Research Horizon

ISSN: 2808-0696 (p), 2807-9531 (e)

Research Horizon
Volume: 06
Issue: 05
Year: 2026
Page: 2215-2228

Citation:
Maisura, Al Muhajir, Nasir, M., Putra, M. P., & Erliana, L. (2026). Islamic education transformation in historical perspective and its contribution to Indonesia's national education system. *Research Horizon*, *6*(5), 2215-2228.

Article History:
Received: July 16, 2026
Revised: September 10, 2026
Accepted: October 7, 2026
Online since: October 9, 2026

Islamic Education Transformation in Historical Perspective and Its Contribution to Indonesia's National Education System

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Abstract

The transformation of Islamic education has become increasingly important amid digitalization, the Industrial Revolution 4.0, Society 5.0, and the growing demand for 21st-century competencies. This study analyzes the transformation of Islamic education from a historical perspective and examines its contribution to the development of Indonesia's national education system. This study employed a qualitative library research design using a historical and conceptual approach. Data were collected from relevant scholarly literature, academic books, policy documents, and regulations and analyzed through historical analysis, thematic content analysis, and conceptual synthesis. The findings demonstrate that Islamic education has undergone continuous and multidimensional transformation in paradigms, institutions, curricula, learning approaches, values, and governance, from the classical period to the digital era. This transformation has strengthened its contribution to character formation, human resource development, knowledge integration, religious moderation, and 21st-century competencies. The study concludes that adaptive transformation while preserving Islamic values is essential for sustaining Islamic education's role in national educational development. The conceptual model developed provides implications for adaptive educational policies and future empirical research.

Keywords

Educational Transformation, Historical Perspective, Islamic Education, National Education System.

1. Introduction

The 21st century has fundamentally transformed education through the rapid development of digital technology, the Industrial Revolution 4.0, Society 5.0, and the increasing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in learning (Gazali & Sumarsono, 2025). These developments have shifted education from a knowledge-oriented approach toward competency development, emphasizing creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, character, and lifelong learning. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 also reinforces this transformation by promoting inclusive, equitable, and quality education. Consequently, educational transformation has become a strategic necessity for developing human resources capable of responding to social, economic, and technological changes (Nada et al., 2025). As an integral component of the Indonesian education system, Islamic education must therefore adapt to these developments while maintaining its religious and moral foundations.

In Indonesia, educational transformation occurs amid persistent challenges, including disparities in educational quality, the need to strengthen character education, and the readiness of educational institutions to adopt technological innovation. Policies such as the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum reflect efforts to establish a more flexible and competency-oriented education system (Sharif et al., 2025). However, technological and curricular transformation alone is insufficient because educational development also requires the integration of moral, ethical, and religious values. Islamic education occupies a strategic position in this context because of its longstanding contributions to character formation, literacy, religious values, and human resource development. Islamic education has continuously evolved from mosque-based learning and *kuttab* to madrasahs, Islamic boarding schools, and Islamic higher education institutions, adapting to changing social, political, cultural, and scientific conditions (Setyawan & Roqib, 2025). This historical adaptability demonstrates that Islamic education is not merely a means of religious transmission but also a mechanism for knowledge development, character formation, and social empowerment.

Despite extensive research on Islamic education, existing studies remain relatively fragmented. Previous research has examined specific historical periods, the development of Islamic boarding schools and madrasahs, and contemporary Islamic education policies. Raharjo and Yahdi (2025), for example, examined the development of early Islamic education in Indonesia, while Nurazizah et al. (2025) focused on the historical development of Islamic boarding schools and madrasahs. Amalia et al. (2025) examined the compatibility of the Merdeka Curriculum with Islamic values in madrasahs. Although these studies provide important insights, they generally address historical, institutional, or policy dimensions separately. Limited attention has been given to integrating the transformation of Islamic education as a continuous historical process involving changes in educational paradigms, institutions, curricula, and learning approaches, while simultaneously explaining its contribution to the development of Indonesia's national education system. The relationship between historical transformation and contemporary educational demands, particularly digitalization and 21st-century competencies, also remains insufficiently synthesized.

