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# Institutionalizing the Unity of Sciences Paradigm and the Depth of Its Implementation in Developing the Professionalism of Islamic Religious Education Teachers: A Qualitative Study at MTs Nuril Huda Sumowono

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**Abstrak**

Paradigma Kesatuan Ilmu menuntut pertautan yang bermakna antara pengetahuan keislaman, ilmu umum, dan realitas kehidupan, tetapi cara tuntutan itu diterjemahkan ke dalam pengembangan profesionalisme guru di tingkat madrasah masih jarang dikaji. Penelitian ini menganalisis bentuk institusionalisasi Paradigma Kesatuan Ilmu, strategi pengembangan profesionalisme guru Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI), serta faktor yang mendukung dan menghambat kedalaman implementasinya di MTs Nuril Huda Sumowono. Penelitian lapangan berpendekatan kualitatif ini melibatkan lima informan yang dipilih secara purposif, yaitu kepala madrasah, wakil kepala madrasah bidang kurikulum, dan tiga guru rumpun PAI. Data dihimpun melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi, dan studi dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis secara deskriptif-interpretatif dengan triangulasi sumber dan teknik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa paradigma tersebut telah dilembagakan melalui kebijakan madrasah, kurikulum, modul ajar, pembinaan guru, Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran (MGMP), dan supervisi akademik, serta dijadikan orientasi nilai bagi pengembangan kompetensi pedagogik, profesional, kepribadian, dan sosial. Meskipun demikian, keterkaitan materi PAI dengan ilmu umum dan kehidupan nyata masih berbentuk interkoneksi kontekstual dan belum tertanam secara konsisten dalam tujuan, aktivitas, dan asesmen pembelajaran. Keterbatasan kapasitas lintas disiplin, sumber belajar, sarana, akses internet, waktu, dan beban administrasi menjadi penghambat utama. Temuan ini menegaskan adanya kesenjangan antara pelembagaan paradigma dan kedalaman penerapan pedagogisnya sehingga diperlukan penguatan kapasitas lintas disiplin guru, kolaborasi antarguru, dan dukungan kelembagaan.

**Kata Kunci**: *Kesatuan Ilmu, profesionalisme guru PAI, institusionalisasi, interkoneksi kontekstual, integrasi pedagogis*

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**Abstract**

The Unity of Sciences paradigm calls for meaningful connections between Islamic knowledge, general sciences, and lived reality, yet how this call is translated into teacher professional development at the madrasah level remains under-examined. This study analyzes how the paradigm is institutionalized, the strategies used to develop the professionalism of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, and the factors that support and constrain the depth of its implementation at MTs Nuril Huda Sumowono, Indonesia. This qualitative field study involved five purposively selected informants: the principal, the vice-principal for curriculum, and three PAI teachers. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, and document analysis, and were analyzed descriptively and interpretively using source and method triangulation. The findings show that the paradigm has been institutionalized through school policy, curriculum, teaching modules, teacher coaching, subject-teacher forums (MGMP), and academic supervision, and that it serves as a value orientation for developing teachers' pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competences. However, the links between PAI content, general sciences, and real life remain largely contextual interconnections and are not yet consistently embedded in learning objectives, activities, and assessment. Limited cross-disciplinary capacity, learning resources, facilities, internet access, time, and administrative workload are the main constraints. The study highlights a gap between the institutionalization of the paradigm and the depth of its pedagogical enactment, and argues for strengthening teachers' cross-disciplinary capacity, collaboration, and institutional support.

**Keywords:** *Unity of Sciences, Islamic education teacher professionalism, institutionalization, contextual interconnection, pedagogical integration*

## INTRODUCTION

The quality of education depends heavily on teacher professionalism, that is, the capacity to plan, deliver, and assess learning responsibly. Law No. 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers sets out four core competences that every teacher must possess: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competence (JDIH, 2024). For teachers of Islamic Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Islam*, PAI), these four competences go beyond mastery of content and methods. PAI teachers are also expected to connect Islamic knowledge with lived reality and to bring Islamic values into the whole of educational practice.

