



## Integrating Multiple Intelligences and deep learning for transformative Islamic Religious Education

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### ABSTRACT

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a crucial role in fostering moral and spiritual values among students. However, classroom practices often remain focused on the transmission of normative knowledge, limiting opportunities for meaningful understanding and internalization of values. While previous research has examined the application of Multiple Intelligences (MI) and deep learning in educational contexts, these approaches are rarely integrated into a coherent IRE curriculum framework. This gap highlights the need for a curriculum model that accommodates students' diverse potential while fostering deeper engagement with Islamic teachings. This study explores the transformation of the IRE curriculum through the integration of MI and deep learning pedagogy to foster meaningful learning. Using a qualitative Design-Based Research approach, data were collected from teachers, students, and the IRE curriculum coordinator through interviews, observations, student reflections, and document analysis. Findings indicate that integrating MI with deep learning shifts IRE instruction from a transmission model to a reflective, contextual learning model. This integration supports differentiated learning experiences, strengthens conceptual understanding, and facilitates the internalization of Islamic values. This study proposes a transformative Islamic Education curriculum model that contributes to curriculum innovation and value-based education in 21st-century Islamic education.

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### ABSTRAK

Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) memainkan peran penting dalam menumbuhkan nilai-nilai moral dan spiritual pada murid. Namun, praktik di kelas sering kali tetap berfokus pada penyampaian pengetahuan normatif, sehingga membatasi peluang untuk pemahaman yang bermakna dan internalisasi nilai. Meskipun penelitian sebelumnya telah meneliti penerapan Kecerdasan Majemuk dan pembelajaran mendalam dalam konteks pendidikan, pendekatan ini jarang diintegrasikan ke dalam kerangka kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam yang koheren. Kesenjangan ini menyoroti kebutuhan akan model kurikulum yang mengakomodasi potensi murid yang beragam sekaligus mendorong keterlibatan yang lebih mendalam dalam ajaran Islam. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi transformasi kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam melalui integrasi Kecerdasan Majemuk dan pedagogi pembelajaran mendalam untuk mendorong pembelajaran yang bermakna. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan Penelitian Berbasis Desain (Design-Based Research) kualitatif, data dikumpulkan dari guru, murid, dan koordinator kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam melalui wawancara, observasi, refleksi murid, serta analisis dokumen. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa integrasi Kecerdasan Majemuk dengan pembelajaran mendalam menggeser pengajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam dari model transmisi menjadi pembelajaran yang reflektif dan kontekstual. Integrasi ini mendukung pengalaman belajar yang terdiferensiasi, memperkuat pemahaman konseptual, dan memfasilitasi internalisasi nilai-nilai Islam. Studi ini mengusulkan model kurikulum PAI transformatif yang berkontribusi pada inovasi kurikulum dan pendidikan berbasis nilai dalam pendidikan Islam abad ke-21.

**Kata Kunci:** kecerdasan majemuk; pembelajaran mendalam; pendidikan Islam; transformasi kurikulum

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## INTRODUCTION

In the national curriculum, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a strategic role in shaping students' moral character, spiritual awareness, and social responsibility in Indonesian education. The national curriculum mandates that IRE learning not only transmit religious knowledge but also cultivate the internalization of Islamic values that guide students' daily behavior and social interactions (Yudesthira et al., 2023). However, in practice, the implementation of IRE in many schools still tends to emphasize the memorization of religious texts and the performance of formal rituals. As a result, learning processes often produce students' understanding that is static, partial, and insufficiently connected to everyday realities (Astuty & Suharto, 2021). The dominance of textual and transmissive approaches positions IRE learning primarily as the acquisition of declarative knowledge rather than as a process of meaning-making and value internalization. Teaching patterns limit students' ability to relate Islamic teachings to contemporary social challenges and hinder the development of reflective and transformative religious awareness (Ramadhan et al., 2025).

The limitations of current IRE practices become increasingly evident when viewed from the perspective of learner diversity. Students possess diverse potentials, interests, and ways of processing information, yet classroom instruction often employs uniform teaching strategies that do not adequately accommodate these differences (Falaqi et al., 2025). According to the theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) by Gardner, H. In his book entitled, *"A Synthesizing Mind: A memoir from the creator of multiple intelligences theory"* said that human intelligence is pluralistic and cannot be reduced solely to linguistic and logical abilities. When this diversity of intelligence is overlooked in the development of IRE curricula and instructional practices, learning experiences tend to be less inclusive and fail to engage students' potential fully. Consequently, the uniformity of instructional approaches may limit students' opportunities to explore religious knowledge through diverse cognitive pathways and experiential learning.

In addition to learner diversity, contemporary educational discourse emphasizes the importance of 21st-century learning approaches that foster deeper understanding, critical reflection, and contextual application of knowledge (Oyedotun, 2024). The significance of deep learning approaches that encourage students to engage with knowledge at a conceptual and reflective level rather than merely mastering content superficially (Nazilah et al., 2025). Within IRE, deep learning involves designing learning experiences that enable students to understand Islamic teachings critically, relate them to real-life contexts, and internalize their ethical implications (Muslim, 2024). Despite its relevance, however, deep learning principles remain insufficiently integrated into the design and implementation of IRE curricula in formal educational settings. These conditions indicate the need to reconstruct the IRE curriculum to foster a more meaningful, value-oriented learning process.

