

Integrating Islamic and Contemporary Education: Applying Bloom's Taxonomy and the PDCA Cycle for Curriculum Improvement

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Islamic Education; Islamic Epistemology; Knowledge Integration; Curriculum Development; Bloom's Taxonomy; PDCA Cycle; Educational Reform	This paper examines the persistent failure of educational integration in Muslim-majority contexts, arguing that the problem is epistemological rather than merely curricular. Contemporary education privileges empirical opinion and rational intellect as its sole sources of valid knowledge, while Islamic education designates Wahi Divine Revelation transmitted through the Quran and authenticated Sunnah, as the primary epistemological anchor that orients all other forms of knowing. Usual integration models have adopted an additive approach, appending Islamic content to unchanged contemporary curricula, which leaves the foundational epistemological divergence unresolved. This paper employs a conceptual-interpretive methodology supported by systematic literature review to propose a two-tier framework: Bloom's Revised Taxonomy is applied at the curricular level to align cognitive learning objectives with Islamic ethical and spiritual formation across all six cognitive tiers; and the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) continuous improvement cycle is adapted at the institutional level to govern iterative reform across four critical dimensions, curriculum, teaching staff, parental engagement, and administrative governance. The proposed framework provides educational institutions with a structured operational model for transitioning from additive toward genuinely epistemological integration, producing graduates who are technically proficient in contemporary disciplines while remaining authentically grounded in the principles of Shariah.
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INTRODUCTION

The education of Muslim communities in colonial and post-colonial contexts has long been characterised by a structural bifurcation between two competing intellectual traditions. On one side stands the classical Islamic sciences tradition, transmitted through institutional networks such as Darul-Uloom Deoband, Nadwah tul Ulama (est. 1892), and Darul Uloom Nadwah tul Ulama (est. 1898), institutions devoted to the conservation and authoritative transmission of Quranic sciences, Hadith methodology, Islamic jurisprudence, and Arabic linguistics.¹ On the other stands the Western empirical-scientific tradition, institutionalised in Muslim contexts through the influence of colonial educational policy and epitomised, in the South Asian subcontinent, by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's founding of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh in 1877. This institutional bifurcation produced, over successive generations, a cultural fracture within Muslim intellectual life that has proven remarkably resistant to repair.

The depth of this fracture was recognised with unusual candour by Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi, who observed that by 1935 approximately ninety percent of graduates from Aligarh Muslim University reportedly held orientations incompatible with orthodox Islamic belief—an indictment, Maududi argued, not of individual graduates but of an educational architecture that positioned Western empiricism and Islamic revelation as mutually exclusive intellectual universes.² This observation remains sociologically and educationally significant today, not because the Aligarh case is unique, but because it illustrates with unusual clarity the structural dynamic that additive integration models cannot address: when an Islamic education component is appended to a curriculum whose epistemological foundations are exclusively empiricist, graduates absorb the epistemological framework rather than the appended content as their primary intellectual orientation.

The problem is by no means confined to the South Asian subcontinent. Across Muslim-majority societies from Southeast Asia to the Arab world to sub-Saharan Africa comparable parallel educational tracks operate with limited institutional communication, producing graduates equipped for either modern professional life or traditional Islamic scholarship but rarely for both simultaneously. As Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi has observed, the challenge of secularisation and liberalisation in the Islamic world is fundamentally epistemological: it concerns the displacement of a Wahi-anchored framework of knowing by a humanist-empirical one, and cannot be addressed by curricular addition alone.³

In Pakistan, the structural reality of this divide is encoded in the country's formal educational architecture. Despite a Muslim population exceeding 96.28 percent, the country operates two parallel qualification frameworks the contemporary NQF administered by the Higher Education Commission and the Islamic credentialing system of the various Wifaq

¹ "Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama," official website, accessed October 14, 2020, <https://www.nadwatululama.org/urdu/1tarruf.php>.

² Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi, *Taleemat*, 2nd ed. (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1971), 45–52.

³ Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, "Tantangan Sekularisasi dan Liberalisasi di Dunia Islam," *Jurnal Tsaqafah* 8, no. 1 (2012): 13.

bodies with minimal institutional connection between them.⁴ Efforts to bridge these frameworks, whether through the inclusion of modern subjects in madrasa syllabi or the addition of Islamic studies components in university programmes, have been widely acknowledged by scholars and practitioners as producing graduates who are neither fully equipped for modern professional life nor deeply grounded in Islamic epistemological tradition.

This paper argues that the root cause of these repeated failures is the universal adoption of what the paper terms 'additive integration' a model that treats Islamic knowledge as supplementary content rather than as an epistemological foundation. The paper proposes that genuine integration requires instead 'epistemological synthesis': a reconstitution of the curriculum's foundational structure in which Islamic and contemporary knowledge systems are articulated together at every level of cognitive development and institutional management.