This integrative demand intersects directly with the Unity of Sciences paradigm (*Wahdat al-'Ulūm*, or *Kesatuan Ilmu* in Indonesian) developed by Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Walisongo Semarang. The paradigm views knowledge as an interconnected whole and rejects any absolute separation between religious and general sciences. It rests on five principles (integrative, collaborative, dialectical, prospective, and pluralistic), which are put into practice through three strategies: the humanization of Islamic sciences, the spiritualization of modern sciences, and the revitalization of local

wisdom (Ma'had Al Jami'ah, 2026). This idea of integrating knowledge is also related to the integration-interconnection paradigm developed by M. Amin Abdullah, which stresses dialogue and connectedness among disciplines as a way of overcoming the dichotomy between religious and general sciences (Akmal, 2024). Kuntowijoyo, meanwhile, proposed the scientification of Islam (*pengilmuan Islam*), which treats Islam as a source for developing knowledge to understand social reality through an epistemological, methodological, and ethical framework (Kuntowijoyo, 2004). This idea overlaps with the Islamization of knowledge project advanced by al-Faruqi and al-Attas, although the two differ in conceptual emphasis. For al-Faruqi, *tawhid* is the principal foundation for integrating and reorganizing the disciplines according to the Islamic worldview (Al-Faruqi and Sulaiman, 1989), whereas al-Attas stresses the need to Islamize contemporary knowledge through a critique of secularization and a reordering of the worldview that underlies modern science (al-Attas, 1981).

Consequently, integrating knowledge is not simply a matter of attaching Qur'anic verses or religious terms to general subject matter; it requires meaningful connections among concepts, ways of understanding reality, ethical considerations, and the benefit (*maslahah*) that knowledge brings.

Philosophically, the relationship between knowledge and values can be enriched by the thought of classical Muslim philosophers. Al-Kindi positioned the search for truth at the heart of philosophical activity, culminating in knowledge of the First Cause (Adamson, 2006). Al-Farabi, in his *Iḥṣā' al-'Ulūm*, mapped the branches of knowledge and explained how the intellect acquires knowledge (Rozali and Lubis, 2023). Al-Ghazali examined the status, function, and limits of reason in relation to faith, spiritual experience, and self-formation (Griffel, 2009). None of the three is identical to the institutional formulation of the Unity of Sciences. In this article, their thought is read as a supporting foundation: Al-Kindi highlights intellectual earnestness in the pursuit of truth; Al-Farabi grounds the breadth and order of knowledge, which calls for cross-disciplinary work; and Al-Ghazali underscores the ethical dimension and the importance of exemplary conduct. Their relevance to teacher professionalism is the authors' analytical interpretation, not a claim that these philosophers formulated a theory of modern teacher professionalism.

From the perspective of professional development, improving professionalism cannot be reduced to occasional individual training. Fullan views educational change as a process that involves the interplay of individuals, organizations, leadership, and implementation conditions; policy, therefore, does not automatically change teachers' practice (Fullan, 2007). School and madrasah principals play a strategic role in mobilizing educators and creating conditions that enable professional development (Mulyasa, 2007). At the madrasah level, such mechanisms may take the form of teacher coaching, academic supervision, subject-teacher forums (*Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran*, MGMP), mentoring, and peer discussion.

Several studies have touched on this issue. A study of students' academic work at UIN Walisongo showed that the paradigm of integrated knowledge has been translated into that work through strategies of local wisdom, the humanization of Islamic sciences,

and the spiritualization of general sciences (Machrus *et al.*, 2019). Other studies have examined PAI teachers' professionalism in integrating Islamic values and modern science (Uyubah and Anawati, 2024), the transformation of PAI teachers' mindsets through openness to change, collaboration, and reflection (Afriyanto *et al.*, 2025), PAI teachers' professional competence in integrating Islamic values at MTs Wadi Mubarak (Suriyati *et al.*, 2026), and the integration of Islamic values into teacher professionalism in Islamic educational institutions (Renawati, Jannah and Septriasa, 2025). However, these studies generally focus on individual teacher competence or on higher-education settings. Research that explicitly distinguishes between the institutionalization of the paradigm at the madrasah level and the depth of its enactment in pedagogical practice remains limited.

