



Reconstructing PAI Curriculum Epistemology Based on Maqāṣid and Tazkiyah al-Nafs: A Philosophical Synthesis of al-Muwāfaqāt, Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn, and Constructive Alignment for Global Competence

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to reconstruct the epistemology of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum through a philosophical synthesis between al-Muwāfaqāt by al-Shāṭibī and Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn by al-Ghazālī with a Constructive Alignment approach to produce a coherent, transformative, and global competency-oriented curriculum framework based on Islamic values. The research method used is qualitative-descriptive with data collection techniques based on literature studies through document analysis, content analysis, and comparative document studies of national curriculum documents, Islamic Religious Education textbooks, and relevant classical turāth works. The results of the study have shown an epistemological discontinuity between learning outcomes, learning activities, and assessment instruments that have not fully reflected the integration of maqāṣid values and the tazkiyat al-nafs process in educational practices.

Keywords: Islamic education; curriculum epistemology; constructive alignment; global competence.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary social reality has signaled a crisis of value integration in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, where students experience a dissonance between daily life practices and normative religious knowledge. This phenomenon is evident in the increasing tendency of religious formalism (Bahiyah, 2025; Huda, 2024; Muis, 2026; Saada & Magadlah, 2021; Syahriani & Jannah, 2025) without being accompanied by the internalization of the values of *tazkiyat al-nafs* which concentrate on the formation of *akhlāq al-karīmah* character and self-purification (Hishnuddin & Jazilurrahman, 2025; Jauhari & Syihabuddin, 2025). Structurally, the PAI curriculum is still oriented towards the transfer of knowledge (*ta'lim*) (Kosim et al., 2023; Laila et al., 2025; Mawarni et al., 2021; Sholeh et al., 2023) and has not fully transformed into a holistic development process (*tarbiyah rūḥiyyah*) based on *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (Farhan et al., 2026; Hefner, 2022; Hilmi & Ali, 2026; Syaifuddin et al., 2025). This situation has urged an epistemological reconstruction that has the opportunity to simultaneously integrate the affective, cognitive, and spiritual dimensions through a systematic and contextual approach. Conceptual and practical commitments become the orientation to shift the curriculum paradigm from merely mastering material to the formation of a complete human being (*al-insān al-kāmil*) who is responsive and responsible to global challenges.

Literature reviews have indicated that various previous studies have developed innovative approaches to Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, such as technology integration through TPACK and strengthening digital literacy, but these are still limited to technical and pedagogical aspects. Several studies also examine the implementation of constructive alignment (Loughlin et al., 2021; Luhuringbudi, Kuliayatun, et al., 2025; Misbah et al., 2020; Ruge et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2023), but tend to position it as an instructional framework (C. K. Y. Chan & Lee, 2021; Hailikari et al., 2022; Luhuringbudi, Liza, et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2022) without connecting it to the epistemological foundations of classical Islam such as *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and *tazkiyat al-nafs*. Meanwhile, on a different aspect, studies of *turāth* such as *al-Muwāfaqāt* by al-Shāṭibī and *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* by al-Ghazālī have not been systematically integrated into modern curriculum design. This gap reflects the lack of a philosophical synthesis that connects contemporary educational theory and Islamic intellectual heritage within a unified perspective or epistemological framework. The novelty of this research lies in its dedication to building a conceptual bridge between the *jalb al-maṣālīḥ wa dar' al-mafāsīd* paradigm, the *takhallī-taḥallī-tajallī* process, and the principle of alignment in learning.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to reconstruct the epistemology of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum through a combination of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, *tazkiyat al-nafs*, and constructive alignment from a global competency perspective. The main focus of this study is to identify how these three approaches have the potential to be synthesized philosophically and operationally in a coherent and transformative curriculum design. In addition, this study is committed to answering the fundamental question of how the Islamic Religious Education curriculum can function not only as an educational instrument, but also as a medium for forming students' social and spiritual awareness. This approach has also been directed to evaluate the extent to which the existing curriculum has accommodated the principles of *ḥifẓ al-dīn*, *ḥifẓ al-'aql*, and *ḥifẓ al-nafs* in learning practices. The aim of this study is to produce a new epistemological

model that is able to address some of the challenges of Islamic education in the era of globalization.