To operationalise this thesis, the paper proposes a two-tier framework. At the curricular level, Bloom's Revised Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001) provides a hierarchical scaffold for specifying integrated learning objectives across six cognitive levels—from foundational recall through higher-order creation. At the institutional level, the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) continuous improvement cycle provides a governance mechanism for managing iterative educational reform across four institutional dimensions: curriculum design, teaching staff development, parental engagement, and administrative governance. Together, these tools provide institutions with a structured and practically actionable model for transitioning from additive toward genuinely synthetic Islamic-contemporary education.⁵

The paper addresses three explicit research objectives: (1) to characterise the epistemological foundations of contemporary and Islamic educational paradigms and explain why their divergence produces the failure of additive integration; (2) to develop an operational curricular framework based on Bloom's Revised Taxonomy that systematically aligns Islamic and contemporary learning objectives at each cognitive level; and (3) to propose a PDCA-based institutional governance framework that enables educational institutions to manage the transition toward epistemological synthesis iteratively and sustainably.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This paper employs a conceptual-interpretive research design. Conceptual research produces knowledge through the rigorous analysis, synthesis, and reframing of existing theoretical propositions, documented institutional evidence, and philosophical arguments, rather than through primary data collection. Its contribution lies in clarifying theoretical relationships, exposing implicit assumptions, and constructing new analytical frameworks

⁴ Higher Education Commission Pakistan, "National Qualifications Framework of Pakistan 2015" (Islamabad: HEC, 2015),

⁵ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2018), 19–22.

that can guide subsequent empirical investigation. The present study contributes in this mode by revealing the epistemological structure underlying the Islamic-contemporary educational divide and constructing a synthesizing framework from established theoretical resources in curriculum theory, Islamic epistemology, and management science.

The conceptual design is enriched by an auto-ethnographic analytical dimension. Auto-ethnography is a qualitative methodology in which the researcher's own culturally situated experience constitutes a primary analytical resource, particularly when that experience provides privileged access to phenomena that are difficult to observe or document through conventional external methods.⁶ The principal researcher's dual educational biography a decade of formal traditional Islamic education (2002–2012) encompassing Quranic sciences, Hadith methodology, Islamic jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*), and classical Arabic, followed by sustained engagement with Finance and Management disciplines in the contemporary academic tradition (2005–2020) provides precisely this kind of privileged analytical access to the lived epistemological gap between the two systems. This biographical positioning is employed analytically rather than anecdotally: personal experience serves to validate and illustrate theoretical claims derived from the systematic literature, not to replace scholarly evidence with subjective assertion.

Literature Review Methodology

The systematic literature review was conducted through searching across academic databases including Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, and the institutional repositories of Pakistani and international universities and Islamic research centres. Search terms combined subject-area descriptors (Islamic education, curriculum integration, Islamic epistemology, Wahi, knowledge integration) with methodological and theoretical terms (Bloom's Taxonomy, PDCA, quality management in education, curriculum reform). Inclusion criteria prioritised peer-reviewed journal articles published within the past twenty years, authoritative scholarly monographs, and primary Islamic textual sources the Quran, authenticated Hadith collections, and classical works of Islamic jurisprudence and epistemology. Sources were assessed for relevance to the three research objectives and for scholarly authority within their respective disciplinary traditions.

The management science literature on PDCA was reviewed with a focus on educational quality management applications, following the lead of Naseem and Morshed's application to Islamic banking training. The Bloom's Taxonomy literature was reviewed in both its original formulation (Bloom et al. 1956) and its extensively used revised version (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001), the latter being preferred for its cognitive process orientation and its empirical grounding in subsequent educational research. The Islamic epistemology literature drew primarily on the classical formulations of Muhammad Taqi Usmani and the philosophical-theological works of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, supplemented by contemporary scholarship on *Maqasid al-Shariah* and Islamic educational

⁶ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2018), 19–22.

philosophy.⁷

Methodological Rigour and Limitations

Rigour in conceptual research is achieved through analytical transparency, systematic engagement with counterarguments, precision in the deployment of theoretical constructs, and explicit acknowledgment of the boundaries of the claims made. This paper maintains rigour by clearly distinguishing between conceptual propositions and empirical claims, by representing alternative scholarly positions within the Islamic finance and integration debates, by grounding theoretical arguments in cited scholarship rather than in personal assertion, and by explicitly limiting its empirical claims to the domain of plausibility and theoretical coherence rather than demonstrated effectiveness.

The primary methodological limitation is the absence of empirical validation of the proposed framework. The framework developed in this paper is designed as a prescriptive model for future action research it provides theoretical justification and operational structure, not proof of efficacy. A secondary limitation concerns the auto-ethnographic dimension: personal experience, however analytically valuable, is inherently perspectival and should be complemented by systematic empirical study of comparable institutional experiences before strong empirical conclusions are drawn.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Epistemological Architecture of Contemporary Education

To understand why integration attempts have persistently failed, it is necessary first to understand the epistemological architecture of contemporary education with analytical precision. At the foundation of modern Western educational systems and of the educational institutions built on their model across the post-colonial world lies a specific and historically contingent theory of knowledge: that valid knowledge is produced through systematic observation of empirical reality and rational analysis of observational data. This paradigm, broadly characterised as empiricist-rationalist, treats human sensory perception and logical inference as the exclusive legitimate sources of theoretical authority.

Theorizing, within this paradigm, is defined by Tavallaei and Abu Talib as the process of presenting ideas in an interconnected form relevant to a phenomenon, such that the resulting structure of propositions may qualify as a theory capable of explaining, predicting, or intervening in that phenomenon.⁸ The theorizing process operates through two analytically distinguishable modes identified by Borowska-Beszta: analytical theorizing, in which the scholar develops theoretical claims by working critically within the tradition of existing theories and research; and constructional theorizing, in which the scholar generates theory independently from freshly collected empirical data.⁹ Alasuutari identifies grounded

⁷ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1993), 41–44.

