

Recontextualizing Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah (AIK) as a Pillar of Multicultural Education in Muhammadiyah Higher Education from a Progressive Islam Perspective

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the conceptual and practical role of Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah (AIK) in strengthening multicultural education within Perguruan Tinggi Muhammadiyah (PTM, Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions). In the context of Indonesia's pluralistic society, PTM face significant challenges such as intolerance, radicalism, identity polarization, and cultural discrimination. This research employs a qualitative-descriptive library research method, collecting data from Muhammadiyah's official documents and reputable academic journals published in the last five years. The study critically examines how the ideology of Progressive Islam (Islam Berkemajuan) can serve as a philosophical and practical foundation for multicultural education in PTM. Findings indicate that AIK, when recontextualized with values of inclusivity, tolerance, and moderation, is essential for building a harmonious academic culture that respects diversity. Strategies for implementation include structural-institutional policies, integration of multicultural content into curricula, development of lecturers' competencies, and fostering inclusive campus environments. Continuous evaluation using the Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) model is recommended to ensure the effectiveness of these strategies. This study concludes that revitalizing AIK as a pillar of multicultural education is key for PTM to become agents of social cohesion, producing graduates who are religiously devout yet socially adaptive in a dynamic, plural society.

Keywords: AIK; Education; Islam; Multiculturalism; Muhammadiyah

Rekontekstualisasi Al-Islam dan Kemuhammadiyah (AIK) sebagai Pilar Pendidikan Multikultural di Perguruan Tinggi Muhammadiyah dalam Perspektif Islam Berkemajuan

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran konseptual dan praktis Al-Islam dan Kemuhammadiyah (AIK) dalam memperkuat pendidikan multikultural di Perguruan Tinggi Muhammadiyah (PTM, Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions). Dalam konteks masyarakat plural Indonesia, PTM menghadapi berbagai tantangan serius seperti intoleransi, radikalisme, polarisasi identitas, dan diskriminasi budaya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif-deskriptif dengan pendekatan studi pustaka, melalui pengumpulan data dari dokumen resmi Muhammadiyah serta jurnal-jurnal akademik bereputasi yang diterbitkan dalam lima tahun terakhir. Kajian ini mengkritisi bagaimana ideologi Islam Berkemajuan dapat menjadi landasan filosofis sekaligus praktis bagi pendidikan multikultural di PTM. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa AIK, ketika direkontekstualisasi dengan nilai inklusivitas, toleransi, dan moderasi, menjadi elemen penting dalam membangun budaya akademik yang harmonis serta menghargai keberagaman. Strategi implementasi meliputi kebijakan struktural-institusional, integrasi konten multikultural dalam kurikulum, pengembangan kompetensi dosen, serta penciptaan lingkungan kampus yang inklusif. Evaluasi berkelanjutan dengan menggunakan model Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) direkomendasikan untuk menjamin efektivitas strategi tersebut. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa revitalisasi AIK sebagai pilar pendidikan multikultural merupakan kunci

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bagi PTM untuk menjadi agen kohesi sosial, sekaligus menghasilkan lulusan yang religius, moderat, dan adaptif dalam masyarakat plural yang dinamis.

Keywords: AIK; Islam; Multikulturalisme; Muhammadiyah; Pendidikan

Submitted: August 7, 2025

Received: August 20, 2025

Published: September 1, 2025

INTRODUCTION

Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions (PTM) are part of Muhammadiyah's charitable endeavors, responsible for producing a generation that excels in intellectuality, Islamic character, tolerance, and transformative thinking. In its implementation, Islamic and Muhammadiyah Education (AIK) at PTM can help students internalize moral values, thereby becoming an integral part of their character (Handoko et al., 2024). However, PTM must now be able to address social challenges such as intolerance, radicalism, identity polarization, and cultural discrimination that still prevail in various aspects of life due to Indonesia's diversity. Thus, a solution has emerged to address these challenges through multicultural education. Through multicultural education, Indonesia's pluralistic society can move together to foster tolerance, thereby creating a peaceful life (Lestari & Sa'adah, 2021).

In addition to being a form of recognition of diversity, multicultural education is also an ideological and pedagogical strategy for building a just and peaceful social order (Salasa et al., 2023). However, ideological and/or political challenges, as well as teacher accountability, make curriculum changes toward multiculturalism difficult because educators must understand the cultural characteristics of their students from diverse cultural backgrounds before teaching minority students (Alismail, 2016). This is reinforced by findings (Widodo et al., 2022) that ideological radicalism and religiously based exclusivist attitudes remain major challenges for Islamic educational institutions, including PTM, especially in the digital age where misinformation and sectarian narratives easily spread among students.