This research addresses this gap by adopting a historical-transformative perspective that examines Islamic education as a dynamic system that continuously adapts to societal needs and educational developments. Rather than viewing each historical period as an isolated phase, this study synthesizes transformations in educational paradigms, institutions, curricula, and learning systems and relates them to the development of the national education system. The study also develops a conceptual model linking historical evolution, institutional transformation,

curriculum reform, learning innovation, and the strengthening of the national education system. Thus, the research contributes theoretically by integrating the historical study of Islamic education with educational transformation and national education development. The findings provide a reference for policymakers, Islamic educational institutions, and other stakeholders in developing educational policies and practices that are adaptive, inclusive, character-oriented, and responsive to technological and social change.

Based on this background and research gap, this study aims to analyze the transformation of Islamic education from a historical perspective as a continuous process from the classical period to the modern era and to explain the contribution of Islamic education transformation to the development of Indonesia's national education system. Through these objectives, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the historical adaptability of Islamic education can support the development of an education system that integrates religious values, knowledge, character, and 21st-century competencies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Historical Transformation of Islamic Education

Islamic education is an educational system that develops human potential holistically of integrating spiritual, intellectual, moral, and social dimensions based on the Qur'an and Sunnah. Thus, its function extends beyond religious knowledge transmission to character formation, scientific development, and civilizational advancement (Sahid & Ali, 2025). Throughout its development, Islamic education has continuously adapted to social, cultural, political, economic, and technological changes through institutional, curricular, and pedagogical innovations. The transformation perspective therefore views change as an inherent characteristic of Islamic education that enables it to remain relevant across historical periods. In Indonesia, this transformation developed gradually from the arrival of Islam in the archipelago to the establishment of modern Islamic educational institutions. Early Islamic education developed through mosques and religious communities as centers of knowledge dissemination and Muslim character formation (Raharjo & Yahdi, 2025). The subsequent development of Islamic boarding schools and madrasahs demonstrated the integration of Islamic scholarly traditions with local community needs (Nurazizah et al., 2025).

This historical transformation continued through institutional modernization. Sumanti et al. (2024) identified changes in the structure and function of Islamic educational institutions in North Sumatra, while Rasyad et al. (2026) showed of the Nahdlatul Wathan educational system adapted to social and political changes during the transitional period. These findings indicate that institutional and educational changes constitute an integral part of the historical evolution of Islamic education rather than isolated responses to external pressures. Synthesizing these studies, the transformation of Islamic education can be understood as a continuous process involving changes in paradigms, institutions, curricula, and learning practices while maintaining fundamental Islamic values. This historical adaptability explains the persistence of Islamic education across different periods and provides an important basis for understanding its contemporary transformation in response to changing societal and educational demands.

2.2. Contribution of Islamic Education Transformation

The transformation of Islamic education has contributed substantially to the development of Indonesia's national education system. Values cultivated through Islamic education, including character, moral integrity, social responsibility, and religious moderation, support the broader goals of national education. The integration of Islamic boarding schools and madrasahs into the national education

system further strengthens the strategic position of Islamic education in human resource development. In the context of contemporary educational reform, Amalia et al. (2025) demonstrated that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs is compatible with Islamic educational values, enabling academic competencies to be developed alongside character formation. Similarly, Siregar et al. (2025) emphasized the importance of strengthening Islamic education teachers' competencies in supporting educational transformation in the digital era. These findings indicate that Islamic education can contribute to an education system that is adaptive, character-based, and responsive to 21st-century challenges.

Nevertheless, previous studies tend to examine Islamic education from sector-specific perspectives. Raharjo and Yahdi (2025) focused on early Islamic education, whereas Nurazizah et al. (2025) examined Islamic boarding schools and madrasahs. Sumanti et al. (2024) and Rasyad et al. (2026) addressed institutional transformation in specific contexts, while Amalia et al. (2025) and Siregar (2025) emphasized curriculum reform and teacher competency. These studies have not comprehensively integrated historical evolution with transformations in paradigms, institutions, curricula, and learning systems, nor have they clearly explained their contribution to the national education system. Therefore, this study develops a conceptual framework linking historical evolution to paradigm shifts, institutional transformation, curriculum reform, and learning innovation, which in turn strengthens character development, human resource quality, the integration of Islamic values with 21st-century competencies, and adaptive educational policies. This framework constitutes the main conceptual contribution of the study.