⁸ Mehdi Tavallaei and Mansor Abu Talib, "A General Perspective on Role of Theory in Qualitative Research," *The Journal of International Social Research* 3, no. 11 (2010): 571.

⁹ Beata Borowska-Beszta, "Theory and Theorizing as Stunning Confusions in the Fieldwork: Analytical and Constructional Theorizing in Ethnographic Research," *International Research Journal for Quality in Education* 2, no. 10 (2015): 3–5.

theory in which theoretical constructs emerge directly from systematic engagement with empirical data as among the most influential methodological expressions of constructional theorizing in the social sciences.¹⁰

The empirical sources that underpin contemporary theorizing are rigorously specified in the methodological literature. Yin delineates six primary categories of evidence: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artefacts.¹¹ Merriam and Tisdell identify interviews, observations, documents, and online data as the core collection methods in qualitative inquiry.¹² Yazan's synthesis of three dominant methodological traditions Yin, Merriam, and Stake confirms that what is common across these frameworks is the exclusive anchoring of legitimate knowledge in human sensory and rational faculties.¹³

The relationship between theory and the empirical world is further specified through the methodological triad of inductive, deductive, and abductive reasoning orientations. Creswell and Creswell note that qualitative research typically begins inductively, moving from particular observations toward generalized theoretical propositions, and may become progressively more deductive as theoretical saturation approaches.¹⁴ Wilkins, Neri, and Lean observe that facility in moving among these three orientations is a hallmark of advanced scholarly contribution in management and business research the disciplines most directly relevant to the Islamic finance integration dimension of this paper.¹⁵

The epistemological implication of this paradigm for curriculum design is decisive and has been insufficiently recognised in the integration literature. A curriculum built exclusively on the contemporary empiricist-rationalist paradigm will produce graduates whose intellectual formation treats human perception and reason as the ultimate arbiters of all knowledge claims. For Muslim graduates, this produces a structural cognitive predicament: they encounter Islamic normative prescriptions the prohibition of Riba, the obligations of Zakat and Waqf, the epistemological authority of Hadith as externally imposed constraints on an otherwise complete intellectual framework, rather than as constitutive elements of a more comprehensive epistemological vision. This predicament is not a product of personal weakness or insufficient Islamic instruction; it is the structural consequence of epistemological architecture.

¹⁰ Pertti Alasuutari, "Theorizing in Qualitative Research: A Cultural Studies Perspective," *Qualitative Inquiry* 2, no. 4 (1996): 372, <https://doi.org/10.1177/107780049600200401>.

¹¹ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2018), 112–14.

¹² Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 96–101.

¹³ Brenda Yazan, "Three Approaches to Case Study Methods in Education: Yin, Merriam, and Stake," *The Qualitative Report* 20, no. 2 (2015): 135.

¹⁴ Stephen Wilkins, Selina Neri, and Jonathan Lean, "The Role of Theory in the Business/Management PhD: How Students May Use Theory to Make an Original Contribution to Knowledge," *The International Journal of Management Education* 17, no. 3 (2019): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2019.100316>.

¹⁵ Stephen Wilkins, Selina Neri, and Jonathan Lean, "The Role of Theory in the Business/Management PhD: How Students May Use Theory to Make an Original Contribution to Knowledge," *The International Journal of Management Education* 17, no. 3 (2019): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2019.100316>.

2. Islamic Epistemology: Wahi as Primary and Orienting Source

Islamic epistemology does not reject empirical observation or rational intellect—both are affirmed throughout the Quran as God-given faculties central to human flourishing and to the human obligation of 'reading' and understanding God's creation. What distinguishes Islamic from contemporary epistemology is the recognition of a third source of knowledge that is logically and ontologically prior to both: Wahi, or Divine Revelation, as transmitted through the Quran and the authenticated Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Usmani identifies three sources of knowledge in the Islamic framework: the senses (hawas), the intellect ('aql), and Wahi three complementary faculties, each with its appropriate scope and authority.¹⁶

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, whose philosophy of Islamic education has profoundly influenced contemporary discussions of knowledge integration, articulates the distinctiveness of Islamic epistemology in terms of the concept of *adab*, the proper ordering of knowledge in accordance with its ontological hierarchy. For al-Attas, secularism in education is fundamentally the loss of this proper ordering: the displacement of the God-centred epistemological hierarchy by a human-centred one, in which human reason and empirical observation become self-sufficient arbiters of all knowledge claims.¹⁷ This analysis directly corroborates the thesis of the present paper: the failure of Islamic-contemporary integration is not a failure of curricular content but a failure of epistemological ordering.

The tripartite Islamic epistemological structure is not, as critics sometimes assume, a claim that revelation suppresses or overrides rational and empirical inquiry. It is a claim about the logical ordering and ultimate grounding of knowledge. The senses provide raw experiential data; the intellect processes and systematizes that data into theoretical understanding; but neither faculty is epistemologically self-sufficient. There exist questions of ultimate value and ultimate obligation questions that define the normative framework within which empirical inquiry is conducted and its results evaluated that senses and intellect, precisely because they are bounded by finite human existence, cannot answer with definitive authority. It is in this domain the domain of normative orientation that Wahi is irreplaceable and authoritative.

