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The Structural Tension Between the Rationality of Higher Education Professionalization and the Transformational Function of Islamic Religious Education: An Analysis of the Structural Position of Islamic Religious Education as a General Compulsory Course

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the structural position of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) within the higher education curriculum in Indonesia and its implications for the transformational function of religious education in public universities. The study employs a qualitative library research approach through the analysis of higher education policies and curriculum structures. Primary data are derived from Law Number 12 of 2012 on Higher Education, Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 3 of 2020 concerning National Standards for Higher Education, as well as literature on Outcome Based Education (OBE), the professionalization of higher education, and Islamic education. The findings indicate that the placement of IRE as part of the MKWU. reflects the dominance of professionalization rationality in modern higher education. A curriculum structure based on learning outcomes prioritizes disciplinary competencies and professional skills over the formation of ethical orientation. Consequently, IRE remains outside the core disciplinary curriculum, occupies limited curricular space, and lacks integration with the development of students' professional ethics. This article argues for the necessity of reorienting religious education through the integration of ethical dimensions into program learning outcomes and the development of an ethical ecosystem within higher education.

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Introduction

The transformation of modern higher education has been marked by the growing dominance of professionalization through the implementation of Outcome Based Education (OBE), (Spady, 1994) learning outcomes, and competency-oriented educational frameworks. Higher education institutions are no longer understood merely as spaces for intellectual development and the transmission of knowledge, but also as institutions responsible for producing graduates who are competitive, adaptive, and relevant to labor market demands. Within this framework, the success of higher education is increasingly measured by an institution's ability to generate professional competencies that can be verified through learning outcomes, graduate employability, and curricular relevance to industrial and societal needs (Wati et al., 2023). This shift demonstrates how higher education has become increasingly governed by the logic of performativity and institutional efficiency, positioning measurable competencies at the center of educational priorities (Tilaar, 2012).

Such transformation has fundamentally restructured the design of higher education curricula. Curricula are no longer primarily conceived as instruments for transmitting knowledge, but rather as strategic mechanisms for producing specific graduate profiles aligned with professional demands (Brauer, 2021). In the OBE framework developed by William G. Spady (1994), educational processes are designed backward from intended learning outcomes, requiring every course to demonstrate a clear contribution to program competencies. Consequently, courses directly supporting disciplinary competencies occupy increasingly dominant positions within curricular structures, while courses lacking direct relevance to professional competency formation tend to be positioned as complementary components (Azra, 2012). In this regard, curriculum structures cannot be regarded as neutral administrative arrangements; rather, they represent the epistemic priorities operating within modern higher education systems (Readings, 1996).

This tendency is closely related to the rise of professional rationality in higher education. Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades (2004) conceptualize this phenomenon through the notion of academic capitalism, referring to the increasing organization of universities according to market logic, economic competition, and industrial demands. Under such conditions, academic activities, research agendas, and curricular structures become increasingly oriented toward producing competencies with economic and professional value (Junaidi, dkk., 2020). Simultaneously, Bill Readings argues that contemporary universities are increasingly governed by institutional performativity, where educational quality is evaluated through indicators of productivity, efficiency, and graduate competitiveness. As a consequence, the distribution of epistemic legitimacy within the curriculum becomes uneven, privileging professionally oriented disciplinary knowledge over ethical, normative, and transformative forms of knowledge (Muhaimin, 2009).

Amid the dominance of such rationality, Islamic Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Islam* or *PAI*) continues to occupy an important normative position within the Indonesian higher education system. Law Number 12 of 2012 (Undang-Undang (UU) Nomor 12 Tahun 2012 Tentang Pendidikan Tinggi, 2012) concerning Higher Education mandates religious education as a compulsory curricular component categorized under the General Mandatory Courses (*Mata Kuliah Wajib Umum* or *MKWU*) (Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi Kementerian Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia Nomor 84/E/KPT/2020 Tentang Pedoman Pelaksanaan Mata Kuliah Wajib Pada Kurikulum Pendidikan Tinggi, 2020). Normatively, PAI is not intended merely as a medium for transmitting religious knowledge, but also as a space for cultivating moral integrity, ethical awareness, and students' social responsibility. Religious education is expected to construct a value orientation that guides students in understanding the relationship between knowledge, professional life, and moral responsibility within society (Hanafi, 2016).