RESEARCH METHODS

Although there have been many studies on the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum, there have been no adequate results in systematically integrating the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, *tazkiyat al-nafs*, and constructive alignment, so this study has used a comprehensive literature-based data collection technique. This technique includes Document Analysis of national curriculum documents such as KMA 183/2019 and Comparative Document Study to compare competency standards and evaluation instruments. The selection of this technique has been based on its ability to reveal the implicit and latent structures of curriculum texts, especially in detecting and indicating the extent to which the values of *al-tazkiyah* and *al-maqāṣid* are internalized in educational practices. The data collection process has been carried out through theme selection, identification of linguistic units in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum, searching for previous studies, systematic recording, and visual documentation in the form of screenshots to ensure data accuracy (Gunawan et al., 2025; Khoiriah & Sujanto, 2026; Kurniawan et al., 2025; Solihah et al., 2024). This technique has enabled the collection of diverse, valid, and relevant data to the research objectives.

The data analysis technique in this study was carried out through three main integrated stages, namely the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* approach, *tazkiyat al-nafs*, and constructive alignment as a comprehensive analysis stage perspective. First, the *maqāṣid* approach has been used to verify whether each curriculum component helps maintain *al-ḍarūriyyāt al-khams* (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*, *al-nafs*, *al-'aql*, *al-nasl*, and *al-māl*), so that education is not trapped in mere procedural formalities (Abubakar et al., 2025; Kasri & Ahmed, 2019; Wahyudi et al., 2025). Second, the *tazkiyat al-nafs* approach through the stages of *takhallī*, *taḥallī*, and *tajallī* has been used to analyze the dimensions of spiritual transformation in the curriculum, emphasizing that learning must start from cleansing the soul to achieving divine consciousness (Atika et al., 2025; Khairul Anam, 2024; Kuliyyatun et al., 2025). Third, the constructive alignment approach introduced by John Biggs has been used to ensure alignment between learning objectives, pedagogical activities, and assessments, thus ensuring a coherent and effective curriculum (Biggs, 1996; Biggs & Tang, 2015). For example, the analysis has indicated that the mismatch between CPL and assessment instruments has led to learning disorientation that does not help and strengthen the formation of *rabbānī* character. The combination and integration of these three approaches have produced an analysis that is not only descriptive, but also normative-critical and constructive in reconstructing the epistemology of the PAI curriculum based on global competencies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Maqāṣid approach

Data reconciliation has shown that the epistemological reconstruction of the Islamic Education curriculum is teleologically significantly rooted in the classification of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* which has been divided into *ḍarūriyyāt*, *ḥājīyyāt*, and *taḥsīniyyāt* as

the basis for educational goals. This has been based on al-Shāṭibī's assertion that "takālīf al-sharī'ah tarjī'u ilā ḥifẓ maqāṣidihā fī al-khalq... wa-hādhihi al-maqāṣid lā ta'dū thalāthat aqsām: ḍarūriyyah, ḥājīyyah, taḥsīniyyah" (Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā al-Shāṭibī, 1997) and that the absence of ḍarūriyyāt will result in total destruction in the life of this world and the hereafter. Analysis of the CPL documents and profiles of Islamic Religious Education graduates has revealed that learning objectives reflect the dimensions of ḥifẓ al-dīn and ḥifẓ al-'aql, but have not been explicitly mapped within the maqāṣid hierarchy, thus losing their thematic and epistemological depth. For example, the profile of graduates as educators with Islamic personalities allows for categorization as ḍarūriyyāt, but has not been accompanied by a curriculum structure that ensures the sustainability of this aspect in terms of min jānib al-wujūd and min jānib al-'adam. Such reconciliation has emphasized that the Islamic Religious Education curriculum requires a remapping based on maqāṣid so that its explicit and implicit objectives align ontologically and teleologically.

The data presentation revealed a pattern of imbalance between the substance of the teaching materials and the principles of ḥifẓ al-dīn and ḥifẓ al-'aql in the Islamic Religious Education curriculum, which was analyzed through a sharia content audit. This aligns with al-Shāṭibī's view that knowledge and reflection on sharia need to proceed from the lisān 'arabī mubīn, as stated: "fa-man arāda tafahhumahu fa-min jihat lisān al-'arab yufhamu wa-lā sabīl ilā ghayr hādhihi al-jihah" (Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā al-Shāṭibī, 1997) and that there are no fundamental contradictions in sharia (al-sharī'ah lā ta'arūḍ fihā albatta), so each material needs to be tested for consistency. Data has revealed that some teaching materials tend to lean toward a rigid textual approach without providing or facilitating space for critical meaning construction, or conversely, initiate a space for skepticism without an Islamic epistemic foundation. For example, tafsir learning is often solely oriented toward memorization without integrating linguistic analysis ('ilm al-lughah), which has become the foundation for awareness of the maqāṣid (the principles of Islamic teachings). This data pattern demonstrates the need for reformulation of curriculum content to align with the integrative principles of linguistic knowledge and reflection, rationality, and sharia values.