Previous studies show that MI theory and deep learning pedagogy offer strong potential for fostering inclusive and meaningful curriculum innovation. MI supports differentiated learning that accommodates the plurality of student intelligences, while deep learning pedagogy promotes cognitive engagement, reflective collaboration, and the application of knowledge in real-life contexts (Díaz-Posada et al., 2017; Saputra et al., 2025). At the same time, effective implementation of these approaches requires systemic support, including curriculum alignment and teacher capacity development (Nurhasanah et al., 2025). Despite these potentials, a significant gap remains in IRE curriculum development. Existing studies have not systematically integrated MI and deep learning principles into a coherent curriculum framework, and many remain descriptive and limited in scope.

That limitation restricts the development of comprehensive models capable of linking differentiated learning with reflective meaning-making and examining their impact on students' conceptual understanding, value internalization, and reflective religious awareness. Addressing this gap, the present

study proposes a transformative IRE curriculum framework that integrates MI and deep learning as a unified pedagogical foundation to promote more inclusive, contextual, and meaningful religious learning. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to design an integrated IRE curriculum framework based on MI theory and deep learning principles, describe its implementation strategies in formal educational settings, and test its effectiveness in improving students' conceptual understanding, internalization of values, critical thinking skills, and religious character development. By addressing these objectives, this research is expected to contribute to the development of more adaptive, inclusive, and meaningful IRE in the context of 21st-century learning.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Multiple Intelligences (MI) in Islamic Religious Education (IRE)

The theory of MI proposed by Howard Gardner posits that human intelligence is not a single, monolithic ability but rather a constellation of distinct intelligences, including linguistic, logical–mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, and existential dimensions (Saleh, 2025). This perspective challenges traditional IQ-centered conceptions of intelligence and emphasizes that learners possess diverse cognitive potentials that require varied instructional approaches (Ali et al., 2023). Within this framework, effective learning occurs when instructional design accommodates MI, allowing students to engage with knowledge through different modalities and experiences that reflect their individual strengths. In the context of Islamic education, the application of MI has been shown to enhance both academic engagement and motivational aspects by aligning teaching strategies with students' diverse capacities.

Research indicates that MI-based learning enables students to explore religious concepts through various forms of expression, thereby promoting deeper understanding beyond rote memorization (Abdullah, 2017). Empirical studies in IRE further reveal that MI-oriented instructional strategies, such as visual media, collaborative discussions, and kinesthetic learning activities, can increase students' motivation and strengthen their comprehension of religious values (Sabang et al., 2024). These strategies enable teachers to design more inclusive learning environments that support learners' holistic development. Despite these positive contributions, previous studies also highlight several limitations in the application of MI within IRE. Most research has primarily focused on classroom-level pedagogical practices rather than on the development of comprehensive curriculum frameworks that systematically integrate MI principles (Nisa, 2024). Consequently, the potential of MI as a guiding framework for curriculum transformation in IRE remains underexplored.

### Deep Learning Pedagogy in Educational Reform

Deep learning as a pedagogical orientation emphasizes conceptual understanding, reflective thinking, and the ability to transfer knowledge across real-world contexts, contrasting sharply with surface learning, which relies on memorization and procedural repetition. Fullan et al., in their book entitled *“Deep Learning: Engage the World Change the World”* stated that deep learning involves fostering higher-order competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, citizenship, and character (the 6Cs), thus aligning with goals of meaningful and transformative education (Afifatun, 2025). Research indicates that deep learning approaches encourage students to integrate new knowledge with existing cognitive structures, enabling them to make sense of information in meaningful, contextual ways (Apriliyana, 2025). Empirical studies have shown that pedagogical practices oriented toward deep learning, such as inquiry-based, collaborative, and reflective instructional strategies, result in higher engagement and improved conceptual understanding when compared to traditional methods (Fitrah et al.,

2025). In primary education, deep learning models have been utilized to promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and application of knowledge to authentic situations, emphasizing learners' active involvement and reflection across cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal dimensions.

### **Meaningful Learning as Conceptual Anchor**

Learning becomes effective when new knowledge is linked to the learner's existing cognitive structures, resulting in lasting and applicable understanding (Mundofi, 2026). This perspective highlights the importance of curriculum design that connects new content with prior knowledge and real-life contexts, and has been widely used to support the shift from rote learning toward constructivist and learner-centered approaches (Mystakidis et al., 2021). In this regard, meaningful learning provides a strong theoretical foundation for integrating MI and deep learning, ensuring that knowledge is not only acquired but also interpreted and applied in meaningful ways. However, despite extensive research on MI and deep learning, their integration as a unified curricular framework remains limited. MI studies primarily focus on differentiated instructional strategies, while deep learning research emphasizes critical engagement and knowledge transfer (Nazilah et al., 2025).