Based on this, Muhammadiyah, as a reformist and progressive Islamic movement, has a rich and progressive perspective in dealing with the reality of plurality. Values such as active tolerance, human brotherhood, social justice, and prophetic humanism serve as important foundations in developing a multicultural education model that is characteristic of Muhammadiyah. Therefore, it is necessary to research how Muhammadiyah's Progressive Islamic ideology can serve as a conceptual and practical foundation for strengthening multicultural education in PTM.

METHODE

This study uses a literature review approach (library research) with a descriptive-qualitative method that aims to analyze in depth the concept of multicultural education from the perspective of Progressive Islam Muhammadiyah. The research focuses on exploring ideas, concepts, and normative principles derived from official Muhammadiyah documents and relevant academic research findings, particularly those related to multicultural education within Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions (PTM). Data collection was conducted through documentary studies and reviews of scientific articles. Official Muhammadiyah documents were analyzed to gain an understanding of the ideology of Progressive Islam and how Muhammadiyah views issues of plurality and education. Selected articles were then screened based on topic relevance, empirical relevance, and their contribution to the development of the research conceptual framework.

This literature review approach aims to formulate a comprehensive conceptual framework for multicultural education in PTM. The results of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to

enriching the study of progressive Islamic education, while offering strategic recommendations for PTM in building an inclusive, tolerant, and transformative academic culture amid the increasingly complex challenges of social plurality.

DISCUSSION

The Multiculturalism Paradigm in Education

The paradigm of multiculturalism in education is an approach that places appreciation for cultural, ethnic, religious, value, and social diversity among students at the core of the educational process. Multicultural education aims to create an inclusive, fair, and harmonious learning environment, particularly in the context of a diverse society such as Indonesia, which has a high degree of cultural and religious complexity. One of the main characteristics of the multiculturalism paradigm in education is the recognition and respect for diversity. Multicultural education emphasizes the importance of accepting, respecting, and interacting positively with various forms of cultural, religious, racial, and belief differences. As stated by (Randy & Fadjarajani, 2024), multicultural education teaches students not only to recognize but also to appreciate the diversity around them, thereby creating a conducive and constructive learning environment for all parties.

In addition, this paradigm requires the empowerment of students from various backgrounds. This means that education must ensure that every student has the same opportunity to develop and achieve without experiencing discrimination based on their cultural, social, or religious identity. (Hufron et al., 2022) emphasize that equality of opportunity in education is a crucial aspect in building a just society, where every individual is valued for their potential regardless of their background. In its implementation, the multicultural education paradigm also encourages the integration of local and universal values into the curriculum. The curriculum is designed not only to include globally relevant material but also to accommodate local wisdom that forms the cultural identity of students. Matsuroh (2010) emphasizes that the balance between local and universal values is an important foundation for building an inclusive and harmonious society.

Furthermore, multicultural education aims to develop multicultural competencies that encompass three main dimensions. First, knowledge of multiculturalism concepts helps students understand the dynamics and values of diversity. Second, wise attitudes as members of a pluralistic society, demonstrated through empathy, tolerance, and respect for differences. Third, skills in making fair and wise decisions when faced with situations related to diversity. (Primawati, 2013) States that these three aspects are important indicators in assessing the extent to which multicultural education has succeeded in shaping the character of students who are broad-minded and inclusive.

Multicultural education also places the values of justice and anti-discrimination as the main pillars of the learning process. This is realized through learning that is directed at promoting social justice and building a school culture that empowers all groups. (Putra, 2023) emphasizes that social justice-based learning is not only the responsibility of teachers/lecturers, but must also be an institutional policy embedded in all aspects of educational management. Additionally, an important characteristic of the multicultural education paradigm is its comprehensive application across all fields and components of education. Multiculturalism should not be limited to the curriculum level but must be internalized throughout the entire educational ecosystem, including formal, non-formal, and informal education. This encompasses educational policies, teaching approaches, human resource development (teachers/lecturers), and the organizational culture of schools or campuses. (Mustofa, 2021) states that without comprehensive internalization across various sectors of education, efforts to create a multicultural learning environment will remain nothing more than a slogan without substantive meaning.