Data construction has demonstrated that the outcomes of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum need to be directed toward developing individuals who have the potential to realize the maqāṣid al-sharī'ah practically, rather than merely mastering theoretical knowledge. It has been stated by al-Shāṭibī that taklīf is only valid if it is within the human capacity "anna sharṭ al-taklīf al-quḍrah 'alā al-mukallaf bih" (Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā al-Shāṭibī, 1997) and that the relationship between knowledge and taqwā is integrative as implied in the principle of "wa-ttaqū Allah wa-yu'allimukum Allah" (Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā al-Shāṭibī, 1997). Analysis of graduate profiles has shown that although there is an orientation towards professional competence, the dimension of spiritual transformation based on tazkiyat al-nafs has not been systematically internalized in the final outcomes. For example, graduates are projected to become competent educators, but there are no evaluative indicators that measure the level of tajallī or rabbānīyah awareness in their pedagogical practices. This construction has focused on the need for the epistemological reconstruction of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum to produce an integrative outcome model between spiritual awareness, global competence, and social welfare.

Tazkiyat al-Nafs

Data reconciliation has revealed that the structure of the KKNi Level 6 qualifications, regarding knowledge mastery, work skills, and managerial responsibility, is still significantly oriented toward the cognitive-instrumental dimension, thus not fully accommodating the epistemological mechanism of takhallī as a process of inner purification within the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum. Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (Islamic scholar) has argued that knowledge should not only be classified as ‘ilm shar‘ī and ghayr shar‘ī, but should also be measured based on its implications for ṣalāḥ al-qalb and the elimination of amrāḍ al-qulūb such as kibr, ḥasad, and riyā’, which have become the essence of the takhallī phase. This has been expressed in his concept that “al-‘ilm mā yata‘allaq bi-maṣāliḥ al-dunyā wa al-ākhirah” which positions knowledge as an instrument of ethical transformation, not merely a tool for solving technical problems (Al-Ghazālī, n.d.), as well as his criticism of the reduction of the meaning of fiqh which ignores the dimension of ma‘rifat āfāt al-naḥs (Al-Ghazālī, n.d.). The Islamic Religious Education curriculum needs to be reconstructed by accommodating explicit indicators in the form of identifying and eliminating heart disease in the early stages of learning, so that the learning process is not only adaptive to social dynamics, but also transformative in preparing and building students' ethical-spiritual awareness.

The data presentation has revealed that the learning outcomes in specific skills areas within the Islamic Religious Education curriculum have not yet fully integrated taḥallī values holistically, as the internalization of morals still tends to be declarative-cognitive rather than practical-affective, manifested in students' concrete actions. Meanwhile, in al-Ghazālī's epistemology, the taḥallī phase urges the filling of the soul with praiseworthy qualities (al-akhlāq al-maḥmūdah) through the processes of riyāḍah al-naḥs and mujāḥadah, which can only be achieved if knowledge is directed toward developing spiritual awareness, not merely conceptual mastery. This is in line with his statement that “al-‘ilm al-maḥmūd huwa mā kāna sababan ilā sa‘ādah al-ākhirah” (Al-Ghazālī, n.d.) and his assertion that cleansing the heart from blameworthy traits will automatically initiate space for the growth of praiseworthy traits (idhā faragha al-qalb min al-maḥmūd imtala’a bi-al-maḥmūd) (Al-Ghazālī, n.d.). The Islamic Religious Education curriculum design needs to transform basic competencies into value-based learning practices, such as self-reflection, integration of worship, and the habituation of Islamic ethics in all learning activities, so that taḥallī does not stop at the discourse level, but becomes an existential experience for students.

Data construction at the tajallī phase indicates that the highest learning outcomes in the Islamic Religious Education curriculum are still dominated by a worldly competency orientation, thus not fully leading to the formation of transcendental awareness and rabbānī character as the pinnacle of students' epistemological journeys. From al-Ghazālī's perspective, tajallī is an illuminative manifestation of the results of takhallī and taḥallī, where a heart that has been purified and adorned with noble morals will reflect the light of knowledge that leads humans to closeness to God. This is reflected in his assertion that the practice of worship and nawāfil is not merely a formal ritual, but a means of taqarrub ilā Allāh which produces a thematic and profound existential awareness (Al-Ghazālī, n.d.), as well as his critique of scientific activities trapped in riyā’, takabbur, and ḥubb al-jāh as obstacles to tajallī⁶. The reconstruction of

the Islamic Religious Education curriculum needs to be directed at the integration of learning outcomes that concentrate on the spiritual-transcendental dimension, such as the experience of the Divine presence, awareness of *ihsan*, and orientation to the afterlife, so that graduates are not only professionally competent, but also attain the status of *insan kāmīl* with *rabbānī* character.