Structurally, however, PAI occupies a position outside the disciplinary core curriculum that forms students' professional competencies. Its placement as part of the MKWU category prevents its direct integration into the network of courses shaping academic and professional identities within study programs (Daria, 2022). In practice, higher education curricula prioritize courses that directly contribute to disciplinary learning outcomes and professional competencies. Consequently, the curricular space available for PAI remains limited in terms of credit allocation, continuity of instruction, and integration with professional ethics formation in specific disciplines. This condition demonstrates that although religious education possesses strong normative legitimacy, its structural legitimacy within the architecture of higher education curricula remains marginal (Hanafi, 2016).

This situation reveals a paradigmatic tension between the professionalization of higher education and the transformative function of religious education (Rao, 2020). On the one hand, PAI is burdened with significant expectations to shape students' moral character, ethical integrity, and value orientation. On the other hand, higher education curricula structurally position religious education outside the central process of professional competency formation. As a result, an institutional paradox emerges in which religious education is expected to perform broad transformative functions without receiving adequate structural support within curricular design (Abdullah, 2012). Therefore, the problem of PAI cannot be understood merely as a pedagogical issue or a matter of instructional effectiveness, but rather as a structural issue rooted in curriculum architecture and the distribution of epistemic legitimacy in modern higher education.

Previous studies on PAI in higher education have predominantly focused on instructional methods, character education, OBE implementation, and graduate competency achievement. Such studies generally approach the issue of PAI as a pedagogical and technical problem of curriculum implementation (Suradji et al., 2024). In contrast, analyses examining the structural position of PAI within higher education curriculum architecture and its relationship to the rationality of professionalization remain limited (Daria, 2022). Yet, the restricted transformative function of PAI is not solely caused by ineffective pedagogy or weak value internalization (Ahda et al., 2026), but is also closely related to its structural position outside the central framework of disciplinary competency formation.

Based on these conditions, this article aims to analyze the structural position of Islamic Religious Education within Indonesian higher education policy and curriculum design, as well as its implications for the transformative function of religious education in public universities. Drawing upon the perspectives of OBE, academic capitalism, and curriculum structure analysis, this article argues that the placement of PAI as part of the MKWU category reflects the dominance of professionalization rationality within modern higher education, producing structural inequality between professional competency formation and students' ethical transformation. Through this analysis, the article seeks to demonstrate that the primary problem of PAI in higher education is not merely pedagogical, but fundamentally structural, rooted in curriculum design and the epistemic orientation of contemporary higher education.

Method

This study employs a qualitative library research approach with a critical orientation toward higher education curriculum policy and knowledge distribution within curriculum structures. The selection of this approach is grounded in the nature of the research problem itself. The issue examined in this article, namely the structural position of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) within the professionalized architecture of higher education curricula, operates primarily at the level of policy rationality, curriculum design, and epistemic hierarchy rather than at the level of individual behavior or classroom interaction. Consequently, this

study approaches curriculum policy not as a neutral administrative framework, but as a site where particular forms of knowledge are prioritized, legitimized, and structurally organized within higher education.

The primary data of this study consist of policy and regulatory documents that shape the curriculum architecture of Indonesian higher education, including Law Number 12 of 2012 on Higher Education, Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 3 of 2020 concerning National Standards for Higher Education, and derivative regulations related to the implementation of the MKWU and Outcome Based Education (OBE). These documents are analyzed as representations of broader educational rationalities concerning competence, professionalism, and curricular legitimacy. Secondary data consist of scholarly works relevant to the conceptual framework of this study, including literature on academic capitalism and the professionalization of higher education, curriculum structure and knowledge classification, as well as transformative Islamic education. Particular attention is given to the works of Slaughter and Rhoades (2004), Bernstein (2000), Al-Attas (1978), and Wan Daud (1998), alongside contemporary studies on Islamic Religious Education in higher education.

Data analysis was conducted through critical content analysis and interpretative analysis. The first stage focused on identifying how curriculum policies define learning outcomes, distribute curricular authority, and position disciplinary and non-disciplinary knowledge within higher education structures. The second stage involved interpreting these findings through the theoretical perspectives employed in this study. Bernstein's concept of recontextualization was used to analyze how IRE is positioned within competency-based curricula, while the framework of academic capitalism was employed to interpret the dominance of professionalization rationality in higher education policy. In addition, the perspective of transformative Islamic education was used to examine the gap between the normative expectations imposed on IRE and the structural capacity provided to support its transformative function. Through this analytical framework, the study seeks not only to describe the position of IRE within higher education curricula, but also to explain the structural mechanisms that shape its marginalization within contemporary professionalized higher education systems.