Israr Ahmed illustrates this epistemological limitation through three perennial civilizational problems that human reason alone has consistently failed to resolve with durable justice: the equitable balance of rights between men and women; the just balance of authority between rulers and the governed; and the fair balance of claims between capital and labour.¹⁸ In each case, purely rational-empirical frameworks have historically produced partisan settlements tethered to the interests of those whose reason and observation they employ. The Quranic and Sunnah-based normative frameworks for all three problems are grounded, by Islamic epistemic conviction, not in any human perspective but in divine

¹⁶ Muhammad Taqi Usmani, *Asan Tarjumah Quran* (Karachi: Maktabah Ma'arif Al-Quran, 2008), 13

¹⁷ Muhammad Taqi Usmani, *Asan Tarjumah Quran* (Karachi: Maktabah Ma'arif Al-Quran, 2008), 13

¹⁸ Israr Ahmed, "3 Problems of All the Time (Man Can Never Solve)," video lecture, accessed October 11, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sAZmkVXIVbQ>.

wisdom and have historically produced, when implemented with institutional fidelity, more stable and just social arrangements than humanist alternatives.

The concept of 'Wahi-based theorization' developed in this paper draws a structural parallel between Islamic epistemology and grounded theory methodology in the contemporary tradition. Grounded theory is so named because, unlike purely deductive approaches, it develops its theoretical structure directly from the ground of empirical data the theory is accountable to, and emerges from, the empirical reality it describes.¹⁹ In a structurally analogous way, Islamic theories are 'grounded' in the Quran and Sunnah: their authority derives not from external philosophical systems or empirical consensus but from direct rootedness in the divine source of revelation. This analogy provides scholars trained in contemporary methodology with a conceptual bridge for appreciating the logical structure of Islamic epistemology without treating it as pre-rational superstition.

3. The Islamic Finance Case: Epistemological Divergence Illustrated

The epistemological divergence between Islamic and contemporary educational paradigms finds its most pedagogically instructive illustration in the domain of Islamic finance. The Conventional Pecking Order Theory of corporate finance, developed by Stewart Myers and Nicholas Majluf in 1984, holds that firms exhibit a systematic hierarchy of financing preferences: internal funds first, then debt, then equity. This hierarchy is derived exclusively from empirical observation of firm behaviour and rational-economic modelling of information asymmetry.²⁰ It represents, in the purest sense, a product of the contemporary empiricist paradigm: it makes no reference to any source of normative authority beyond human observation and reasoning, and treats interest-bearing debt as an unremarkable, indeed preferred, financing instrument.

From an Islamic epistemological standpoint, the Pecking Order framework is not merely incomplete but misconceived at its foundation. The Quran prohibits Riba interest-based transactions in categorical and emphatic terms across multiple revelatory contexts: Surah Al-Baqarah 2:275–281, Surah Al-'Imran 3:132, Surah An-Nisa 4:61, and Surah Ar-Rum 30:39. Surah Al-Baqarah 2:279 declares that persistence in Riba transactions after the prohibition has been communicated constitutes a declaration of war against Allah and His Messenger, a formulation of extraordinary severity. For the Islamic curriculum designer, this is not a peripheral regulatory constraint to be managed within the Pecking Order framework but a Wahi-derived epistemological boundary that delimits the very universe of legitimate financial instruments and strategies.

The educational implications are direct and serious. As Usmani documents, the emergence of an Islamic banking industry has not resolved the epistemological problem at the curricular level it has merely added a set of Shariah-compliant financial products to an otherwise unchanged contemporary finance curriculum.²¹ Students continue to be formed

¹⁹ Alasuutari, "Theorizing in Qualitative Research," 374–75.

²⁰ Muhammad Taqi Usmani, *An Introduction to Islamic Finance* (Karachi: Maktabah Ma'arif Al-Quran, 2017), 146.

²¹ Usmani, *An Introduction to Islamic Finance*, 12–17.

within a paradigm that treats interest-based finance as the normative baseline, with Islamic finance appearing as a constrained special case: an interest-free variant that accepts the conventional framework's categories but forbids some of its instruments for exogenous religious reasons. The graduate thereby internalises Islamic finance as a restriction on conventional finance, rather than understanding conventional finance as a departure from the normative Islamic framework established by Wahi.

As Ghazali and Swamidas Ely have documented in their review of Islamic finance education, this curricular framing produces graduates who are technically proficient in conventional financial analysis but lack the epistemological grounding to develop genuinely Islamic financial solutions to novel challenges a deficit with direct consequences for the development of the global Islamic finance industry.²² The solution the present paper proposes is not a further expansion of Islamic finance electives within the conventional curriculum but a reconstitution of the curriculum's epistemological foundations, so that Islamic normative principles are articulated at every cognitive level from recall through higher-order creation.

It is important to acknowledge ongoing scholarly debates within Islamic finance education regarding the appropriate scope of integration. Daud Bakar distinguishes between Shariah scholars who approach integration primarily from the perspective of textual validity ensuring that specific transactions meet the formal requirements of Islamic jurisprudence and those who approach integration from the perspective of Maqasid al-Shariah ensuring that the financial system as a whole serves the higher objectives of Islamic law.²³ The framework proposed in this paper aligns with the Maqasid-oriented approach, which requires integration at the level of epistemological foundations rather than at the level of individual product compliance.