Building on this gap, this study aims to analyze (1) how the Unity of Sciences paradigm is institutionalized in madrasah policies and programs, (2) the strategies used to develop PAI teachers' professionalism, and (3) the factors that support and constrain the depth of its implementation at MTs Nuril Huda Sumowono. The main contribution of the study lies in its analytical distinction between the *institutionalization* of the paradigm and the *depth of implementation* at the pedagogical level. This distinction is used to show that the availability of policies, teaching materials, coaching, and supervision does not in itself mean that connections between disciplines have been systematically integrated into learning objectives, activities, and assessment.

## METHODS

### Research Design and Setting

This study employed a qualitative approach in the form of field research. This approach was chosen because the aim was not to measure statistical relationships between variables but to understand how the paradigm is interpreted, translated into madrasah programs, and enacted in teacher professional development (Creswell, Lazuardi and Qudsy, 2015). The study was conducted at MTs Nuril Huda, an Islamic junior secondary school (*madrasah tsanawiyah*) in Losari Village, Sumowono District, Semarang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. Data were collected in September 2026, and this period sets the temporal boundary for interpreting the findings.

### Research Informants

Informants were selected purposively, that is, on the basis of how relevant their knowledge and experience were to the research focus (Creswell, Lazuardi and Qudsy, 2015). Five informants were involved to provide perspectives ranging from the policy level to classroom practice (Table 1). The small number of informants is consistent with the nature of a field case study, but it also limits the scope of the findings.

**Table 1. Profile of research informants**

| Code | Position | Information focus |
|---|---|---|
| KM | Principal | Understanding of the paradigm and institutional policy |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| WKK | Vice-principal for curriculum | Management of the curriculum, programs, and teacher coaching |
| G1 | Teacher of Akidah Akhlak (Islamic creed and morals) and SKI (Islamic cultural history) | Classroom practice, readiness, and constraints |
| G2 | Teacher of Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) | Classroom practice, readiness, and constraints |
| G3 | Teacher of Qur'an and Hadith | Classroom practice, readiness, and constraints |

**Data Collection Techniques**

Data were gathered through three complementary techniques. *First*, semi-structured interviews explored informants' understanding of the Unity of Sciences paradigm, madrasah policy, professional development strategies, the integration of competences with Islamic values, teachers' readiness and motivation, the availability of facilities, and supporting and constraining factors. The interview guide set out the main questions while leaving room for probing in response to informants' answers. *Second*, observation covered 14 aspects, including madrasah policies and programs, lesson planning and classroom practice, links between Islamic values and general sciences, mastery of subject matter, exemplary conduct, social interaction, the use of learning resources and technology, professional development, and leadership support. *Third*, document analysis covered 15 types of documents, including the vision and mission statement, curriculum documents, work programs, teacher development programs, records of MGMP meetings and training, PAI lesson plans and teaching materials, academic supervision documents, teacher performance evaluations, and integrative learning resources. Documents were treated as a point of comparison for the interview and observation data, not as automatic evidence of successful implementation.

**Analytical Framework and Techniques**

The analysis was guided by a distinction between three levels of implementation. The *conceptual* level refers to how leaders and teachers understand the connections among religious sciences, general sciences, Islamic values, and lived reality. The *institutional* level refers to how that understanding is translated into policies, teacher development programs, teaching materials, collaboration, and supervision. The *pedagogical* level refers to the realization of connections between disciplines in learning objectives, activities, assessment, and reflection. These three levels serve as analytical tools, not as categories assumed to have been achieved.