3. Methods

This study used a qualitative library research design to analyze the transformation of Islamic education from a historical perspective and its contribution to the development of Indonesia's national education system (Fitriani et al., 2026). The design was selected because it enables an in-depth examination and synthesis of scientific literature concerning the development of Islamic education from the classical to the modern era. The study used and descriptive-analytical, conceptual approach, combining historical and conceptual methods. The historical approach traced the development of Islamic education across different periods, while the conceptual approach identified transformations in educational paradigms, institutions, curricula, and learning systems and examined their contribution to the national education system (Prayogi, 2021).

The research data consisted of secondary sources, including reputable international journal articles, accredited national journals, academic books, educational policy documents, and laws and regulations related to Islamic education and the national education system (Sari et al., 2025). Supporting sources included scientific proceedings, dissertations, and relevant research reports (Rajagukguk et al., 2026). Literature was collected systematically through keyword identification, database searches, relevance screening, source-quality evaluation, and thematic classification. The literature selection followed inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure relevance and academic quality (Mubarok, 2026). Sources discussing Islamic education transformation, its historical development, educational reform, and the national education system were included, whereas sources lacking scientific credibility or substantial relevance to the research objectives were excluded (As-Shidqi et al., 2025). Classical works were retained when they provided important theoretical or historical foundations.

Data collection and validation involved cross-referencing information across sources and evaluating the credibility of publishers, journal reputation, and the substantive quality of references (Sabrina et al., 2026). Data were analyzed through historical analysis and thematic content analysis. Historical analysis was used to

identify the development of Islamic education across historical periods, whereas thematic analysis identified recurring patterns concerning changes in educational paradigms, institutions, curricula, learning approaches, and contributions to the national education system (Mudhiah & Rusdiah, 2024). The findings were subsequently integrated through conceptual synthesis to develop an understanding of the relationship between historical transformation and national educational development (Komariah et al., 2026). The research procedure consisted of problem identification, literature searching and selection, thematic classification, historical and thematic analysis, conceptual synthesis, and interpretation of findings (Nisa & Nashrullah, 2026). This procedure produced a conceptual model linking the historical evolution of Islamic education with paradigm transformation, institutional development, curriculum reform, learning innovation, and the strengthening of Indonesia's national education system.

4. Results

4.1. Historical Transformation of Islamic Education

The analysis of selected literature demonstrates that the transformation of Islamic education is a continuous and adaptive historical process shaped by social, political, cultural, scientific, and technological developments. The transformation can be traced across major periods, from the era of the Prophet Muhammad and the Caliphate to the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, the development of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago, the colonial and post-independence periods, the reform era, and the digital age. The synthesis indicates that transformation has occurred not only institutionally but also through changes in educational paradigms, curricula, learning approaches, and the broader functions of education in developing character and community competencies. Thus, the historical development of Islamic education reflects a continuous process of adaptation that enables it to remain relevant to the development of the national education system (Latief et al., 2021).

During the era of the Prophet Muhammad, Islamic education established the foundational principles that shaped subsequent educational development. Education emphasized the integrated development of faith, morality, and intellectual capacity through learning centered on the Qur'an and Sunnah. Mosques functioned as centers of education, community development, and knowledge dissemination, integrating spiritual, social, and intellectual dimensions. Learning emphasized role modeling, dialogue, deliberation, and the internalization of moral values in daily life. This period therefore established the integration of knowledge, character, and morality as fundamental principles of Islamic education (Niyozov & Memon, 2011).

During the Caliphate, Islamic education expanded alongside the growth of Islamic territories and increasing educational needs. New learning centers emerged, strengthening the dissemination of knowledge across regions. The codification of knowledge developed alongside *halaqah* activities, while educational content expanded beyond religious instruction to include administration, law, and social affairs. This development marked a transition toward a more organized and increasingly complex educational structure (Saputra et al., 2026).

The Umayyad period represented an important stage in institutional transformation. The expansion of *kuttab* as a primary educational institution was supported by increasingly structured state administration. Arabic education gained greater importance for scientific and administrative purposes, while the growing demand for specialists encouraged the differentiation of academic fields. Islamic education consequently moved from relatively simple learning practices toward a more formal institutional structure with clearer educational functions (Taofik, 2020).