Thus, multicultural education has become one of the most relevant strategies for addressing the challenges of social disintegration arising from differences in identity. Through education based on respect for differences, it is hoped that Indonesia's younger generation will develop a collective awareness of the importance of living together in harmony, so that the nation's ideals of peace, justice, and dignity can be realized. Multicultural education is not merely a theoretical concept but a strategic necessity in building a humane civilization within a pluralistic society.

Muhammadiyah's Ideological Thinking on Multicultural Education and Plurality

Muhammadiyah's ideological thinking on multicultural education and plurality is based on the inclusive principle of Progressive Islam, which recognizes diversity as *Sunnatullah*. For Muhammadiyah, religious, cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity is not something that should be standardized or feared, but rather accepted as a divine reality that is part of God's creation. This concept is not only understood theologically, but also serves as the ethical and practical foundation for communal life, especially in education (Taofik & Basit, 2022). Muhammadiyah emphasizes that living in a diverse society is a natural part of life that must be embraced with a spirit of human brotherhood. Therefore, Muhammadiyah members are encouraged to be active in social life by upholding the values of harmony and avoiding discriminatory attitudes. (Taofik & Basit, 2022) State that Muhammadiyah's principles encourage its members to foster interfaith, inter-ethnic, and inter-racial brotherhood as part of the manifestation of Islam's teachings as a mercy to all creation. Thus, in the educational environment, this attitude is translated through inclusive policies that allow students from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds to learn together in a spirit of unity.

Multicultural education for Muhammadiyah is not only a strategic choice, but also a philosophical foundation. As a movement for *da'wah* and *tajdid*, Muhammadiyah views education as the primary medium for building a civilized social order. Muhammadiyah education is open and inclusive, accepting students, university students, and educators regardless of their religious background, ethnicity, social status, or economic status. Muhammadiyah education is understood as social reconstruction—an effort to cultivate a humanistic, democratic, and open ethos, as well as respect for diversity as the nation's primary strength (Hairit, 2020; Taofik & Basit, 2022). In its curriculum, Muhammadiyah instills the values of Islam and Muhammadiyah as a distinctive identity that sets its educational institutions apart. Multicultural, pluralistic, independent, innovative, and moderate values are taught integrally in the learning process and campus activities.

The Muhammadiyah educational philosophy also emphasizes the principles of inclusivity, humanism, and egalitarianism. Education is viewed as a means of enlightenment (*tanwir*), liberation (*liberasi*), and humanization (*humanisasi*), to build a civilized society without eliminating Islamic identity. Muhammadiyah education is not only focused on academic achievement but also aimed at fostering social awareness, universal human ethics, and respect for diversity as a national asset. Methodologically, this pluralistic approach is instilled through various interfaith programs, such as interfaith dialogue, joint celebrations of major religious holidays, and social activities involving diverse cross-cultural communities.

Historically, Muhammadiyah has been known as a movement with a dynamic ideological discourse that continues to evolve. Since the time of KH Ahmad Dahlan, Muhammadiyah has championed a creative and solution-oriented reformist spirit in addressing the challenges of the times. In subsequent periods, under figures such as Mas Mansyur, there was a phase of theological purification that strengthened the purification of Islamic teachings. Nevertheless, Muhammadiyah today presents itself as a movement that is increasingly progressive, dialogical, and transformative, without losing its distinctive Islamic purity (Taofik & Basit, 2022). Muhammadiyah does not position itself as an exclusive group but

rather integrates and engages in dialogue with all groups, both majority and minority, as part of its missionary mandate focused on enlightening civilization.

The real implementation of Muhammadiyah's commitment to multicultural education can be seen in various Muhammadiyah educational institutions spread across areas with non-Muslim majorities. Many Muhammadiyah schools and universities actively build community harmony by providing access to education for students of various religions and backgrounds. This openness is a real practice that demonstrates Muhammadiyah's pluralistic orientation in education. Muhammadiyah educational institutions serve as healthy meeting points for interfaith and intercultural dialogue, where values of inclusivity are taught not only theoretically but also through daily experiences (Mu'ti, 2016). Therefore, ideologically, Muhammadiyah views multicultural education as a means to bring Islamic values closer to universal humanity.