Data were analyzed descriptively and interpretively by organizing the data according to the research focus, sorting relevant information, grouping it into themes, comparing across informants and techniques, and interpreting patterns (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2013). Trustworthiness was strengthened through source triangulation, comparing the accounts of KM, WKK, and the teachers, and through

method triangulation, comparing interview, observation, and documentary data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Differences between sources were not smoothed over to make the data appear uniform; instead, they were treated as analytical material and interpreted in context. Because the study was conducted in a single madrasah with five informants, the findings are intended as contextual understanding rather than statistical generalization.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Institutionalization of the Unity of Sciences Paradigm

At the conceptual level, the principal understands religious and general sciences as knowledge that ultimately derives from a single source, namely Allah, so the two should not be rigidly separated. This understanding does not remain a personal view. It is communicated at the meeting held at the start of each academic year and then incorporated into curriculum documents, teaching materials, teacher coaching programs, and supervision instruments.

The most concrete form of institutionalization is a requirement that every PAI teacher include at least one link between the lesson content and general science or real life in their teaching module. This link then becomes one of the items checked during academic supervision. The principal gave several examples of the expected connections: ritual purification with health and hygiene, *zakat* with mathematics and economics, and material about nature with natural science. Document analysis confirmed the availability of curriculum documents, professional development programs, teaching materials, supervision documents, and records of MGMP and coaching activities.

In the classroom, the picture was more varied. Observation showed that teachers did connect PAI content with other sciences and everyday life, but these connections generally served as examples that reinforced explanations rather than as a structure driving learning objectives, activities, and assessment. Cross-disciplinary development was also limited to certain topics. The teachers themselves acknowledged that integration sometimes appeared only in some lessons and not in every topic, although the instilling of Islamic values continued throughout.

### Strategies for Developing PAI Teachers' Professionalism

The madrasah does not develop teachers' four competences separately. The vice-principal for curriculum stressed that the four are treated as a single package and that professionalism without good character (*akhlak*) is regarded as incomplete. Islamic values serve as the bond that connects the four competences (Table 2).

**Table 2. Integration of Islamic values into the four competences of PAI teachers**

| Competence | Forms of integration identified |
|---|---|
| Pedagogical | Teaching modules incorporate the values of honesty, responsibility, and gratitude; these values are applied through opening activities, discussion, and closing |

| | |
|---|---|
| | reflection; methods are adapted to students' characteristics while maintaining the etiquette of learning (*adab*). |
| Professional | Teachers are encouraged to go beyond textbooks through MGMP and digital sources, for example by linking environmental topics with data on environmental degradation and with humanity's trust (*amanah*) as *khalīfah* (stewards of the earth). |
| Personal | Punctuality, honest completion of teaching journals, welcoming students, congregational prayer, and courteous communication; this aspect was confirmed through observation. |
| Social | The values of brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), mutual respect, and deliberation (*musyawarah*) in relationships with students, fellow teachers, education staff, parents, and the community. |

**Pedagogical and professional competences**

In the pedagogical domain, Islamic values are built in from the planning stage, so teaching modules do not merely set targets for content mastery. Teachers vary group discussion, question-and-answer sessions, and contextual examples according to students' characteristics. In the professional domain, teachers are encouraged to broaden their knowledge beyond textbooks. MGMP is considered useful because it provides examples of teaching materials and methods that can be tried immediately, but its frequency is not yet consistent for some subjects; in such cases, communication through online messaging groups serves as an alternative.

***Personal and social competences***

The integration of Islamic values is most evident in the personal domain, through exemplary conduct. Observation found discipline, responsibility, honesty, and courteous interaction in teachers' daily routines, so Islamic values are not merely stated in documents but are also present in professional behavior. In the social domain, a culture of deliberation, courteous communication, and cooperation characterizes the madrasah's working climate.

***The role of leadership and sharing mechanisms***

The principal acts as both director and mentor. Besides formulating policy, the principal makes room for consultation with teachers who face difficulties in their teaching, facilitates participation in MGMP, and conducts academic supervision. Professionalism is evaluated by checking the completeness of teaching materials, through classroom observation, and through student feedback. The madrasah also requires teachers who attend training to share what they have learned at teachers' council meetings. Because

the budget is limited, training opportunities are allocated on a rotating basis, and this sharing mechanism allows the benefits to reach other teachers.