The Abbasid period marked a major expansion of Islamic intellectual and educational development. The establishment of the House of Wisdom symbolized a

scientific tradition that connected religious knowledge with philosophy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and other disciplines. The development of madrasas as formal institutions, together with research, translation, and literary activities, expanded access to knowledge and strengthened intellectual traditions. Consequently, Islamic education shifted from primarily transmitting knowledge to producing and advancing it through intellectual inquiry and innovation (Chande, 2023).

In the Indonesian archipelago, Islamic education developed through extensive interaction and acculturation with local cultures. Islamic boarding schools, *surau*, and *dayah* emerged as community-based institutions integrating religious instruction, character formation, and social development. Their flexibility in incorporating local traditions enabled Islamic education to expand while maintaining its fundamental values. This adaptability became an important factor in the sustained development and acceptance of Islamic education within Indonesian society (Humaidi et al., 2026).

During the colonial period, restrictive policies toward traditional educational institutions encouraged institutional reform. Islamic boarding schools underwent modernization, while madrasahs emerged with more organized educational structures. Islamic organizations also expanded access to education, improved learning quality, and strengthened national consciousness. Islamic education therefore developed beyond its religious function, becoming an important instrument for strengthening national identity and supporting the struggle for independence (Hefner, 2009).

The post-independence period was characterized by the increasingly formal integration of Islamic education into Indonesia's national education system. The recognition of madrasahs within formal education, the development of Islamic higher education, and the introduction of national educational regulations strengthened the institutional position of Islamic education. Its functions consequently expanded to include scientific development, educator professionalization, and human resource development, reflecting a closer and more inclusive relationship between the state and Islamic education (Susanto et al., 2026).

The reform era further transformed Islamic education through decentralization and greater institutional autonomy. Islamic educational institutions gained opportunities to innovate in curriculum development, institutional governance, educational programs, and learning processes according to community needs. The modernization of Islamic boarding schools and improvements in educational management strengthened the flexibility and adaptability of Islamic education within the changing national educational environment (Moslimany et al., 2024).

The digital era has introduced a new phase of transformation through digital technology, online and hybrid learning, and the emerging integration of AI. These developments encourage a shift from teacher-centered learning toward more collaborative, flexible, and student-oriented approaches. At the same time, the demands of 21st-century competencies and Society 5.0 require Islamic educational institutions to integrate digital literacy, critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration while maintaining spiritual and moral values (Hayati et al., 2024). Thus, contemporary transformation involves not merely adopting technology but preserving Islamic identity while developing an innovative, inclusive, and future-oriented education system.

4.2. Transformation of Islamic Education to the National Education System

The synthesis of the literature demonstrates that the transformation of Islamic education involves fundamental changes in educational paradigms, institutions, curricula, learning approaches, and their relationship with the national education system. The educational paradigm has shifted from teacher-centered learning, in which teachers serve as primary sources of knowledge, toward student-centered

learning that emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving. This shift is accompanied by a broader orientation from knowledge transmission toward competency development encompassing knowledge, skills, character, and digital literacy. Islamic education has also evolved from a predominantly normative approach focused on religious sciences to an integrative approach that connects religious knowledge with modern science while maintaining Islamic identity within an increasingly global educational context (Mukhlis et al., 2026).

Institutional transformation reflects this paradigm shift. Mosques developed into *kuttabs* and, later, madrasahs as more structured educational institutions. In Indonesia, this development continued through Islamic boarding schools and later Islamic universities, expanding the function of Islamic education from religious instruction to scientific development, research, innovation, and community service. These changes demonstrate that institutional transformation represents not merely organizational change but also an adaptation of educational functions to social, political, economic, and scientific developments (Nawawi, 2023).

Curriculum transformation has similarly occurred in response to changing societal needs. Classical Islamic education emphasized the Qur'an, *hadith*, *fiqh*, Arabic, and moral development, while subsequent developments incorporated philosophy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and other disciplines. In contemporary Indonesia, Islamic education curricula have become increasingly adaptive to national education policies, including the Merdeka Curriculum, while integrating Islamic values, character education, digital literacy, and 21st-century competencies to support holistic student development (Rohman et al., 2024). Learning approaches have also evolved from *halaqah* and direct teacher-student interaction toward discussion, deliberation, scientific dialogue, project-based learning, collaborative learning, and digital learning. The integration of digital platforms and AI further expands opportunities for flexible and participatory learning while requiring the preservation of Islamic educational values (Halimah et al., 2024).