The Reality of Muhammadiyah Universities Amidst Social Plurality

The reality of Muhammadiyah universities amid social plurality can be observed from their active role and strategic approach in dealing with diversity in society. As higher education institutions rooted in the values of Progressive Islam, PTM is committed to building an inclusive and tolerant academic environment. One tangible manifestation of this commitment is its policy of accepting students from various religious and cultural backgrounds, including non-Muslim students. Muhammadiyah universities provide access to education as widely as possible without discriminating against the religious, ethnic, or socio-economic identities of prospective students. In this context, Muhammadiyah provides inclusive religious education while respecting differences in beliefs among students. This serves as concrete evidence of Muhammadiyah's commitment to promoting pluralism and interfaith harmony within the higher education environment (Setiawan, 2020). Akib, Hartanti, & Suaib (2020) also emphasize that Muhammadiyah universities strive to build a campus culture that prioritizes inclusivity and social harmony as core principles, by holistically integrating academic and social approaches.

In addition to internal campus aspects, PTM also demonstrates its concern for social plurality through active participation in social activities and community service. They regularly collaborate with various parties, including the media, local institutions, and international organizations, to strengthen their social role within the broader community. (Fauzalia & Harmonis, 2022) Note that the collaborations and social activities undertaken by Muhammadiyah universities constitute tangible contributions to strengthening social cohesion within the dynamic, diverse society. Within the campus, cross-cultural communication dynamics present a unique challenge. Students from various regions in Indonesia often face difficulties in adapting to new cultural environments, particularly in terms of language and social customs. To address this, PTM has developed digital communication programs and acculturation learning initiatives designed to help students bridge existing cultural differences. These efforts have proven effective in creating a harmonious campus environment where students from diverse backgrounds can learn and grow together. (Robina et al., 2024) Note that this strategy has been one of the keys to Muhammadiyah's success in managing internal campus diversity wisely.

PTM directs the education provided so that students do not grow up with an exclusive understanding of diversity, but rather appreciate diversity as an integral part of the social reality of Indonesian society. (Nawangsih et al., 2022) emphasize that the educational model applied by PTM is oriented toward the formation of a moderate character that can appreciate differences as a strength of the nation. Overall, PTM strives to be an educational institution that not only focuses on strengthening religious aspects but is also actively involved in fostering diversity and social harmony within a pluralistic society.

Reactualizing AIK as a Pillar of Progressive Islam-Based Multicultural Education

The reactivation of AIK (Al-Islam and Kemuhmadiyah) as a pillar of progressive Islam-based multicultural education is an urgent need amid the increasingly pluralistic dynamics of society. This effort can be carried out by integrating inclusive, tolerant, and moderate Islamic values into the curriculum and learning process at Muhammadiyah educational institutions. In this context, AIK is expected to internalize the attitude of religious moderation and social awareness that constitute the essence of Islam as a source of mercy for all creation (Nasution et al., 2025). This reactivation approach is implemented by highlighting universal Islamic values that align with the spirit of moderation and progress. The teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith that emphasize the importance of tolerance, peace, and social justice serve as the primary foundation that must be revived in the AIK learning process. This aligns with (Rajabiah & Wardan, 2024) that AIK-based education must be able to accommodate and respect cultural diversity and students' backgrounds, thereby creating an inclusive learning environment that respects differences and fosters open-mindedness and collaboration.

In practical terms, the reactivation of AIK in progressive Islam-based multicultural education requires the implementation of contextual and dialogical learning methods. This approach is important so that the Islamic values taught do not remain at the normative level but are directly linked to the social reality of Indonesia's multicultural society. Through this method, students are encouraged to develop the ability to interact, respect, and collaborate with people from diverse backgrounds. (Sujud & Utomo, 2023) emphasize that AIK-based education should not only focus on religious ritual knowledge but also be directed toward the development of a moral and social character that is tolerant, inclusive, and adaptable to the changes of the times.

In addition, AIK also serves as a pillar of progressive Islamic multicultural education, functioning as an ethical and spiritual foundation in building a future generation that is religious yet still able to live harmoniously in a diverse and dynamic society. (Tamrin, 2019) states that strengthening AIK within the framework of multicultural education requires close collaboration between educational institutions, teachers, religious scholars, and policymakers to formulate teaching materials and learning strategies that are relevant to the context of a pluralistic society, while remaining firmly committed to moderate and progressive Islamic values. Thus, the re-actualization of AIK as a pillar of Islamic-based multicultural education can be formulated through several key strategies. First, integrating the values of moderation, tolerance, and humanity into every aspect of Islamic education within the Muhammadiyah educational environment. Second, adopting a dialogic and contextual learning approach ensures the internalization of values occurs while considering the cultural and social diversity of students. Third, strengthening the AIK curriculum and providing intensive training to educators so they have adequate competencies in teaching multicultural values. Fourth, fostering inclusive attitudes and social skills among students to address diversity wisely. Finally, AIK must become a strategic instrument in strengthening the role of Islamic education as a vehicle for character building that is civilized and diverse. (Solihin & Firmansyah, 2023) state that through this strategy, Islamic education will become more relevant and responsive to the challenges of diversity and social dynamics in the modern era.