Results and Discussion

1. The Rationality of Professionalization as the Organizing Principle of Higher Education Curricula

Modern higher education has not transformed organically from within itself. The changes that have occurred over the past two decades, particularly the strengthening of competency orientation, the standardization of learning outcomes, and market relevance as criteria of educational quality, are responses to external pressures of a structural nature (Olssen & Peters, 2005). Economic globalization, competition among universities for rankings and international accreditation, and increasing demands for public accountability regarding educational investment have pushed higher education institutions to adopt a logic previously associated primarily with the corporate world: efficiency, measurable productivity, and market relevance. Slaughter and Leslie (1997) describe this transformation as *academic capitalism*, a condition in which universities progressively organize themselves according to market rationality, ranging from the management of resources and curriculum design to determining which forms of knowledge deserve prioritization. Under these conditions, universities are no longer accountable solely to academic communities and intellectual missions, but also to labor markets, industries, and evolving global competency standards (Marginson, 2016).

Outcome Based Education (OBE) represents the most systematic product of this rationality. When Spady (1994) introduced OBE, the argument appeared straightforward and reasonable: education should begin with clarity regarding intended outcomes rather than with inherited

curricular traditions accepted without question. However, the OBE framework did not evolve within a value-neutral environment. It was adopted and adapted within the context of academic-capitalistic pressures that transformed the question of "what should be achieved" into "what can be measured and communicated to external stakeholders." Learning outcomes shifted from substantive educational objectives into instruments of institutional accountability (Tomlinson & Watermeyer, 2022). Competencies that cannot be standardized, verified, and reported in formats compatible with accreditation and ranking systems tend to lose legitimacy, not because they are unimportant, but because they are incompatible with the logic of performativity that drives the system. Lyotard (1984) anticipated this condition when he argued that in postmodern societies, knowledge is increasingly legitimized not by its truth, but by its performativity, namely its capacity to generate outputs that can be measured and optimized.

In the Indonesian context, this rationality does not merely exist as academic discourse but has become concretely embedded within curriculum regulations. An analysis of Law Number 12 of 2012 on Higher Education and Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 3 of 2020 (Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Nomor 3 Tahun 2020 Tentang Standar Nasional Pendidikan Tinggi, 2020) concerning National Standards for Higher Education demonstrates that these regulations are not merely administrative instruments governing technical educational procedures. Rather, they are texts that embody and reproduce particular hierarchies of knowledge legitimacy. Ministerial Regulation Number 3 of 2020 explicitly organizes curricula into structures that distinguish between courses forming the core competencies of academic programs and courses categorized as nationally mandated general subjects. This distinction is not neutral. It reflects what Bernstein (2000) describes as the mechanism of *recontextualization*, namely the process of selecting and reorganizing knowledge according to the governing principles of a particular institutional field. When regulations position graduate learning outcomes as the primary reference for curriculum design and define disciplinary competencies as the core of academic programs, they simultaneously construct an implicit curricular hierarchy: knowledge that directly contributes to measurable professional competencies occupies a central position, while knowledge that is formative, normative, or transformational is placed outside the core as legally compulsory but epistemically marginal components.

This curricular hierarchy does not operate through explicit prohibition or elimination. No regulation directly states that religious education is less important than disciplinary courses. The power of professionalization rationality operates far more subtly than that: through the distribution of credit hours that reflect institutional priorities, through course groupings that determine the degree of integration with the formation of core competencies, and through curriculum design logics that systematically privilege knowledge capable of being operationalized within standardized learning outcome frameworks. This is why the problem of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in higher education cannot be resolved merely through pedagogical improvement. Before discussing learning methods or the effectiveness of value internalization, it is necessary to understand that IRE operates within a curriculum architecture not designed to support its transformational function, because that architecture itself is built upon a rationality fundamentally different from the rationality underlying religious education.

2. The Structural Position of Islamic Religious Education in the Curriculum Architecture of Indonesian Higher Education

Normatively, the position of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) within Indonesian higher education appears strong. Law Number 12 of 2012 (Undang-Undang (UU) Nomor 12 Tahun 2012 Tentang Pendidikan Tinggi, 2012) establishes religious education as a compulsory

curriculum component that cannot be negotiated, placing it alongside Pancasila education, citizenship education, and the Indonesian language within the category of the *MKWU*. This obligation is national in scope and applies to all universities without exception, regardless of institutional type, level, or academic orientation. At first glance, this position appears robust. However, normative strength and structural strength are fundamentally different, and this distinction constitutes the central problem of IRE in higher education.