The transformation of Islamic education contributes substantially to the national education system through character and moral development, religious moderation, internalization of national values, and the integration of religious and academic competencies. It also supports human resource development and integrity-based leadership through ethics, social responsibility, and academic culture (Ikhlas et al., 2026). The findings indicate that Islamic education has undergone a multidimensional and interconnected transformation involving paradigms, institutions, curricula, learning, and educational policies. Its historical continuity is supported by the ability to adapt to changing societal needs while preserving fundamental Islamic values. This adaptive capacity strengthens the relevance of Islamic education as a foundation for the development of an inclusive, sustainable, and nationally integrated education system in Indonesia (Akrim, 2022).

Table 1. Historical Transformation of Islamic Education Across Different Periods

Historical Period	Educational Characteristics	Major Transformation	Contribution to National Education
Prophet Era	Character- and faith-based education centered in the mosque	Establishment of Islamic educational foundations	Formation of moral and character education
The Caliphs	Expansion of learning circles and knowledge codification	Structured educational organization	Development of administrative and legal education

Historical Period	Educational Characteristics	Major Transformation	Contribution to National Education
Umayyad	Institutional development through *kuttab*	Formalization of elementary education	Standardization of educational administration
Abbasid	Integration of religious and scientific knowledge	Establishment of madrasas and research traditions	Advancement of scientific culture
Archipelago	Adaptation to local culture	Development of Islamic boarding schools, surau, and *dayah*	Expansion of community-based education
Colonial	Educational reform under colonial policies	Modernization of Islamic boarding schools and the emergence of madrasas	Strengthening national awareness
Independence	Integration into national education	Legal recognition of Islamic educational institutions	Contribution to national education system
Reform	Decentralization and institutional autonomy	Curriculum diversification	Improvement of educational quality
Digital Era	Technology-enabled education	Digital transformation and AI integration	Strengthening 21st-century competencies

Table 1 shows that the transformation of Islamic education follows an evolutionary pattern that unfolds gradually across historical periods. Each phase does not completely replace the previous system, but rather evolves the functions and characteristics of education according to changing societal needs. The analysis also reveals a shift in educational goals from the formation of Muslim communities to the development of knowledge, human resource development, and increasing global competitiveness. These changes occur concurrently with a transformation in the educational paradigm that increasingly emphasizes the balance between Islamic values, mastery of knowledge, and the development of 21st-century competencies.

Table 2. Conceptual Model of Islamic Education Transformation and Contribution

Transformation Dimension	Historical Evidence	Educational Impact	Contribution to National Education
Paradigm	Shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning	Active and competency-based learning	Improved educational quality
Institution	Evolution from mosque to Islamic university	Diversification of educational institutions	Strengthened educational accessibility
Curriculum	Integration of religion and general sciences	Holistic curriculum	Balanced competence and character
Learning	From *halaqah* to digital and collaborative learning	Innovative learning process	Development of 21st-century skills
Values	Preservation of Islamic ethics	Character education	Religious moderation and citizenship
Governance	Integration with national education policies	Better institutional management	Sustainable educational development

Based on Table 2, the research findings demonstrate that the transformation of Islamic education is a multidimensional process that continues through changes in paradigms, institutions, curriculum, learning, and educational governance. This transformation not only reflects Islamic education's ability to adapt to historical changes but also demonstrates its contribution to shaping national character, improving the quality of human resources, and strengthening the national education system. Based on the historical and conceptual synthesis conducted, this research produces a model of Islamic education transformation that explains the relationship between historical evolution, changes in educational paradigms, institutional transformation, curriculum reform, learning innovation, and their contribution to the development of the national education system. This model is the research's main conceptual contribution. It can serve as an analytical framework for further research and of formulating Islamic education policies that are more adaptive to future challenges.

5. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the transformation of Islamic education is an evolutionary process shaped by social, political, cultural, and scientific dynamics, with each period refining existing practices to meet changing societal needs while preserving fundamental values. This finding aligns with Sumanti et al. (2024), Raharjo and Yahdi (2025), and Rasyad et al. (2026), who highlight the adaptability of Islamic education to changing social contexts. Rahman and Azzahra (2024) similarly emphasize maintaining Islamic identity amid modernity, making adaptability essential to its sustainability.