As a result, few studies have systematically combined these approaches in curriculum design, particularly in IRE, and existing research remains largely descriptive, offering no validated models that can be implemented and tested at the institutional level. The convergence of MI, deep learning, and meaningful learning offers a promising framework for transforming IRE curricula. Such integration can accommodate learners' cognitive diversity while promoting reflective, contextual, and applied learning. Although the literature provides strong theoretical support for this integration, empirically grounded curriculum models remain underdeveloped. Therefore, research that develops and evaluates integrated curricular frameworks is essential to advance both theory and practice in IRE.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative research methodology using a Design-Based Research (DBR) approach to develop and validate an IRE curriculum design that integrates MI and deep learning pedagogy to promote meaningful learning (Baumgartner et al., 2003). DBR was selected because it enables the integration of theoretical perspectives with practical educational contexts through iterative cycles of design, implementation, evaluation, and refinement. The study was conducted in a formal educational institution implementing IRE within the national curriculum framework. Participants included IRE teachers, students, and curriculum coordinators who were directly involved in the learning and curriculum development processes. Informants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure they possessed relevant knowledge and experience in IRE instruction.

The research procedure followed several DBR stages: 1) Needs analysis to identify challenges in current IRE practices; 2) Curriculum model design integrating MI and deep learning principles; 3) Limited-scale implementation in classroom learning; and 4) Evaluation and reflective revision of the curriculum design based on implementation findings. The research procedures comprised needs analysis, curriculum model design, limited-scale implementation, evaluation and reflection, and subsequent design revision. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, document analysis, and students' reflective accounts, and analyzed using an iterative thematic analysis that involved coding and pattern identification.

The analysis was theoretically informed by MI theory (Breeze, 2023), deep learning pedagogy (Zhu & Niyozov, 2024), and meaningful learning theory by Ausubel, Novak, and Hanesian in the book titled *“Educational Psychology: A cognitive view (2d ed)”*. Based on Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., and Saldaña, J. In their book entitled *“Qualitative Data Analysis: A methods sourcebook”* they stated that trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and the maintenance of an audit trail, while adhering to established research ethics principles. Accordingly, this methodological framework was explicitly designed to produce an IRE curriculum model that is theoretically grounded, pedagogically robust, and responsive to the demands of 21st-century learning.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Design of an IRE Curriculum Integrated with MI and Deep Learning

The research findings indicate that the IRE curriculum design developed through a Design-Based Research (DBR) approach can transform the curriculum structure from a uniform, rote-oriented model into one that is differentiated, reflective, and meaningful. The integration of MI theory is not applied solely to teaching methods. However, it is positioned as a conceptual foundation across the entire curriculum, encompassing the formulation of learning objectives, the organization of content, instructional strategies, and assessment. Through this approach, the IRE curriculum no longer assumes students’ intelligence as a single entity. Instead, it recognizes the diversity of learners’ potentials as a pedagogical reality that must be addressed systemically.

Conceptually, this curriculum design situates IRE learning objectives within three main domains: value understanding (cognitive), internalization and appreciation (affective–spiritual), and practice or enactment (psychomotor–social). These domains are further translated into MI-based learning outcome indicators (Shearer, 2018). For instance, understanding the value of tawhid is not assessed solely through verbal explanation, but also through intrapersonal intelligence (reflection on the meaning of faith), interpersonal intelligence (value-based discussion in social contexts), visual–spatial intelligence (symbolic representation), kinesthetic intelligence (worship practices), and existential intelligence (contemplation on the meaning of human existence). In this way, the curriculum objectives follow multiple pathways while remaining directed toward a single overarching goal: the holistic internalization of Islamic values.