**Supporting and Constraining Factors**

Implementation of the paradigm is supported by madrasah policy, leadership, collaboration among teachers, MGMP, and peer learning. Constraints, by contrast, stem mainly from facilities, learning resources, internet access, teachers' disciplinary backgrounds, time, and administrative workload (Table 3).

**Table 3. Factors supporting and constraining implementation**

| Factor | Findings |
|---|---|
| Supporting factors | |
| Madrasah policy | Provides clear direction through a practical indicator: a link to general science or real life in each teaching module. |
| Leadership | Space for consultation, support for MGMP participation, supervision, and evaluation based on classroom observation. |
| Collaboration among teachers | PAI teachers ask science teachers or other subject teachers for explanations when they need to understand particular concepts. |
| MGMP and training | Examples of teaching materials and methods that can be tried immediately; training outcomes are shared at teachers' council meetings. |
| Constraining factors | |
| Cross-disciplinary capacity | With a background in PAI, teachers need to relearn material when explaining basic science concepts. |
| Facilities and learning resources | The laboratory is inadequate, and books with an integrative orientation are still limited (confirmed by observation and documents). |
| Internet access | The connection is often slow because of the madrasah's geographical location, which limits the use of digital media. |
| Time and administration | Administrative tasks take up time that could be used to design integrative lessons. |
| Regularity of MGMP | MGMP meetings for some subjects are not yet held regularly. |

**From Institutionalization to Contextual Interconnection**

The principal's view that all knowledge comes from Allah is consistent with the basic principle of the Unity of Sciences and with the integration-interconnection idea that rejects the dichotomy of knowledge (Akmal, 2024). This view also accords with Kuntowijoyo's account of the interrelation between revelation and the products of human thought (Kuntowijoyo, 2004), and with al-Faruqi's emphasis on *tawhid* as the foundation of knowledge (Al-Faruqi and Sulaiman, 1989). What matters more, however, is how this understanding is turned into mechanisms. At MTs Nuril Huda, the idea of integration has been translated into an observable performance indicator: a cross-disciplinary link in the teaching module, which is checked during supervision. This is the essence of institutionalization: a shift from idea to policy, working instruments, and evaluation mechanisms.

Nevertheless, the classroom data show that current practice is better described as contextual interconnection than as deep integration of knowledge. Teachers connect PAI concepts with other knowledge to make the material more meaningful, but these connections have not yet become a framework that structures objectives, activities, and assessment. The analysis also revealed an intermediate layer not anticipated in the initial framework, namely *professional habituation*: teachers are becoming accustomed to looking for connections, although they do not yet design them systematically.

Thus, the findings do not indicate that the paradigm has "not been implemented." It has been implemented, but its depth is uneven. The requirement of "one link in the teaching module" is best understood as an initial stage of habituation, not as the ultimate measure of success for the Unity of Sciences. It is here that the gap between institutionalization and depth of implementation constitutes the study's main contribution: institutionalization provides direction and mechanisms, but deepening practice requires cross-disciplinary capacity, learning resources, collaboration, and time to design lessons.

**Islamic Values as the Glue of Teacher Competences**

The second finding shows that the Unity of Sciences in this madrasah is understood not only as linking subject matter but also as uniting teachers' professional competence with their Islamic character. Islamic values give direction to pedagogical competence; the development of knowledge becomes part of professional competence; exemplary conduct is embodied in personal competence; and brotherhood and deliberation are embodied in social competence. This pattern extends the understanding that the four competences set out in the regulations are not stand-alone abilities but a mutually reinforcing whole (Mulyasa, 2007).