The paradigm transformation also indicates a shift from normative and teacher-centered education toward integrative, student-centered, and competency-oriented approaches. This finding aligns with Bratianu et al. (2020), who emphasize competency-based education in responding to changing educational and societal demands. The shift reflects transformative learning and constructivist perspectives, emphasizing critical reflection and learner experience in knowledge construction, while integrating intellectual, spiritual, social, and moral dimensions to meet 21st-century educational needs.

Curriculum transformation increasingly integrates religious and general sciences within a holistic framework. Amalia et al. (2025) show that the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs can align with Islamic educational values by integrating religious values, academic competencies, character education, digital literacy, and 21st-century skills. Similarly, changes from *halaqah* toward discussion, project-based, collaborative, and digital learning reflect a shift toward active and participatory approaches. Technological transformation therefore requires not only digital adoption but also integration with Islamic values, while AI and Society 5.0 create opportunities for personalized learning, digital literacy, and data-informed practices without neglecting ethical and spiritual foundations (Kesuma et al., 2025).

The findings also confirm that Islamic education contributes substantially to the national education system through character formation, moral development, religious moderation, human resource development, and integrity-based leadership. This finding is consistent with Ibrahim et al. (2024), who emphasize the role of Islamic education in addressing contemporary ethical and moral challenges. The integration of religious values with academic competencies represents a distinctive contribution of Islamic education to national educational development by supporting the formation of intellectually capable and ethically responsible graduates.

Islamic education develops through an adaptive rather than linear pattern. Each historical period contributes to changes in paradigms, institutions, curricula, and learning while maintaining continuity with earlier foundations. This finding is

consistent with Eden et al. (2024), who emphasize that educational reform must respond to changing social conditions while addressing broader issues of access and educational quality. Therefore, educational policies should accommodate historical continuity while remaining adaptive to future societal and technological changes.

The conceptual model developed in this study integrates paradigm, institutional, curriculum, learning, values, and governance dimensions into a single framework. This finding extends Gusrianto et al. (2025), who emphasize educational transformation through teacher creativity, performance, and engagement, by placing such transformation within a broader historical and institutional framework. The model therefore contributes theoretically by explaining educational transformation as an interconnected process involving history, values, institutions, and policy rather than as isolated changes in curriculum or technology.

The findings support Mudzakir and Aslan (2025), who identify the relationship between curriculum and educational policy as important for improving human resource quality. This study extends that perspective by showing that the contribution of Islamic education to the national education system is multidimensional and historically grounded. The findings imply that future policies should integrate technological innovation, character development, institutional adaptability, and Islamic values. Thus, the transformation of Islamic education provides both a theoretical foundation and a practical reference for strengthening an adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable national education system.

6. Conclusion

This study concludes that the transformation of Islamic education is a historical process that occurs in an evolutionary, multidimensional manner and adapts to social, political, and cultural changes, as well as developments in science and technology. This transformation is not only reflected in changes in educational institutions from mosques, *kuttab* (Islamic boarding schools), madrasas, Islamic boarding schools, to Islamic universities, but also encompasses changes in educational paradigms, curriculum development, learning innovation, and strengthening educational governance. The results of the study indicate that Islamic education contributes significantly to the development of the national education system by strengthening character education, moral formation, religious moderation, knowledge integration, and the quality of human resources in line with the demands of 21st-century competencies. These findings confirm that the ability of Islamic education to maintain fundamental values while adapting to change is a key factor supporting its sustainable role in national education development.

This research also produces a conceptual model of Islamic education transformation that integrates the dimensions of history, paradigm, institutions, curriculum, learning, values, and governance as a single framework explaining the relationship between the evolution of Islamic education and the development of the national education system in Indonesia. This model broadens the study of Islamic education by offering a more comprehensive perspective than previous research that tends to discuss these aspects separately. However, this research remains limited to a qualitative library research approach, so the findings require further testing through empirical research in various Islamic educational institutions. Therefore, further research is recommended to test this conceptual model in various educational contexts, explore the integration of Artificial Intelligence and digital transformation in Islamic education, and conduct cross-country comparative studies to enrich strategies for developing an innovative, adaptive, and globally competitive Islamic education system.

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Acknowledgment
We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of individuals who supported the completion of this article.

Funding Information
This research did not receive any funding.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval and Originality Statement
Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

Data Disclosure Statement
The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



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