4. The Failure of Additive Integration: Theoretical Analysis

The dominant paradigm for Islamic-contemporary educational integration in Muslim-majority contexts may be characterised as 'additive integration': Islamic content is incorporated into an otherwise unchanged contemporary curriculum, or contemporary subjects are incorporated into an otherwise unchanged Islamic curriculum, without altering the epistemological foundations of either. This approach is structurally incapable of producing genuine integration because it addresses the symptom the absence of Islamic content while leaving the cause the dominance of a non-Islamic epistemological framework entirely intact.²⁴

In the madrasa-to-contemporary direction, additive integration has been adopted by the Wifaqul Madaris, Rabitah tul Madaris, and related systems, as well as by reform-oriented institutions such as Nadwah tul Ulama and Mansoorah Sindh, all of which have incorporated modern subjects mathematics, English, computer science into curricula whose

²² Noor Azlan Ghazali and Susela Swamidas Ely, "Islamic Finance Education: Challenges and Prospects," *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research* 8, no. 4 (2017): 363–76.

²³ Daud Bakar, *Shariah Minds in Islamic Finance* (Kuala Lumpur: Amanie Media, 2016), 22–25.

²⁴ ududi, *Taleemat*, 89–92.

epistemological core remains devoted to the classical Islamic sciences. In the contemporary-to-Islamic direction, additive integration has been adopted by virtually every Pakistani university that includes Islamic studies as a compulsory or elective component alongside a contemporary disciplinary curriculum.

The structural failure of additive integration is illustrated most starkly by the Aligarh case, but its dynamics are reproduced at a less dramatic scale in every Pakistani university that offers Islamic economics or Islamic business ethics alongside a conventional management or economics curriculum. Students who encounter both bodies of knowledge within a curriculum organized, assessed, and conceptually framed by the contemporary empiricist paradigm will inevitably experience them as inhabiting different epistemic registers: conventional knowledge as 'scientific' subject to the rigorous standards of empirical testing and theoretical elaboration—and Islamic knowledge as 'normative preference' subject to the standards of scriptural interpretation and religious authority. These two registers do not synthesize; they coexist in parallel, and the weight of institutional culture, professional credentialing, and career incentive invariably privileges the contemporary register in graduates' practical orientations.

Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, in his definitive study of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's educational philosophy, frames the resolution of this problem in terms of the concept of Islamisation of knowledge: not the addition of Islamic content to secular disciplines, but the reorientation of the intellectual framework within which all knowledge Islamic and contemporary is processed, evaluated, and applied.²⁵ The present paper's proposal for epistemological synthesis is aligned with this Islamisation-of-knowledge orientation, operationalised through the practical tools of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy and the PDCA cycle.

5. Pakistan's Educational Structure and the Two-Track Reality

The structural reality of Pakistan's educational divide is formally encoded in the country's qualifications framework. Table 1 presents the Higher Education Commission's National Qualifications Framework, which provides the official structure of contemporary education from primary schooling through doctoral studies.²⁶

Table 1. Current Education Levels in Pakistan

Level Category	No.	Award Type	Award Examples	Technical/Vocational
Higher Education	8	Doctoral	PhD	—
	7	Masters	M.Phil, MBA, MS, MSc, MA	M. Tech
	6	Bachelor (Hons)	MA/MSc (16 Yrs), BS, BE	B. Tech (Hons)

²⁵ Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1998), 108.

²⁶ Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1998), 108.

	5	Associate/Ordinary Bachelor	BA/BSc (Pass)	B. Tech (Pass)
Higher Secondary	4	HSSC	I.Com, FA, FSc, A Level	DAE
Secondary	3	SSC	Matriculation	NVC Level 1–4
Elementary	2	Middle	—	—
	1	Pre-Primary/Primary	—	—

Source: Higher Education Commission Pakistan (2015, p. 6).

Running in parallel with no formal mechanism for mutual recognition, credit transfer, or institutional equivalency is the Islamic educational hierarchy. Table 2 maps each level of the Islamic credential system to its approximate contemporary equivalent.

Table 2. Islamic and Contemporary Credential Equivalences in Pakistan

Islamic Credential	Contemporary Equivalent	HEC Level
Shahadah tul Alamiyah	MA Arabic / Islamic Studies	Level 7 (Masters)
Shahadah tul 'Aliyah	Bachelor of Arts	Level 5
Shahadah tul Khassah	Higher Secondary Certificate	Level 4
Shahadah tul 'Ammah	Secondary School Certificate	Level 3

Source: Adapted from Ayub et al. (2019, pp. 44–46).

In a society where 96.28 percent of the population is Muslim²⁷ and the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan designates Quranic principles as the supreme source of legislative guidance, the institutional separation of these two tracks constitutes a profound structural dysfunction with direct consequences for national moral and intellectual development. The graduates of the contemporary track are, in their overwhelming majority, Muslims whose professional formation takes place within a framework that treats Islamic normative principles as external to its epistemological architecture. The graduates of the madrasa track are members of a society that must engage with modern science, technology, economics, and governance yet whose educational formation has equipped them with limited capacity to do so.