The crucial question is not whether IRE is compulsory, but what the curriculum system actually means when it mandates something. Within the logic of competency-based curricula, "compulsory" possesses two distinct dimensions. First, it is normatively compulsory: an obligation derived from legal or policy mandates, whose compliance is verified through the presence of the course within the curriculum structure. Second, it is epistemically compulsory: the central position of a body of knowledge within the network of competency formation, where its integration with other courses is organic and mutually reinforcing. IRE belongs to the first category. It exists within the curriculum because regulations require it, not because the curriculum architecture is designed to integrate it substantively into the process of developing students' professional competencies. This distinction is not merely semantic. It determines the actual degree of influence a course possesses over students' academic and professional orientations.

To understand the structural implications of this position, Bernstein's (2000) framework of *classification* and *framing* provides precise analytical tools. *Classification* refers to the degree of insulation between categories of knowledge within a curriculum: the stronger the classification, the more rigid the boundaries between courses and the more limited the possibility of cross-boundary integration. *Framing* refers to the degree of control over what is taught, how it is sequenced, and within what contexts knowledge becomes meaningful. As part of the *MKWU* category, IRE operates under conditions of strong classification and framing relatively isolated from the disciplinary networks of academic programs. It exists as a self-contained block of knowledge, with learning outcomes formulated generically and applied across academic programs, without organic linkage to the specific professional contexts encountered by students in their respective disciplines. Engineering students, medical students, and law students receive IRE in fundamentally similar formats, despite the substantial differences in professional contexts, ethical dilemmas, and moral challenges they will encounter in their careers. This uniformity is not a strength. It is the consequence of structural isolation that limits IRE's capacity to achieve the contextual relevance necessary for transformational functioning.

This structural isolation produces what may be termed *epistemic marginalization*. This is not explicit exclusion, but rather the systematic reduction of epistemic authority through curriculum architecture mechanisms. Courses not integrated into the network of core disciplinary competencies gradually lose relevance in students' perceptions, not because their content lacks meaning, but because the system fails to signal that such content is important for the formation of their professional identities. Students interpret institutional priorities not from official statements, but from the curriculum structure itself: how many credit hours are allocated, how frequently the course interacts with other subjects, and whether mastery of its content is relevant to competencies evaluated within their future professional worlds. In all of these dimensions, IRE occupies a structurally weak position.

What makes this condition paradoxical is the striking gap between the normative burden assigned to IRE and the structural capacity provided for it. IRE is expected to cultivate moral integrity, professional ethics, and students' character comprehensively. It is positioned as the value foundation underlying students' entire academic and professional formation. Structurally, however, it appears only in one or two semesters, carries merely two to three credit hours, and lacks curricular integration connecting it with the concrete ethical dilemmas

students encounter within disciplinary courses. Professional ethics are developed within academic programs without substantive integration with religious education. IRE promotes moral orientations without specific and relevant professional contexts. These two processes, which should reinforce one another, instead operate along separate pathways, producing students who possess religious knowledge on one side and professional competencies on the other, yet lack a living conceptual bridge connecting the two in practice. This paradox is not the failure of IRE lecturers, students, or curriculum implementation. It is the direct product of a curriculum architecture designed from the outset to establish a structural separation between the formation of professional competencies and the formation of moral orientation.

3. The Tension Between the Transformational Function of Islamic Religious Education and the Logic of Professional Competence

To understand the actual tension at stake, it is necessary to begin with a question that is often overlooked in discussions concerning Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in higher education: what exactly is meant by the transformational function of religious education, and why can this function not simply be adapted into the framework of Outcome Based Education (OBE) without losing something essential? The answer to this question cannot be found solely within pedagogical literature. It is rooted in the tradition of Islamic educational thought, which possesses an understanding of educational purpose fundamentally different from the rationality of professional competence.