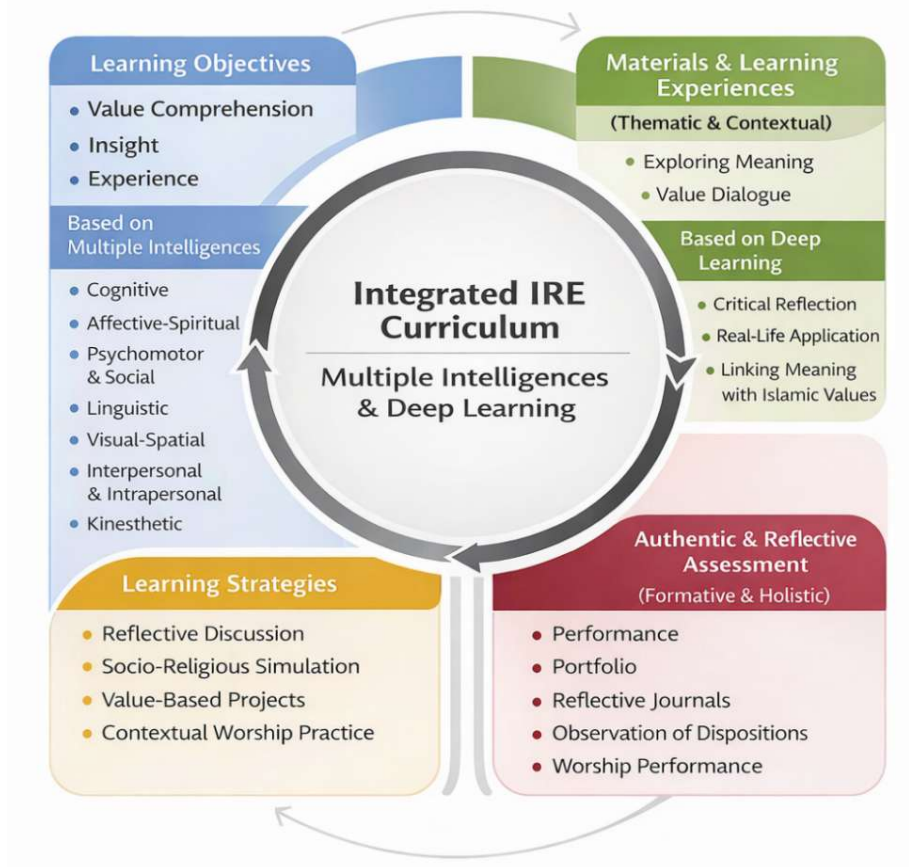
**Table 1.** Perceptions of MI and Deep Learning Integration in the IRE Curriculum

Respondent	Data (Interview Results)	Keyword Element
Q <sup>1</sup>	IRE teachers stated that an MI-integrated curriculum enables them to understand students’ learning potentials more holistically, not only through verbal abilities but also through visual, kinesthetic, social, and reflective expressions.	Intelligence differentiation
Q <sup>2</sup>	Respondent explained that implementing a deep learning approach encourages students not merely to memorize IRE content, but to interpret the meanings of Islamic values and relate them to their everyday life experiences.	Deep meaning-making
Q <sup>3</sup>	Students demonstrated higher levels of learning engagement when instruction was designed around value-based projects and reflective activities, as they perceived the learning process to be relevant to their social and spiritual realities.	Engagement and relevance
Q <sup>4</sup>	Teachers reported that authentic assessments, such as portfolios, reflective journals, and attitude observations, are more effective at representing students’ religious development than written tests alone.	Authentic assessment

Respondent	Data (Interview Results)	Keyword Element
Q <sup>5</sup>	Curriculum administrators noted that integrating MI and deep learning makes the IRE curriculum more flexible, adaptive, and contextual, without compromising the normative substance of Islamic teachings.	Adaptive curriculum
Q <sup>6</sup>	All respondents agreed that this curriculum design contributes to more sustainable internalization of Islamic values, as reflected in students' attitudes, worship practices, and social sensitivity.	Value internalization

Sources: *Research 2025*

**Table 1** indicates that the integration of MI and a deep learning approach within the IRE curriculum is perceived positively by respondents as a strategy that strengthens learning differentiation, value meaning-making, and the internalization of Islamic values. IRE teachers view MI as enabling a holistic understanding of students' learning potentials. In contrast, deep learning promotes instruction oriented toward deep meaning and the connection of Islamic values with real-life experiences. Learning designs based on value-driven projects and reflective activities enhance student engagement and learning relevance, further reinforced through authentic assessments that more accurately represent students' religious development (Zoraida & Ikhlas, 2025). Overall, curriculum administrators and teachers agree that the synthesis of MI and deep learning produces an IRE curriculum that is adaptive, contextual, and firmly grounded in the normative substance of Islam, thereby contributing to the sustainable internalization of Islamic values. The integrated MI and deep learning IRE curriculum model is presented in **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1.** IRE MI-Deep learning curriculum integration model  
Sources: *Research 2025*

These findings reinforce Gardner's view that curricula that ignore the plurality of intelligences risk creating shallow, exclusive learning experiences. In the context of IRE, MI-based differentiation has been shown to enhance students' access to the meaning-making of Islamic values, resulting in learning that is not uniform but adaptive and inclusive (Pozas et al., 2020). Accordingly, MI functions not merely as an instructional strategy, but as a normative–pedagogical curriculum framework. This study further affirms that MI within the IRE curriculum operate as a normative–pedagogical framework rather than a purely technical teaching strategy. Its integration with deep learning pedagogy produces an IRE curriculum design that is inclusive, adaptive, and transformational, capable of expanding students' epistemic access to Islamic values and fostering genuinely meaningful learning. At the same time, this curriculum design offers a new direction for the development of twenty-first-century IRE curricula, oriented not only to the acquisition of religious knowledge but also to the formation of sustained value consciousness and religious character.

### **Implementation of Deep Learning Pedagogy in IRE**

The research findings indicate a paradigm shift in IRE learning, from an instructional approach focused on content transmission to a meaning-based approach. IRE learning is positioned as a reflective and dialogical experience that connects Islamic teachings with students' real-life contexts, including contemporary social dynamics and the digital environment (Afif et al., 2025). Through this approach, students not only develop cognitive understanding of Islamic teachings but are also encouraged to interpret their relevance, reflect on their ethical implications, and integrate them into everyday attitudes and behaviors. Consequently, IRE learning evolves into a holistic process that integrates cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions. From a theoretical perspective, these findings reinforce the relevance of deep learning pedagogy as a foundation for meaningful learning in IRE.