Reading these findings through their philosophical foundations clarifies their meaning. Encouraging teachers to go beyond textbooks and engage with current issues such as environmental degradation reflects the intellectual earnestness in the pursuit of truth emphasized by Al-Kindi. PAI teachers' need to consult science teachers illustrates the Farabian breadth of knowledge, which no single person can master alone. Meanwhile, the emphasis on honesty, discipline, and exemplary conduct is in line with Al-Ghazali's ethical orientation. These findings are consistent with earlier work affirming

the relevance of Islamic values to teacher professionalism in a madrasah (Suriyati *et al.*, 2026), in an integrated Islamic kindergarten (Renawati, Jannah and Septriasa, 2025), and in the integration of Islamic values with modern science (Uyubah and Anawati, 2024). Unlike those studies, however, this study shows that such values operate most strongly in the personal and social domains, whereas the integrative pedagogical domain still needs to be deepened.

It should be noted that the data on coaching and professional behavior describe how competences are understood and enacted; they are not evidence of measurable improvement in competence. Assessing changes in competence would require longitudinal data or evaluation indicators that allow teachers' practice to be compared over time.

**Leadership, Collaboration, and the Implementation Ecosystem**

The principal's role as both director and mentor supports Fullan's argument that educational change requires leadership support, teacher capacity, resources, and a culture of collective learning (Fullan, 2007). Policy without mentoring is unlikely to be enough to change teaching habits. The obligation to share training outcomes is also noteworthy because it shifts professional development from an individual activity to collective learning. Even so, the availability of a space for sharing must be distinguished from actual change in the classroom; its effectiveness cannot be inferred without evidence of follow-up. The mechanism is better viewed as institutional capital that needs to be strengthened through documentation, follow-up discussion, and reflection on implementation.

Indeed, the collaboration between PAI and science teachers reflects the collaborative principle of the Unity of Sciences: connecting disciplines does not require every teacher to master all of them but can be achieved through dialogue among educators. At the same time, the constraints identified show that implementation problems should not be reduced to a "lack of teacher motivation." What is at work is an interaction among cross-disciplinary capacity, the availability of learning resources and facilities, time, and administrative demands. This finding complements Afriyanto et al.'s work on the importance of an open mindset: changes in individual mindset need to be accompanied by improvements in working conditions and in the institutional ecosystem (Afriyanto *et al.*, 2025).

**Implications and Limitations**

For the Unity of Sciences to move from contextual interconnection toward pedagogical integration, connections between disciplines need to be designed in sequence: content links, integrative learning objectives, integrative activities, integrative assessment, and reflection. In practical terms, this can be pursued by turning MGMP into a cross-subject forum that brings PAI and general-subject teachers together, by jointly compiling integrative learning resources, and by broadening the focus of supervision from the mere presence of links in teaching modules to their consistency across objectives, activities, and assessment. This study is limited to one madrasah, five informants, and a single period of data collection; the layered model proposed here is therefore an interpretive synthesis of the case studied, not a set of universal stages.

## CONCLUSION

The Unity of Sciences paradigm at MTs Nuril Huda Sumowono has been institutionalized through madrasah policy, the curriculum, teaching modules, teacher coaching, MGMP, and academic supervision. The paradigm also serves as a value orientation for developing PAI teachers' pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competences, with the principal's leadership and collaboration among teachers as its main drivers.

However, this institutionalization has not yet been fully matched by deep pedagogical integration. Links between PAI content, general sciences, and real life remain predominantly contextual interconnections and are not yet consistently designed into learning objectives, activities, assessment, and reflection. The depth of implementation is shaped by teachers' cross-disciplinary capacity, learning resources and facilities, internet access, time, administrative workload, and the regularity of professional collaboration.

The contribution of this study lies in distinguishing between the institutionalization of the paradigm and the depth of its enactment. Institutional policies and programs are a starting point, but deepening implementation requires sustained development of teacher capacity, collaboration between PAI and general-subject teachers, integrative learning resources, and opportunities to design and evaluate lessons reflectively. Future research could compare several madrasahs or adopt a longitudinal design to trace the movement from habituation toward more systematic pedagogical integration.

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