Constructive alignment

Verification of vertical coherence in the constructive alignment perspective that has been echoed by John Biggs has explained that the formulation of Graduate Learning Outcomes (CPL) in the field of attitudes and values has had a significant normative orientation, but has not been fully connected linearly with the syllabus design and operational course descriptions. Conceptually, CPL such as *al-taqwā*, *al-akhḷāq al-karīmah*, and *al-mas'ūliyyah al-ijtimā'iyah* are still often placed as separate affective domains, not as driving epistemic forces that direct the entire learning structure in the Islamic Religious Education curriculum. Meanwhile, in the perspective of Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, the integration of knowledge and character formation is an ontological unity, as has been emphasized that “*al-fiqh huwa ma'rifat ṭarīq al-ākhirah wa āfāt al-naḥs*”, as well as his criticism of the reduction of the meaning of knowledge to merely a worldly instrument without the dimension of *tazkiyat al-naḥs*. Curriculum reconstruction based on epistemic alignment that has positioned CPL as the main axis in syllabus design is an urgent need, so that each course not only reflects scientific content, but also becomes a medium for internalizing *al-dīn* values and transforming students' awareness in an integrated manner.

The audit of learning activities has revealed a tension between the curriculum objectives, which emphasize the development of higher-order thinking skills, and pedagogical practices that still tend to be transmissive and lecturer-centered, thus not fully representing the principle of constructive alignment. From an Islamic epistemological perspective, learning activities should ideally be oriented toward a constructive process of *ta'allum* (reflection) through *tafakkur* (reflection), *tadabbur* (contemplation), and *taḥqīq* (reflection), not merely a mechanistic reproduction of knowledge. This is in line with the view of Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, who emphasized that valuable knowledge is knowledge that leads to existential transformation, as stated that “*al-'ilm al-maḥmūd mā kāna sababan ilā sa'ādah al-ākhirah*”, as well as the importance of *mujāhadat al-naḥs* as a prerequisite for achieving authentic awareness. Learning activities in the RPP need to be reoriented towards a constructivist-participatory approach, such as critical reflection, problem-based learning, and contextual practice, so that students become active subjects in building knowledge while internalizing Islamic values thematically and deeply.

Evaluation of assessment instruments in the Islamic Religious Education curriculum has revealed a tendency to dominate lower-order thinking skills (LOTS) measurements, thus not fully aligning with the curriculum's objectives, which are oriented towards integrative affective, cognitive, and psychomotor transformation. From a constructive alignment perspective, assessment stimulates transformation into a direct reflection of CPL, which demands values-based analysis, synthesis, and evaluation skills, not merely mastery of factual information. From the perspective of Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, the assessment of knowledge cannot be separated from its impact on the heart, as evidenced by his criticism of scientific

practices that produce *kibr*, *hasad*, and *riyā'* due to erroneous orientations, and his assertion that true knowledge must guide humanity towards the *Qurb ilā Allah*. Reconstruction of assessment in the Islamic Religious Education curriculum needs to lead to the development of authentic instruments that are able to measure the integration between attitudes, knowledge, and skills, such as reflective portfolios, performance assessments, and project-based evaluations, so that the assessment process becomes an integral part of the formation of human beings.

Reflection of PAI Curriculum Epistemology Based on *Maqāṣid* and *Tazkiyah al-Nafs*

The findings of this study have declared that the epistemological reconstruction of the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum based on *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and *tazkiyat al-nafs* produces a more coherent curriculum structure vertically, horizontally, and transformatively. This is based on the analysis that the asynchronous between CPL, learning activities, and previous assessments has revealed the dominance of the cognitive dimension that is detached from the objectives of *ḥifẓ al-dīn*, *ḥifẓ al-'aql*, and *ḥifẓ al-nafs*. Meanwhile, on the other hand, the integration of the principles of *takhallī*, *taḥallī*, and *tajallī* has explained that the learning process does not only lead to *ta'līm* (knowledge transfer), but also *tarbiyah rūḥiyyah* which is transformative. For example, the analysis of curriculum documents has revealed that indicators of religious attitudes have not been fully operationalized in constructive-based learning activities. This is in line with al-Shāṭibī's statement: "*al-maqāṣid hiya rūḥ al-sharī'ah wa asās al-taḥqīq li-maṣāliḥ al-'ibād*" and al-Ghazālī: "*laysa al-'ilm bi-kathrat al-riwāyah wa-lākin bi-nūr yaqdhifuhu Allāh fi al-qalb*". This study has concluded that the philosophical synthesis between *maqāṣid*, *tazkiyat al-nafs*, and constructive alignment is able to answer the epistemological crisis in the contemporary PAI Curriculum.