Muhammad Ayub et al. have documented this dysfunction in the specific context of Shariah advisory competence in Pakistan's Islamic banking industry: despite the growth of the Islamic finance sector, the supply of scholars with genuine competence in both Islamic jurisprudence and contemporary finance remains severely constrained, precisely because no educational pathway systematically cultivates both dimensions of the required competence.²⁸

²⁷ Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, "Population by Religion" (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, 2020), accessed June 3, 2020, http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/tables/POPULATION_BY_RELIGION.pdf

²⁸ Muhammad Ayub, Khurram Khan, Abdul Rashid, Muhammad Asghar Shahzad, and Habib Rehman, "Enhancing the Competence and Effectiveness of Shari'ah Advisory Boards: Case of Islamic Banking Institutions in Pakistan," *Journal of Islamic Business and Management* 9, no. 1 (2019): 44, <https://doi.org/10.26501/jibm/2019.0901-004>.

The framework proposed in this paper is designed to address exactly this deficit by providing a structured model for the simultaneous cultivation of Islamic and contemporary knowledge at every cognitive level of the educational process.

The historical dimension of the Islamic-contemporary educational divide in economic life deserves particular attention. As Ghazi documents, Muslim societies managed their financial systems for over twelve centuries on the basis of partnership and trading modes, Mudarabah, Musharakah, Murabahah, and Ijara, rather than interest-bearing debt, and did so with considerable institutional sophistication.²⁹ The displacement of this indigenous Islamic financial epistemology by the colonial interest-based paradigm was not the result of Islamic finance's practical inadequacy but of the structural dominance of the colonial educational system, which systematically produced graduates formed in the contemporary empiricist paradigm rather than in the Islamic one. The present proposal seeks to provide the institutional mechanism for reversing this historically produced displacement.

6. The Proposed Framework: Bloom's Revised Taxonomy as Curricular Architecture

Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, originally formulated by Benjamin Bloom and colleagues in 1956, was significantly revised by Anderson and Krathwohl in 2001 to produce a more cognitively oriented and empirically validated framework. The revised taxonomy organises cognitive skills into six hierarchical levels: Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyse, Evaluate, and Create, replacing the original synthesis level with Create as the highest cognitive aspiration and repositioning Evaluate below Create to better reflect the cognitive complexity of constructing new knowledge.³⁰ Both formulations share the fundamental architectural property that makes them valuable for integration purposes: the hierarchy specifies levels of cognitive engagement without prescribing the epistemological source of the knowledge being engaged.

Mohammed and Omar's analysis of Bloom's Taxonomy applications in educational contexts confirms that the taxonomy's hierarchical structure is reliably applicable across disciplines and cultural contexts, provided that learning objectives at each level are specified with sufficient precision.³¹ This cross-cultural applicability is precisely what makes the taxonomy suitable as an integration scaffold: it can accommodate both contemporary empiricist knowledge and Wahi-based Islamic knowledge within a single hierarchical framework, without privileging either epistemological source at the level of cognitive structure.

The integration logic of the proposed framework proceeds level by level through the revised taxonomy, applied to any disciplinary field. At the Remember level, integration requires that students not only recall the key concepts and models of their contemporary discipline but also recall the relevant Islamic normative frameworks, the Quranic verses and

²⁹ Ghazi, *Muhazirat-e-Ma'ishat-o-Tijarat*, 91–93.

³⁰ Anderson, L. W., and D. R. Krathwohl, eds. *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (New York: Longman, 2001), 67–68.

³¹ Manal Mohammed and Nazlia Omar, "Question Classification Based on Bloom's Taxonomy Cognitive Domain Using Modified TF-IDF and Word2Vec," *PLOS ONE* 15, no. 3 (2020): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0230442>.

Hadith evidence pertaining to the discipline's core activities and concerns. At the Understand level, students must be capable of explaining both the internal logic of contemporary theoretical frameworks and the Islamic alternatives, in terms adequate to the internal logic of each rather than merely their external formal properties. At the Apply level, students deploy both frameworks in analysis of real-world institutional and practical cases, developing genuine fluency in both epistemological registers. At the Analyse level, students identify and examine the points of convergence and divergence between the frameworks, and trace these to their epistemological roots. At the Evaluate level, graduates assess existing institutional practices financial strategies, organisational policies, regulatory frameworks, against both contemporary performance criteria and the criteria of Maqasid al-Shariah.³² At the Create level, graduates design original institutional frameworks and policy proposals that are simultaneously technically sound by contemporary standards and normatively grounded in Wahi-derived principles. Table 3 maps these requirements systematically.

Table 3. Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, Islamic Integration Goals, and PDCA Alignment

Bloom's Level	Cognitive Skill	Contemporary Goal	Islamic Integration Goal	PDCA Phase
1. Remember	Recall & Define	Define interest, GDP, markets	Define Riba; recall Quranic prohibition (Al-Baqarah 2:275–281)	Plan: audit curricular content
2. Understand	Explain & Describe	Explain Pecking Order Theory	Explain Mudarabah & Musharakah as Wahi-grounded alternatives	Plan: map learning outcomes
3. Apply	Use & Implement	Apply financial ratio analysis	Apply Shariah-compliant modes to real firm scenarios	Do: pilot integrated units
4. Analyse	Examine & Compare	Analyse risk-return trade-offs	Analyse conventional vs Islamic finance through Maqasid al-Shariah lens	Check: evaluate student outcomes
5. Evaluate	Judge & Assess	Evaluate firm performance metrics	Evaluate institutional practices against Islamic ethical criteria	Act: institutional review
6. Create	Design & Construct	Develop financial strategy proposals	Construct Wahi-informed institutional policy frameworks	Act: refine & restart cycle

Source: Authors' own formulation based on Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), Mohammed and Omar (2020), and Naseem and Morshed (2017).