The emphasis on conceptual understanding, cross-contextual connections, and critical reflection aligns with the epistemological character of Islamic teachings, which call for processes of *tafakkur*, *tadabbur*, and the actualization of values in real life. Deep learning pedagogy functions as a pedagogical mechanism that bridges normative knowledge with the internalization of Islamic values, while strengthening the role of IRE as a medium for fostering sustained moral and spiritual consciousness rather than merely the mastery of religious content (Fian & Misbah, 2023). The implementation of deep learning pedagogy in IRE unfolds through structured and continuous learning stages. The process begins by activating prior meaning through exploration of students' religious experiences and everyday realities, followed by the construction of deep understanding through dialogical discussions, textual analysis, and cross-contextual exploration.

These stages foster the development of critical and coherent understanding, in which Islamic values are consciously linked to moral, social, and humanitarian issues, enabling the systematic integration of cognitive and affective dimensions. Subsequent stages involve critical reflection, value personalization, and contextual application in concrete actions, such as social projects, reflective worship practices, or value-based initiatives within students' environments. This process is reinforced through meaningful, formative, and reflective evaluation that emphasizes depth of meaning, quality of reflection, and changes in attitudes and value awareness. Overall, the findings affirm that deep learning pedagogy in IRE is a continuous process that views learning as a journey of internalizing Islamic values, as well as an instrument for the holistic and sustainable transformation of students' religious awareness, attitudes, and behaviors.

**Table 2.** Implementation of MI and Deep Learning in IRE

Respondent	Data (Interview Results)	Keyword Element
Q <sup>1</sup>	IRE teachers stated that prior to the implementation of the integrated curriculum, IRE learning tended to focus on content explanation and memorization, with relatively passive and uniform student engagement.	Textual learning, teacher-centered.
Q <sup>2</sup>	After integrating MI, teachers observed increased student participation, as learners expressed their religious understanding through modes such as discussion, visual representation, practical activities, and personal reflection.	Intelligence differentiation, inclusivity.
Q <sup>3</sup>	Students reported that learning became more meaningful because they were encouraged to connect Islamic teachings with everyday experiences, social issues, and the digital realities they encounter.	Contextual connection, meaningful learning.
Q <sup>4</sup>	Teachers emphasized that deep learning pedagogy helps students understand the reasons and meanings underlying Islamic teachings, rather than merely recognizing what is right or wrong, or halal and haram, in a purely normative sense.	Deep understanding, critical reflection.
Q <sup>5</sup>	Curriculum administrators assessed that this curriculum model aligns more closely with the vision of twenty-first-century education, as it promotes critical thinking, value awareness, and the sustainable formation of religious character.	Transformative curriculum, character formation.
Q <sup>6</sup>	All respondents agreed that the primary challenge lies in teacher readiness and the need for pedagogical support to ensure the integration of MI and deep learning is implemented consistently and sustainably.	Implementation challenges, teacher readiness.

*Sources: Research 2025*

The observation and interview data indicate that implementing deep learning pedagogy shifts IRE instructional practices from content transmission to meaning construction (see **Table 2**). The learning process is designed through reflective, dialogical, and contextual activities that encourage students to connect Islamic teachings with their lived experiences, social issues, and the digital realities they encounter. Students are not only required to “know” religious concepts, but also to explain their meanings, question their relevance, and reflect on their implications in everyday life. These findings align with the core characteristics of deep learning, which emphasize conceptual understanding, cross-contextual connections, and critical reflection. Within IRE, deep learning proves to be a relevant pedagogical approach because Islamic teachings inherently call for processes of *tadabbur*, *tafakkur*, and ethical praxis. Accordingly, deep learning functions as a pedagogical bridge between normative knowledge and the internalization of Islamic values.

### **Meaningful Learning as an Integrative Outcome of the Curriculum**

Data from students’ reflections and observational findings indicate that integrating MI and deep learning leads to more meaningful learning (Feriyanto & Anjariyah, 2024). Students can connect IRE content to their cognitive structures and personal experiences, as emphasized in Ausubel’s theory. Learning does not stop at conceptual mastery but fosters value awareness, reflective attitudes, and a tendency to practice Islamic teachings contextually (Shalehah et al., 2025). Meaningful learning in this study extends beyond the cognitive domain to include affective and spiritual dimensions. This finding suggests that meaningful learning serves as both an indicator of the success of a transformational IRE curriculum and a fundamental prerequisite for the internalization of religious values.