In a broader context, the results of this study demonstrate that the integration of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, *tazkiyat al-nafs*, and constructive alignment forms a curriculum perspective that is not only adaptive to global change but also rooted in the classical Islamic scientific tradition. Rationally, the *maqāṣid* approach ensures that each component of the curriculum contributes to the maintenance of *al-darūriyyāt al-khams*, while *tazkiyat al-nafs* ensures the spiritual transformation dimension of students. Meanwhile, constructive alignment acts as an operational mechanism to ensure that goals, processes, and evaluations run in a harmonious and systematic manner. For example, the implementation of a project-based learning model integrated with *taḥallī* values has the potential to increase active student engagement while supporting the moral dimension. This is in line with al-Shāṭibī's statement: "*al-sharī'ah innamā wuḍi'at li-taḥqīq maṣāliḥ al-khalq*" and al-Ghazālī's statement: "*al-nafs ka-al-mar'ah lā tajallā illā ba'da al-taṣfiyah*". This contextualization emphasizes that the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum needs to be understood, recognized, and cared for as an integrative system that connects normative, pedagogical, and practical dimensions into an epistemological whole.

The implications of these findings demonstrate that reconstructing the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum based on *maqāṣid* (observance of the principles of Islamic education) and *tazkiyat al-nafs* (observance of the principles of Islamic education) has the potential to produce graduates who are not only academically competent but also spiritually and morally mature. This is crucial because current global

challenges demand competencies that transcend cognitive aspects, including global citizenship, ethical reasoning, and spiritual intelligence. Specifically, this integration facilitates a paradigm shift from teacher-centered learning to student-centered transformative learning based on reflective practice and experience. For example, a reflective project-based assessment design has the potential to measure the *tajallī* dimension through indicators of self-awareness and social responsibility. This is in line with the statement of al-Shātibī: “*al-maṣlaḥah hiya al-ghāyah min kull tashrī*” and al-Ghazālī: “*al-‘amal bidūn niyyah lā yaṣḥuḥ*”. This implication has declared that the reform of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum needs to be directed at the formation of a complete human being (*al-insān al-kāmil*) in a global context.

CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this study is the identification of hidden epistemological imbalances in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum, namely the dominance of cognitive structures that are not aligned with the internalization of the values of *tazkiyat al-naḥs* and the orientation of *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*. Thematic and in-depth analysis has revealed that although the curriculum document contains dimensions of attitudes and skills, their implementation has not been systemically connected through the principle of authentic and transformative constructive alignment. At a more advanced level, this research paper reveals that the absence of the *takhallī* stage in the learning process is a crucial factor triggering the failure to develop students' spiritual awareness. For example, memorization-oriented learning activities are unable to activate the *tajallī* dimension, which is the pinnacle of divine awareness in the Islamic education process. This finding emphasizes that the main problem with the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum lies not in the content, but in the epistemological lack of integration between the learning process, values, and objectives.

The primary scientific contribution of this research paper lies in the formulation of a philosophical synthesis that combines *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*, *tazkiyat al-naḥs*, and constructive alignment within a single, coherent and operational epistemological perspective. This approach presents novelty by positioning the concept of *jalb al-maṣāliḥ wa dar’ al-mafāṣid* as a normative foundation, while simultaneously integrating it with modern pedagogical mechanisms oriented toward the construction of meaning. In a different dimension, this study introduces a curriculum analysis model based on the *takhallī-taḥallī-tajallī* stages, which has not previously been systematically used in contemporary Islamic Religious Education curriculum studies. As an illustration, the integration of CPL indicators with the *taḥallī* dimension allows for evaluation not only of cognitive achievement but also of the transformation of students' character. This study's contribution initiates a new horizon in the development of Islamic curriculum epistemology that dialectically integrates classical *turāth* and modern educational theory.

Despite its significant contribution, this research paper is limited by its analytical scope, which focuses on curriculum documents and does not include direct empirical observations of classroom implementation. This limitation means that the practical dimension of the integration of *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* and *tazkiyat al-naḥs* has not been fully verified in the context of real pedagogical interactions. On the other hand, this

research has not quantitatively tested the effectiveness of the values-based constructive alignment model in supporting students' global competencies. For example, there has been no long-term or longitudinal measurement of the impact of implementing the takhallī-taḥallī-tajallī stages in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. Further research is recommended to develop mixed-method empirical studies capable of more comprehensively testing the validity and effectiveness of this model in various educational contexts.

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