The operational value of this table is not merely descriptive: it constitutes a practical tool for

³² Mohd Shukri Hanapi, "From the Concept of Maqasid al-Shari'ah to the Implementation of Wasatiyyah in Malaysia," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 7 (2015): 32.

curriculum designers working to develop integrated syllabi. By specifying, for each cognitive level, both the contemporary learning objective and its Islamic integration counterpart, the table enables subject-matter specialists to identify exactly where and how Islamic epistemological content must be incorporated into each disciplinary curriculum. The table also makes explicit the connection between curricular integration and institutional management through the PDCA alignment column, ensuring that curricular design is embedded within a governance framework that can sustain its implementation.

7. The PDCA Cycle as Institutional Governance Architecture

The successful institutionalisation of an integrated curriculum requires a governance mechanism capable of managing the systemic complexity of educational reform across multiple institutional dimensions simultaneously. The Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) continuous improvement cycle originally developed by Walter Shewhart in the 1930s and popularised by W. Edwards Deming as a model for industrial quality improvement provides precisely this architecture. The PDCA cycle's defining epistemological virtue is its explicit commitment to organisational learning: it treats reform not as a one-time planned intervention but as an iterative cycle of structured experimentation, systematic measurement, and progressive improvement.³³

Naseem and Morshed's application of the PDCA cycle to Islamic banking training demonstrated its capacity to identify root causes of training inefficiencies and generate structured improvements through a disciplined cycle of planning, implementation, evaluation, and revision in a context directly relevant to the Islamic-contemporary integration challenge.³⁴ The present paper extends this application to the comprehensive challenge of Islamic-contemporary educational integration, proposing that the PDCA cycle be applied across four institutional dimensions: curriculum design, teaching staff development, parental engagement, and administrative governance. Table 4 specifies the activities appropriate to each PDCA phase across these dimensions.

Table 4. PDCA Cycle Applied to Islamic-Contemporary Educational Integration

Phase	Management Action	Educational Integration Activity	Key Stakeholders
Plan	Identify gaps & set objectives	Conduct epistemological audit of existing syllabi; align intended learning outcomes with Bloom's revised levels; map Quranic and Hadith references to disciplinary content	Curriculum designers, Islamic scholars, HEC representatives
Do	Implement the plan	Deliver integrated lesson sequences; provide teacher training in both	Subject teachers, Shariah advisors, students

³³ Rebekah Inez Brau, John W. Gardner, G. Scott Webb, and Jason K. McDonald, "Teaching Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) in a Supply Chain Context: A Paper Football in Class Activity," *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education* 17, no. 1 (2019): 8.

³⁴ Zubair Ahmed Naseem and Mohammed Ibrahim Morshed, "Case Study: Islamic Banking Training Improvement Using the PDCA Method," in *International Conference on Islamic Banking & Finance Abstract Book* (Karachi: Institute of Business Management, 2017), 36.

		epistemological traditions; develop bilingual instructional materials anchored in Wahi-based normativity	
Check	Measure & evaluate outcomes	Assess cognitive and ethical learning outcomes; gather parent and community feedback; benchmark graduate profiles against Islamic integrity criteria	Internal evaluators, external assessors, parents
Act	Improve & standardise	Revise curriculum based on evaluation findings; institutionalise proven practices; share lessons with network institutions; initiate next PDCA cycle	Administration, accreditation bodies, policy makers

Source: Authors' own formulation based on Naseem and Morshed (2017) and Brau et al. (2019).

The PDCA cycle also provides the mechanism for systematically extracting and applying the institutional learning embedded in prior integration efforts. Each historical integration initiative Nadwah tul Ulama, Darul Uloom Nadwah tul Ulama, the International Islamic Universities at Islamabad and Kuala Lumpur represents, in PDCA terms, a completed or ongoing 'Do' phase of a larger institutional learning cycle. A PDCA-informed approach does not dismiss these efforts but treats them as structured sources of institutional knowledge: What were the intended outcomes? What were the actual outcomes? What conditions produced convergence or divergence between intention and outcome? What curricular, pedagogical, staffing, or governance adjustments are indicated by documented divergences?³⁵

Gita and Apsari's work on action research in educational contexts validates the PDCA framework's dual function as both management tool and scholarly methodology: it enables educational institutions to generate original empirical knowledge about their own practice while simultaneously using that knowledge to improve it.³⁶ This dual function is particularly valuable for the integration project, which requires not only institutional improvement but also the systematic generation of the empirical knowledge base that sustained and scalable integration will require.

The four institutional dimensions across which the PDCA cycle is applied in this framework deserve elaboration. The curriculum dimension encompasses the design of integrated syllabi, the specification of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy-aligned learning objectives at each cognitive level, and the selection and sequencing of instructional content. The teaching staff dimension encompasses the professional development of educators in both contemporary disciplinary expertise and Islamic epistemological competence recognising that integrated curriculum delivery requires teachers who themselves inhabit both intellectual traditions with genuine competence rather than superficial familiarity. The

³⁵ Naseem and Morshed, "Case Study," 36–37.

³⁶ I N Gita and R A Apsari, "Scaffolding in Problem Based Learning to Increase Students' Achievements in Linear Algebra," *Journal of Physics* 1040 (2018): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1040/1/012024>.

parental engagement dimension recognises that educational integration requires the active support and understanding of families, who must appreciate the purpose and value of an epistemologically synthesised education rather than experiencing it as a dilution of either tradition. The administrative governance dimension encompasses the institutional policies, accreditation requirements, and leadership commitments necessary to sustain integration across successive leadership generations and budgetary cycles.

