikan Dan Keislaman*, 13(1), 129–144. <https://doi.org/10.54437/urwatulwutsqo.v13i1.1330>
- Hamdanah, H., Soebahar, A. H., Wijdan, A. F., & Budiharso, T. (2026). Exploring Inter-Religious-Based Instruction in Islamic Boarding School: Loved-Based Curriculum Perspectives. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 17(1), 276–306. <https://jsser.org/index.php/jsser/article/view/7349>
- Hasan, M. S., & Aziz, A. (2023). Kontribusi Pendidikan Islam dalam Pengembangan Sosial Emosional Peserta Didik di MTs Salafiyah Syafiiyah Tebuireng Jombang. *Irsyaduna: Jurnal Studi Kemahasiswaan*, 3(2), 143–159. <https://doi.org/10.54437/irsyaduna.v3i2.1124>
- Hasan, M. S., & Sintasari, B. (2025). *Pengembangan Kurikulum PAI Berbasis Kurikulum Merdeka*. Academia Publication.

- Hunaepi, H., & Suharta, I. (2024). Transforming education in Indonesia: The impact and challenges of the Merdeka belajar curriculum. *Path of Science*, 10(6), 5026–5039.
- Ismail, I. (2024). Classical Islamic Education Socio-Historical Analysis of Curriculum and its Relevance in the Contemporary Era. *Edusia: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Asia*, 4(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.53754/edusia.v4i1.714>
- Kamali, M. A., Susetiyo, A., & Haekal, A. (2025). Implementasi Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta dalam Pembentukan Karakter Peserta Didik di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. *TARBAWIYAT*, 4(2), 157–168. <https://doi.org/10.62589/tarbawiyat.v4i2.337>
- Laila, S. N. F., Mufarokah, A., Anwar, H. S., & Mudhofar, A. (2025). Curriculum Changes in Indonesia: Implementation and its Challenges in Religious Institutions. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 3(1), 16–31. <https://doi.org/10.70376/jerp.v3i1.266>
- Lee, S. J., & Kwon, K. (2024). A systematic review of AI education in K-12 classrooms from 2018 to 2023: Topics, strategies, and learning outcomes. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, 6, 100211. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2024.100211>
- Mansur, M., Najamuddin, A., & Alias, A. (2024). The Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Education Learning at Senior High School. *ETDC: Indonesian Journal of Research and Educational Review*, 3(2), 230–241. <https://doi.org/10.51574/ijrer.v3i2.2692>
- Maryamah, M., Karolina, A., & Apriansyah, A. (2023). Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar dalam Pengembangan Kemampuan Berpikir Kritis pada Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam. *Muaddib: Islamic Education Journal*, 6(1), 35–44. <https://doi.org/10.19109/muaddib.v6i1.22153>
- Nadiva, D. (2023). Relevance of Kurikulum Merdeka in Islamic Religious Education to Build Independence and Creative in The Muslim Generation. *Education and Human Development Journal*, 8(2), 10–19.
- Nasikha, R. (2022). Implementasi Kurikulum 2013 Melalui Analisis Buku Ajar PAI Kelas XI di SMA N I Balapulang. *La-Tahzan: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 14(1), 78–97. <https://doi.org/10.62490/latahzan.v14i1.323>
- Neliwati, N., Safitri, D., Ramadhan, M. R., & Aqilla, N. P. (2023). Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran PAI pada Kurikulum 2013 melalui Pendekatan Saintifik Learning. *JlIP-Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan*, 6(3), 1684–1688.
- Nisa, H., Aslan, A., & Sunantri, S. (2021). Upaya Persiapan Pembelajaran Guru PAI dalam Kurikulum 2013 di SDN 16 Sungai Ringin. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar*, 9(2), 219–226.
- Nkolika, C. J. (2025a). The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Curriculum Development at the Tertiary Education Level. *Jurnal Indonesia Pendidikan Profesi Guru*, 2(1), 39–49. <https://doi.org/10.64420/jippg.v2i1.250>
- Nkolika, C. J. (2025b). The role of artificial intelligence in curriculum development at the tertiary education level. *Jurnal Indonesia Pendidikan Profesi Guru*, 2(1), 39–49.
- Novita, M., Hayat, T. J., Najiburrohman, N., R, A. H. A., & Hefniy, H. (2026). Spiritual and Value-Based Islamic Educational Leadership in Indonesia: A Hermeneutic Inquiry into Love, Moderation, and Institutional Management. *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 7(2), 336–353. <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v7i2.2571>
- Pati, D., & Lorusso, L. N. (2018). How to Write a Systematic Review of the Literature. *HERD: Health Environments Research & Design Journal*, 11(1), 15–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1937586717747384>
- Pedro, F., Subosa, M., Rivas, A., & Valverde, P. (2019). *Artificial intelligence in education: Challenges and opportunities for sustainable development*.
- Rohmah, A. K. A. Y. N., Faizah, I., & Mahmud, M. E. (2025). Cinta Cinta Sebagai Epistemologi Pendidikan: Kajian Kepustakaan Atas Gagasan Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta. *Didaktik :*

- Jurnal Ilmiah PGSD STKIP Subang*, 11(04), 211–221.
<https://doi.org/10.36989/didaktik.v11i04.9139>
- Sapawi, M. M., & Yusoff, N. (2025a). Artificial intelligence in curriculum development: A global systematic review of trends, challenges, and strategic directions. *Journal of Curriculum Studies Research*, 7(2), 466–497.
- Sapawi, M. M., & Yusoff, N. (2025b). Artificial intelligence in curriculum development: A global systematic review of trends, challenges, and strategic directions. *Journal of Curriculum Studies Research*, 7(2), 466–497.
- Sunarya, E., & Sassi, K. (2026). Curriculum Of Love: Efforts To Revitalise Humanism In Islamic Education. *IJGIE (International Journal of Graduate of Islamic Education)*, 7(1), 11–26.
<https://doi.org/10.37567/ijgie.v7i1.4323>
- Triandini, E., Jayanatha, S., Indrawan, A., Putra, G. W., & Iswara, B. (2019). Metode Systematic Literature Review untuk Identifikasi Platform dan Metode Pengembangan Sistem Informasi di Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Information Systems*, 1(2), 63–77.
<https://doi.org/10.24002/ijis.v1i2.1916>
- Triwardhani, I. J., Trigartanti, W., Rachmawati, I., & Putra, R. P. (2020). Strategi Guru dalam membangun komunikasi dengan Orang Tua Siswa di Sekolah. *Jurnal Kajian Komunikasi*, 8(1), 99–113. <https://doi.org/10.24198/jkk.v8i1.23620>
- Waizah, N., & Herwani, H. (2021). Penilaian Pengetahuan Tertulis Dalam Kurikulum 2013. *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education*, 2(2), 207–228.
<https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v2i2.54>
- Walter, Y. (2024). Embracing the future of Artificial Intelligence in the classroom: The relevance of AI literacy, prompt engineering, and critical thinking in modern education. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 21(1), 15.
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-024-00448-3>
- Wasehudin, W., Rohman, A., Wajdi, M. B. N., & Marwan, M. (2023). Transforming islamic education through merdeka curriculum in pesantren. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 9, 256–266.