The results reinforce the position of meaningful learning as an intermediate goal that bridges curriculum design and the formation of students' religious character. The integration of the MI approach and deep learning pedagogy generates learning experiences that are substantively meaningful for students (Kharisma et al., 2025). Reflection data and observational evidence indicate that students do not merely understand IRE content as conceptual information, but can also relate it to their existing knowledge structures and personal life experiences. This process aligns with Ausubel's principle of subsumption, which holds that new knowledge acquires meaning when it is coherently integrated into existing cognitive schemas. In this context, IRE learning is transformed from a normative academic activity into a living and relevant process of meaning-making.

**Table 3.** Students' Experiences of Meaningful Learning in IRE

Respondent	Data (Interview Results)	Keyword Element
Q <sup>1</sup>	Now I better understand why IRE content is important—not only for exams, but for how I behave and make everyday decisions.	Connection between meaning and life.
Q <sup>2</sup>	Learning is not just about listening to the teacher's explanations; we are invited to discuss and relate the material to our personal experiences.	Activation of personal experience.
Q <sup>3</sup>	I feel more comfortable learning because I can express my understanding in different ways, not always through writing or memorization.	Intelligence differentiation.
Q <sup>4</sup>	Reflection at the end of the lesson makes me rethink my attitudes and behavior as a Muslim.	Critical reflection and value internalization.
Q <sup>5</sup>	IRE material now feels more real because it connects to the social and environmental issues we face.	Contextualization of Islamic teachings.
Q <sup>6</sup>	I feel more motivated to practice Islamic values, not just understand them theoretically.	Value application and ethical praxis.

Sources: *Research 2025*

The interview findings reveal a fundamental shift in how students perceive IRE learning, from a detached academic activity to a learning process relevant to their personal and social realities (see **Table 3**). IRE learning is perceived as a space for value-meaning-making that connects to lived experiences, so that religious knowledge does not remain at the level of conceptual understanding but is integrated into real-life contexts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). These findings affirm the realization of the principle of meaningful learning, in which students actively construct meaning through the interconnection of instructional content, experience, and reflection on Islamic values. The integration of MI has been shown to foster more inclusive, humanistic learning by creating equitable spaces for the expression of diverse student potential.

Differentiated learning strategies enable students to participate according to their dominant intelligences while simultaneously developing other intelligences in a balanced manner. This condition directly impacts increased engagement, learning comfort, and motivation, while reducing the dominance of one-dimensional approaches that have traditionally limited student participation in IRE learning. Meanwhile, deep learning pedagogy makes a significant contribution to strengthening the affective, spiritual, and practical dimensions of religious learning. Reflective activities foster ethical and spiritual awareness, while the application of values in real-life contexts demonstrates the gradual, authentic internalization of Islamic teachings. Overall, these research findings confirm that meaningful learning functions as both an

integrative outcome and an indicator of the success of a transformational IRE curriculum, bridging conceptual understanding, value reflection, and the sustainable formation of students' religious character.

### **Internalization of Islamic Values and the Transformation of Learning Experiences**

The research findings indicate that students experience a shift in how they perceive Islamic teachings, moving from viewing them merely as normative obligations toward a more personal and reflective value consciousness. The internalization of Islamic values emerges through learning experiences that involve role modeling, self-reflection, dialogue, and social practice. Students demonstrate an increased ability to reflect on the meaning of worship, moral conduct (*akhlaq*), and social responsibility as integral parts of their everyday lives. These findings affirm that value internalization cannot be achieved through indoctrination, but rather through meaningful learning experiences deliberately designed into the curriculum.

In this regard, an IRE curriculum based on MI and deep learning functions as a transformational pedagogical system rather than merely an administrative instructional framework. The epistemological and pedagogical transformation in IRE learning is evident in the way students no longer perceive Islamic teachings solely as a set of formal obligations to be obeyed, but as sources of values that are consciously and personally interpreted (Apriliyana, 2025). This shift is reflected in how students understand worship, moral conduct, and social responsibility as integral components of their identity and life choices (Hoeruman et al., 2024). The process of value internalization unfolds through authentic learning experiences, such as role modeling, reflective dialogue, social interaction, and real-life practice, that allow Islamic values to be experienced existentially rather than merely as normative doctrine.