8. Illustrative Model of Partial Synthesis

The theoretical framework proposed in this paper is not without practical precedent. A particularly instructive illustration of partial synthesis at the school level is provided by an integrated school model documented through the principal researcher's field observation and extended discussion with its founder. This institution operating within Pakistan's regulated curriculum requirements—introduces each major scientific topic with the relevant Quranic verses that reference the phenomena under study: astronomical topics are introduced with relevant verses from the Quran concerning the celestial realm; biological topics with verses on creation and living systems; economic topics with the relevant normative frameworks from Quranic and Hadith sources. This practice implements, at the Remember and Understand levels of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, precisely the kind of epistemological framing that additive integration models entirely lack.

More significantly from the perspective of the proposed framework, when the compulsory national curriculum requires instruction in interest-based mathematics as it does in Pakistan this institution does not simply deliver the required content in isolation. Instead, it simultaneously and systematically reinforces the Islamic normative context: students learn the mathematics of interest while being explicitly reminded that Riba is categorically prohibited for Muslims, so that every encounter with interest-based content is framed within the Wahi-derived normative context that defines its inadmissibility for Islamic practice. This approach integrating normativity at every cognitive encounter rather than deferring it to a separate Islamic studies class operationalises, at the institutional level, the epistemological synthesis the proposed framework advocates.

This illustrative model is offered as a proof-of-concept demonstration that epistemological framing of contemporary content within an Islamic normative context is institutionally achievable within existing regulatory constraints. It is not offered as evidence of the framework's effectiveness which would require systematic evaluation of learning outcomes over time but as an illustration of what the Apply and Analyse levels of the proposed integrated curriculum might look like in practice. The PDCA governance cycle would be essential for evaluating whether such approaches consistently achieve their intended cognitive and ethical learning outcomes and for refining instructional practice based on those evaluations.³⁷

CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that the persistent failure of Islamic-contemporary educational integration in Muslim-majority contexts is rooted in an epistemological problem that additive

³⁷ Usmani, *An Introduction to Islamic Finance*, 148–52.

integration models cannot address: the fundamental divergence between a contemporary paradigm that anchors knowledge in human empirical observation and rational inference, and an Islamic paradigm that recognises Wahi Divine Revelation through the Quran and Sunnah as the primary and orienting source of knowledge that subsumes and directs all other epistemological faculties. Until this foundational divergence is confronted directly in curriculum design and institutional governance, no amount of content supplementation will produce the synthesis that Islamic educational reformers have sought.³⁸

In response to the first research objective characterising the epistemological foundations of the two paradigms and explaining the failure of additive integration the paper has demonstrated that additive integration fails not because of insufficient Islamic content but because of the epistemological dominance of the contemporary paradigm within which all content, Islamic and secular alike, is processed and evaluated. In response to the second research objective developing an operational curricular framework the paper has applied Bloom's Revised Taxonomy to specify integrated Islamic-contemporary learning objectives at each of the six cognitive levels, producing a practical tool for curriculum designers that can be applied across disciplinary fields. In response to the third research objective proposing an institutional governance framework the paper has adapted the PDCA continuous improvement cycle to provide a structured, iterative, and multi-dimensional governance architecture for managing educational integration across four critical institutional dimensions.

The theoretical contribution of this paper lies in the concept of epistemological synthesis as distinct from and superior to additive integration. Epistemological synthesis does not merely add Islamic content to a contemporary curriculum; it reconstitutes the curriculum's foundational architecture so that Islamic and contemporary knowledge are articulated together at every cognitive level, within a governance framework capable of sustaining and deepening that articulation iteratively over time. This conceptual distinction provides a theoretical foundation for evaluating and designing integration initiatives that is absent from the existing literature, which has tended to evaluate integration in terms of curricular content rather than epistemological structure.

For educational practitioners and policymakers, the paper offers several concrete implications. First, epistemological audit systematic examination of the implicit epistemological assumptions embedded in existing curricula should precede any integration initiative, to establish the baseline from which reform must proceed. Second, teacher development in both epistemological traditions is a prerequisite for effective integrated curriculum delivery; institutions that invest in integrated curricula without investing equivalently in teacher preparation will reproduce the additive model at the classroom level regardless of their curricular aspirations. Third, parental and community engagement is not a peripheral concern but a structural dimension of integration: educational synthesis requires that families understand and support the epistemological framework within which their children are being educated.

The study acknowledges significant limitations. As a conceptual paper, the proposed

³⁸ Israr Ahmed, "Dajali Ilam Kon Sa Hai," video lecture, <https://youtu.be/R2-8SqAS6wA>.

framework requires empirical validation through formal action research in specific institutional contexts. Future research should employ the PDCA model as an action research protocol at specific institutional sites across educational levels from primary through post-graduate—measuring cognitive and ethical learning outcomes at each phase, comparing integrated and additive curricula through rigorous comparative design, and conducting longitudinal assessment of graduate professional and ethical formation. Comparative research across diverse Muslim-majority national contexts would enhance the generalisability of the framework's application and identify the institutional conditions under which epistemological synthesis is most readily achieved.

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