Al-Attas (1980) formulates the objective of Islamic education through the concept of *ta'dib*, namely the formation of human beings who possess *adab*, or proper awareness of their position in relation to God, fellow human beings, and the universe. Education, within this framework, is not a process of accumulating competencies but a process of forming complete human beings who possess value orientation, ethical responsibility, and tawhidic consciousness permeating all dimensions of life. Wan Daud (1998) extends this argument by emphasizing that Islamic education is essentially a process of moral subjectivity formation inseparable from the development of worldview, namely the way individuals perceive reality, truth, and human responsibility within it. What is crucial in the thought of both scholars is the implication for how the success of religious education should be measured. The transformation of value orientation, the formation of moral consciousness, and the internalization of ethical responsibility are longitudinal and contextual processes that cannot be verified within the timeframe of a single semester or through assessment instruments designed to measure predetermined competencies (Madjid, 1992). This is not a weakness of religious education. It is its fundamental nature.

From a different intellectual tradition, Freire (1993) and Giroux (2011) arrive at a structurally similar conclusion. Transformative education is education that develops critical consciousness, enabling individuals to educate themselves as socially and morally responsible human beings rather than merely as executors of functions within an economic system. Freire explicitly contrasts the "banking" model of education, in which knowledge is transferred and accumulated, with a dialogical model that forms consciousness through critical engagement with reality. In its performative logic, OBE is far closer to the banking model than its advocates generally acknowledge. When learning outcomes are predetermined, nationally standardized, and verified through uniform assessment instruments, the educational process structurally shifts toward the transfer of measurable competencies rather than toward the formation of open-ended and unpredictable consciousness.

This is where the most fundamental tension emerges. OBE and the transformational function of religious education differ not only in method, but also in their ontological assumptions concerning what constitutes an educated human being and in their

epistemological assumptions regarding what constitutes valuable knowledge. OBE presupposes that educational objectives can be predetermined, standardized, and verified before the educational process takes place. The transformational function of religious education presupposes the opposite: that genuine transformation cannot be entirely planned because it involves changes at the level of value orientation and moral subjectivity that are personal, contextual, and non-linear. Attempting to operationalize the transformational function of IRE within the framework of OBE learning outcomes is not merely a technical challenge of curriculum design. It is an attempt to translate something into a language structurally incapable of accommodating its meaning without significant reduction. What remains after this translation is no longer transformational function itself, but rather its simulation: religious knowledge that can be tested, values that can be declared, and attitudes that can be assessed through rubrics, yet without necessarily transforming students' life orientations in any substantive way.

This tension has concrete and observable consequences within the academic ecosystem of higher education. When IRE is designed to satisfy the demands of OBE, it tends to shift from the formation of moral consciousness toward the transmission of standardized religious knowledge. IRE learning outcomes are generally formulated in measurable competency language: students are expected to explain, analyze, or demonstrate understanding of particular religious concepts. Such formulations are compatible with the logic of OBE, but they silently shift the orientation of IRE from the transformation of moral subjectivity toward mastery of religious content. Consequently, students may complete IRE courses with high grades without experiencing meaningful changes in value orientation, because the assessment system itself is not designed to measure such transformation. At the same time, the genuine ethical dilemmas students encounter within their professional contexts, questions concerning integrity in business practice, social responsibility in technical decision-making, or justice in legal and medical practice, receive insufficient space for reflection within an IRE framework reduced to a generic religious knowledge course.

This is what is meant by structural tension, rather than merely an incompatibility between two educational approaches that can be bridged through pedagogical innovation. This tension is built into the curriculum architecture itself through decisions concerning where IRE is positioned, how its learning outcomes are formulated, and to what extent it is permitted to interact with the formation of students' professional competencies. As long as these architectural decisions remain unquestioned and unchanged, any innovation at the level of teaching methods will merely optimize processes already operating upon a flawed foundation. IRE will continue to exist as a course that formally fulfills normative mandates while substantively remaining unable to perform the transformational function expected of it, not because of insufficient effort, but because the system itself does not provide the structural space necessary for such a function to operate.

4. Structural Reconfiguration as a Response to the Tension

Before discussing solutions, it is necessary to clarify what will not work. Most responses to the problems of IRE in higher education operate at the pedagogical level: improving teaching methods, revising learning outcome designs, developing contextual approaches, or integrating technology into religious education. These efforts are not misguided, but they do not address the root of the problem. Pedagogical innovation operates within an existing system, optimizing processes that function upon an unchanged architecture. If the curriculum architecture itself establishes a structural separation between the formation of professional competencies and the formation of moral orientation, then no innovation in teaching methods can overcome limitations originating from the system's design. This is not an argument for neglecting

pedagogical concerns. It is an argument against stopping there, because stopping there merely produces solutions disproportionate to the actual scale of the problem.