**Table 4.** Internalization of Islamic Values through Transformative IRE Learning

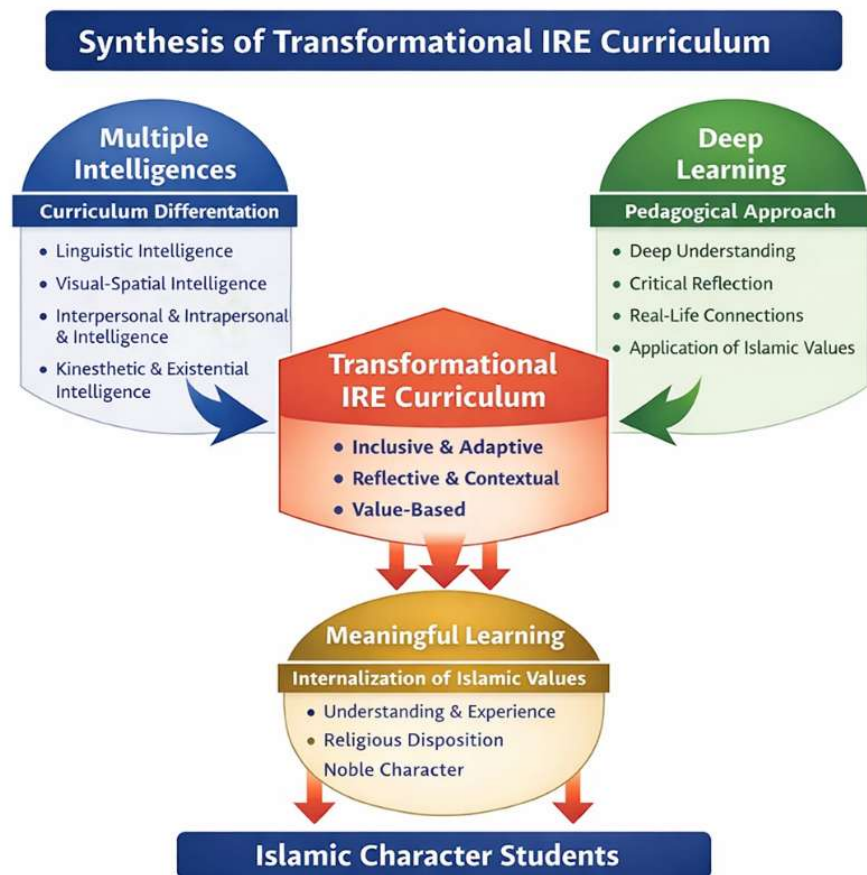
<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Data (Interview Results)</b>	<b>Keyword Element</b>
Q <sup>1</sup>	Students show a shift in how they understand Islamic teachings; they no longer merely memorize content but begin to relate acts of worship and moral conduct to their everyday life experiences.	Shift in Meaning, Value Awareness.
Q <sup>2</sup>	Reflective processes and classroom dialogue encourage students to express moral perspectives more confidently and to question the relevance of Islamic values within their social context.	Critical Reflection, Ethical Dialogue.
Q <sup>3</sup>	IRE learning helps me understand that worship is not only an obligation but also a way to draw closer to Allah and to improve my attitudes toward others.	Personalization of Worship.
Q <sup>4</sup>	Discussion activities and social projects make me more aware of social responsibility as an integral part of Islamic teachings.	Social Practice, Moral Conduct.
Q <sup>5</sup>	Experiential-based IRE learning encourages changes in students' behavior, particularly in discipline, empathy, and social concern.	Behavioral Transformation.
Q <sup>6</sup>	A curriculum that provides space for reflection and authentic practice is more effective in shaping religious character than approaches based solely on memorization.	Transformational Curriculum.

*Sources: Research 2025*

Based on the interview findings, **Table 4** shows that the internalization of Islamic values occurs through a gradual, multidimensional meaning-making process, marked by a shift from a normative to a reflective learning approach. Teachers' statements indicate that Islamic values are no longer positioned as static instructional content, but rather as living discourses open to ethical dialogue and critical reflection. This shift underscores that IRE functions as a space for the formation of value consciousness, in which students are encouraged to interpret, question, and contextualize Islamic teachings in relation to their lived realities.

Students' responses reveal that meaningful learning experiences enable the personalization of Islamic values, particularly in understanding worship and social responsibility. Islamic values are perceived as orientations of attitude and action that emerge from internal awareness, rather than mere formal compliance with curricular demands. These findings affirm that value internalization can occur only when students are holistically engaged across cognitive, affective, and social dimensions, enabling learning to become a medium for authentic and sustained meaning construction.

Meanwhile, the perspectives of school principals and curriculum developers highlight the institutional implications of these findings, emphasizing that an IRE curriculum grounded in the integration of MI and deep learning functions as a transformational pedagogical system rather than merely an administrative framework. The curriculum orchestrates learning experiences that foster changes in ways of thinking, behaving, and acting religiously. Thus, this study reinforces the notion that the internalization of Islamic values constitutes the primary outcome of a transformational IRE curriculum, whose effectiveness is measured by students' capacity to consciously and sustainably reflect on and enact Islamic values in real-life contexts. The synthesis of the transformational IRE curriculum is presented in **Figure 2**.



**Figure 2.** Synthesis of Transformational IRE curriculum  
*Sources: Research 2025*

The figure presents a theoretical synthesis that positions MI and deep learning pedagogy as the two main pillars for developing a transformational IRE curriculum. MI is framed as the foundation for curriculum differentiation, acknowledging the plurality of students' intellectual potentials and broadening epistemic access to Islamic values. Through this lens, the IRE curriculum becomes not only methodologically diverse but also structurally inclusive and equitable. MI-based differentiation enables each student to construct

religious understanding and meaning in accordance with their individual characteristics, thereby positioning the curriculum as a pedagogical space that is responsive to human diversity (Makrufi & Prihatno, 2020).