Implementative Strategies for Multicultural Education in PTM

The implementation strategy for multicultural education at Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions (PTM) can be outlined based on the approaches and practices identified in various educational institutions that implement multicultural education, including:

1. Structural and Behavioral Approach: Implementation often begins with policies from the foundation or institutional leadership that instill multicultural values in a top-down manner,

while also emphasizing the awareness and behavior of campus members who value diversity as the primary capital to ensure implementation proceeds naturally without excessive intervention. For example, at Sang Timur Catholic Kindergarten, this strategy is implemented with an emphasis on love and brotherhood as the basis for school community interaction (Wulaningrum, 2017).

2. **Integration into the Curriculum and Learning Process:** Multicultural education is integrated into courses or study programs by incorporating content that values cultural, social, and gender diversity. In addition, learning is also designed to instill values of tolerance and equality, such as the formation of diverse learning groups and the assignment of equal tasks (Januarti, Zakso, & Supriadi, 2018).
3. **Development of Lecturer Competence and Extracurricular Activities:** Multicultural education needs to be supported by the development of lecturers' capacity to understand and teach the values of diversity and tolerance. Activities outside the classroom, such as arts, culture, and religion, reinforce the application of multicultural values in a broader social context (Rohman, 2022).
4. **Creating an Inclusive and Collaborative Learning Environment:** A campus atmosphere that is open to diversity must be created through policies that support inclusion, collaboration among students from diverse backgrounds, and the use of digital technology to broaden students' cultural horizons while strengthening local cultural identity (Anton et al., 2024).
5. **Continuous Evaluation Using the CIPP Approach:** Evaluate implementation using the contextual (context), input, process, and product (CIPP) model to assess the effectiveness of the strategies implemented and to make necessary adjustments so that multicultural education values are truly embedded in higher education institutions (Rohman, 2022).
6. **Addressing Barriers Through Socialization and Supporting Media:** Barriers such as attitudes of intolerance toward differences between individuals can be minimized by increasing socialization, installing posters or educational media about diversity, and strengthening the value of tolerance through discussions and real activities on campus (Januarti et al., 2018).

Thus, the strategy for implementing multicultural education in PTM requires the integration of institutional policies, curriculum development, increased awareness and competence among lecturers and students, the creation of an inclusive environment, and continuous evaluation with the active participation of the entire academic community (Wulaningrum, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The reactivation of Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah (AIK) as pillars of progressive Islam-based multicultural education at Muhammadiyah Universities (PTM) is a strategic step in facing the challenges of social plurality in Indonesia. Moderate, inclusive, and tolerant Islamic values must be fully integrated into the curriculum, learning processes, and institutional culture to foster students' adaptability to diversity. AIK not only plays a role in building theological understanding but also serves as an ethical and spiritual foundation for internalizing religious moderation, social sensitivity, and respect for differences.

The implementation of multicultural education at PTM requires a comprehensive approach, starting from inclusive structural policies, the integration of multicultural values into the curriculum, the development of lecturer competencies, the creation of a collaborative campus environment, and continuous evaluation using the CIPP model. PTM must also address barriers such as exclusivist attitudes

through socialization strategies, educational media, and genuine cross-cultural dialogue practices. Through these strategies, AIK is expected to become a strategic tool in building an academic culture that values pluralism and promotes the creation of a peaceful, just, and civilized society. The revitalization of AIK in PTM is a key factor in ensuring that Islamic education remains relevant and contributory in shaping a generation that is religious, moderate, and capable of living harmoniously amidst complex social dynamics.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to Universitas Ahmad Dahlan and Universitas Muhammadiyah Pringsewu for providing academic and institutional support during the completion of this study. Special thanks are also extended to colleagues and reviewers whose constructive feedback has contributed to improving the quality of this manuscript.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Funding Statement

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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