The necessary reconfiguration operates on two interconnected levels. First, the epistemic level: transforming the way higher education institutions understand the relationship between the formation of professional competence and the formation of moral orientation. As long as both are understood as separate processes that can be managed independently, IRE will remain outside the network of core competency formation. What is required is institutional recognition that professional ethics are not moral supplements added externally to disciplinary curricula, but dimensions inherently embedded within professional competence itself. An engineer lacking ethical orientation regarding the social consequences of technology, a physician lacking moral awareness concerning patient dignity, or an accountant lacking integrity regarding public trust are not merely individuals deficient in moral character. They are professionals who are fundamentally incomplete in their competence. Such recognition opens space for substantive integration between IRE and disciplinary courses through cross-curricular approaches in which professional ethical dilemmas relevant to each field of study become meeting points between competency formation and moral orientation formation.

Second, the regulatory level: revising the framework of the *MKWU* in ways that allow IRE to move from a generic cross-disciplinary format toward contextualized forms integrated into the curricula of individual academic programs. Ministerial Regulation Number 3 of 2020 should be reconsidered not in order to abolish the compulsory status of IRE, but to provide architectural flexibility enabling IRE to interact organically with the formation of students' professional competencies in each discipline.

Such reconfiguration is not without challenges. It requires changes in how universities understand curricular accountability, willingness from academic programs to create space for interdisciplinary integration, and the capacity of IRE lecturers to develop contextual approaches relevant to specific professional fields. More fundamental than these technical challenges, however, is the epistemological challenge itself: whether Indonesian higher education is willing to question the assumption that the rationality of professionalization is the only legitimate principle for organizing curricula. As long as this question is not seriously raised at the policy and institutional design levels, IRE will remain trapped in a paradoxical position, normatively compulsory yet structurally marginalized, burdened with transformational expectations yet deprived of the architectural capacity necessary to fulfill them. Ultimately, the problem of IRE reflects a broader crisis within modern higher education itself: how academic institutions can maintain commitment to the formation of complete human beings amid systemic pressures that increasingly reduce education to the production of competencies.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that the problem of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Indonesian higher education is not a problem that can be resolved merely by improving teaching methods or revising learning outcome designs. The root of the problem lies much deeper: within a curriculum architecture constructed upon a rationality of professionalization that is structurally incompatible with the transformational function of religious education. The dominance of Outcome Based Education (OBE), as an institutional expression of academic capitalism, has produced a hierarchy of knowledge legitimacy that places measurable disciplinary competencies at the center of the curriculum while pushing formative, normative, and transformational forms of knowledge to the margins. It is within this hierarchy that IRE, as part of the MKWU, operates, normatively mandated by regulation yet epistemically marginalized by a curriculum logic not designed to sustain it.

The tension analyzed in this article is epistemological rather than merely technical. OBE

presupposes that educational objectives can be predetermined, standardized, and verified before the educational process takes place. The transformational function of IRE, as formulated in the traditions of Al-Attas, Wan Daud, Freire, and Giroux, presupposes the opposite: that the formation of moral subjectivity, ethical consciousness, and comprehensive value orientation is a longitudinal and contextual process that cannot be reduced to standardized assessment instruments. When IRE is compelled to operate entirely within the framework of OBE, what remains is no longer its transformational function but merely its simulation: religious knowledge that can be tested without necessarily transforming students' orientations toward life in any substantive way. This paradox is not the result of failed implementation. It is the direct product of architectural decisions that separate the formation of professional competence from the formation of moral orientation at the very level of curriculum design.

The implications of this analysis require responses operating at the same level as the roots of the problem itself. The necessary reconfiguration is not merely pedagogical innovation, but transformation at two interconnected levels: the epistemic level, namely institutional recognition that professional ethics constitute an inherent dimension of professional competence rather than a separate moral supplement; and the regulatory level, namely revision of the MKWU framework to enable IRE to move from a generic format toward a contextualized form organically integrated with the curricula of academic programs. Without changes at these two levels, IRE will continue to bear transformational expectations disproportionate to the structural capacity provided for it. Ultimately, the problem of IRE reflects a larger unresolved question confronting Indonesian higher education itself: whether academic institutions are genuinely committed to forming complete human beings, or merely committed to producing competencies that can be verified and reported to the market.

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