Deep learning pedagogy serves as the core approach that directs the learning process toward deep understanding, critical reflection, and the application of Islamic values in real-life contexts, while simultaneously transforming IRE from normative knowledge transmission into dialogical meaning construction. The synergistic interaction between MI and deep learning culminates in meaningful learning as the primary outcome of the curriculum, characterized by the internalization of Islamic values, the development of reflective dispositions, and the formation of students' religious character (Mahmoud & Alaraj, 2019). Conceptually, this synthesis affirms that integrating curriculum differentiation and a deep-meaning-oriented pedagogy is a prerequisite for transforming 21st-century IRE, offering both theoretical and pedagogical contributions to the contemporary landscape of religious education curriculum development.

## Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that integrating MI and deep learning pedagogy into the IRE curriculum creates a learning environment that better accommodates students' diverse intellectual potentials while encouraging deeper engagement with religious knowledge (Ali et al., 2023). This finding is consistent with the theoretical perspective of MI by Gardner, H. In his book entitled "*A Synthesizing Mind: A memoir from the creator of multiple intelligences theory*" he argues that effective learning must recognize the plurality of human intelligences rather than privileging linguistic and logical abilities alone. In the context of IRE, integrating interpersonal, intrapersonal, visual-spatial, and existential intelligences enables students to approach Islamic teachings through multiple cognitive pathways. Such results are also consistent with previous research showing that MI-based instructional strategies can enhance students' engagement and understanding of religious values (Saleh, 2025).

However, these findings differ from earlier classroom-based studies that primarily examined MI as a teaching technique, as the present study demonstrates that the systematic integration of MI at the curriculum level provides a broader framework for fostering inclusive and meaningful religious learning. The findings also confirm the pedagogical relevance of deep learning in transforming the orientation of IRE instruction. This finding is consistent with previous studies suggesting that deep learning promotes conceptual understanding, reflective thinking, and the connection of knowledge to real-life contexts (Apriliyana, 2025). Within IRE, this approach enables students to interpret religious teachings more critically and relate them to contemporary social realities. However, this study extends earlier findings by demonstrating that deep learning not only enhances cognitive comprehension but also fosters value awareness and religious praxis among students (Saputra et al., 2025). In this sense, deep learning serves not only as a cognitive learning strategy but also as a pedagogical pathway for bridging knowledge acquisition with ethical and spiritual development.

Another important implication of this research lies in repositioning the integration of MI and deep learning from isolated pedagogical strategies to a comprehensive curricular framework (Gebremeskel et al., 2024). This finding partially aligns with previous research that conceptualizes MI and deep learning as instructional strategies implemented within classroom learning processes (Kharisma et al., 2025). However, it differs from those perspectives by demonstrating that their effectiveness increases when they are embedded systematically within curriculum structures, including learning objectives, content organization, instructional methods, and assessment design. By situating MI and deep learning at the curricular level, the study highlights the transformative role of curriculum design in shaping learning environments that are more inclusive, reflective, and responsive to diverse learner characteristics

(Gunawan & Shieh, 2023). Furthermore, the results contribute to the broader discourse on meaningful learning in religious education. This finding is consistent with the conceptualization of meaningful learning as a process that integrates knowledge construction with personal reflection and experiential engagement (Nazilah et al., 2025).

However, the present study expands this perspective by demonstrating that within Islamic religious education contexts, meaningful learning involves not only cognitive comprehension but also affective and spiritual dimensions manifested in value internalization and reflective religious attitudes (Mystakidis et al., 2021). This suggests that the meaningfulness of learning in religious education should be evaluated not solely through cognitive achievement but also through the extent to which students develop ethical awareness and reflective dispositions grounded in Islamic teachings. Overall, these findings provide important theoretical and pedagogical implications for the development of IRE in the 21st century. Theoretically, the study contributes to the synthesis of MI, deep learning pedagogy, and meaningful learning within a unified curricular framework. Pedagogically, the results indicate the need to shift the orientation of IRE from a transmissive model focused on normative knowledge to a transformative learning paradigm centered on meaning-making and value internalization. Such a transformation reflects not merely a methodological innovation but an epistemological response to the evolving challenges of Islamic education in the digital and global era.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to develop an IRE curriculum framework that integrates MI and deep learning pedagogy to promote meaningful learning. The findings reveal that integrating these two approaches transforms IRE learning from a transmissive, normative knowledge-focused model into a reflective, contextual learning process. By accommodating students' diverse intellectual potentials through MI-based differentiation and fostering deeper conceptual engagement through deep learning pedagogy, the curriculum supports the development of meaningful learning experiences that facilitate the internalization of Islamic values across cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions. Theoretically, this study contributes to the synthesis of MI, deep learning pedagogy, and meaningful learning as a coherent framework for transforming IRE in the context of 21st-century learning. In practice, the proposed curriculum model offers an inclusive, value-oriented approach that can guide educators and curriculum developers in designing learning environments responsive to learner diversity and contemporary educational challenges. Further research is recommended to examine the implementation of this model across different educational contexts in order to explore its broader applicability and long-term impact on students' value internalization and religious character formation.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article; it is simply part of an assignment for a specific course. The author confirms that the article's data and content are free of plagiarism.

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