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Faith and Pedagogy in a Global Era: Rethinking Teaching Practices in Islamic Higher Education

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Abstract. This study examines how teaching practices in Islamic higher education in Indonesia are shaped at the intersection of faith-based educational values and global pedagogical approaches. Using a qualitative multiple-case design, data were collected from 24 lecturers through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The findings reveal that pedagogy is strongly grounded in faith, with teaching viewed as a moral and purposeful activity aimed at students' holistic development. At the same time, global approaches such as student-centered learning are selectively adopted, resulting in hybrid practices that combine interaction and participation with continued lecturer guidance. However, this integration remains partial and uneven. Key tensions emerge between authority and autonomy, critical thinking and respect for tradition, and institutional expectations and classroom realities. The study also finds that while institutional policies promote contemporary pedagogies but offer limited guidance on integrating them with value-based educational frameworks, leading to inconsistent implementation. Drawing on a negotiative-integrative perspective, the study argues that teaching is a dynamic and context-dependent process shaped by ongoing negotiation between religious commitments and pedagogical innovation. By illuminating how lecturers actively mediate these competing influences, the study contributes a nuanced understanding of pedagogical adaptation in Islamic higher education highlights the need for clearer pedagogical frameworks, targeted professional development, and stronger institutional support to enable more coherent and meaningful integration.

Keywords: Islamic higher education; faith-based pedagogy; student-centered learning; pedagogical negotiation; teaching practices

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1. Introduction

The rapid transformation of higher education in the twenty-first century has been profoundly shaped by globalization, digitalization, and the growing demand for internationally competitive graduates (Oleksiyenko et al., 2021; Rahimi & Oh, 2024). In response, universities are increasingly expected to adopt pedagogical approaches that promote critical thinking, student-centered learning, interdisciplinarity, and the effective integration of technology (O'Connor, 2022; Panakaje et al., 2024).

These developments are closely connected to broader educational agendas that emphasize democratic participation and global citizenship, positioning pedagogy as a key mechanism for preparing students to navigate complex and interconnected societies (Aly et al., 2022; Saada, 2023). Consequently, higher education institutions are undertaking pedagogical, organizational, and governance reforms to enhance innovation and global competitiveness (Mohamed Hashim et al., 2022; Bhuiyan, 2026). These global transformations underscore the importance of examining how universities adapt their teaching practices and institutional strategies to meet evolving educational expectations.

Within this global shift, faith-based institutions, particularly Islamic higher education, face a distinctive challenge: how to reconcile these emerging pedagogical expectations with religious epistemologies, moral frameworks, and spiritual objectives rooted in Islamic tradition. While global pedagogical discourses increasingly prioritize constructivist, learner-centered, and outcomes-based approaches (Barnes & Marlatt, 2022; O'Connor, 2022), Islamic pedagogy emphasizes holistic human development, ethical formation, and the integration of revealed and acquired knowledge (Brooks & Ezzani, 2022; Chanifah et al., 2021; Suhayib & Ansyari, 2023). This divergence reflects deeper epistemological differences concerning the nature, purpose, and authority of knowledge (Biesta, 2023). As a result, educators in Islamic universities must frequently navigate complex intersections between faith commitments and professional teaching standards, often engaging in continuous processes of adaptation, negotiation, and reinterpretation to align institutional, pedagogical, and religious expectations (Talukder, 2021; Saada & Magadlah, 2021).

Globally, Islamic higher education institutions are not isolated from these pressures. They participate in transnational academic networks, adopt international accreditation frameworks, and respond to the global knowledge economy (Oleksiyenko et al., 2021). However, this engagement often creates tensions between universalized models of effective teaching and the context-specific values embedded in Islamic educational philosophy. Recent studies suggest that educators and students in Muslim contexts continually negotiate the intersections sacred and secular dimensions of education, shaping evolving forms of identity, belonging, and pedagogical practice (Fara, 2026; Khoo, 2026). At the same time, critical scholarship has pointed to the need to interrogate the dominance of Western pedagogical paradigms and to consider alternative epistemologies that foreground spiritual and moral dimensions of learning (Lumbard, 2025; Marshall, 2025).

At the local level, particularly in countries such as Indonesia, Islamic higher education plays a strategic role in shaping both national identity and religious understanding. Indonesian institutions operate within a pluralistic society while maintaining strong commitments to Islamic values and traditions (Waluyo et al., 2025). In practice, teaching approaches often reflect hybrid forms, combining conventional lecture-based instruction, religious authority, and emerging student-centred methods. Empirical studies indicate ongoing efforts to integrate religious and scientific knowledge, though such integration is often uneven and context-dependent (Riwanda et al., 2025). Furthermore, educators' pedagogical decisions are influenced by broader academic and institutional pressures, such as publication requirements, professional expectations, and evolving higher education standards, which can affect instructional priorities, curriculum design, and approaches to student learning and engagement.

Despite a growing body of literature on Islamic education and pedagogical reform, several critical gaps remain. First, existing studies frequently conceptualize Islamic pedagogy either as a normative ideal grounded in classical Islamic texts or as a fixed tradition to be preserved, providing limited insight into how pedagogical principles are actively interpreted, negotiated, and enacted by educators in contemporary teaching contexts (Karwadi et al., 2025; Supriyono et al., 2025). As a result, there is a lack of micro-level analysis of the processes through which educators reconcile religious values, disciplinary knowledge, institutional expectations, and student needs in their everyday pedagogical practices.

Second, research on Islamic higher education has largely focused on curriculum design, institutional policy, or educational outcomes, while giving insufficient attention to educators' lived experiences and pedagogical reasoning. Consequently, empirical typologies that capture the diverse ways educators understand and operationalize Islamic pedagogy in higher education settings remain underdeveloped. Third, there is insufficient exploration of how faith-based values are enacted, adapted, or contested in everyday teaching within globally influenced academic environments.

This study addresses this gap by examining how lecturers in an Islamic higher education institution negotiate and translate faith-based values into their daily pedagogical practices while engaging with internationally informed educational approaches. Finally, few studies critically examine the assumptions underlying global pedagogical models when applied to faith-based contexts, particularly in relation to epistemology, authority, and moral purpose (Biesta, 2023; O'Connor, 2022). In response, this study critically investigates how educators perceive, adopt, and reinterpret these pedagogical models, highlighting the tensions, compatibilities, and contextual adaptations that emerge when global educational discourses intersect with Islamic educational values.

Addressing these gaps is important for advancing understanding of how faith-based values and contemporary pedagogical expectations interact in Islamic higher education. By examining educators' lived experiences and pedagogical

reasoning, this study contributes to discussions of religion, pedagogy, and educational change in a global context. It also provides insights for educators and policymakers seeking to develop teaching approaches that are both pedagogically effective and aligned with Islamic educational values. Accordingly, this study aims to rethink teaching practices in Islamic higher education by examining how faith and pedagogy intersect in a global era. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do educators in Islamic higher education conceptualize the relationship between faith and pedagogy in a globalized academic context?
2. In what ways are teaching practices shaped by the interaction between Islamic educational values and global pedagogical trends?
3. What challenges and tensions do educators encounter when negotiating faith-based principles and contemporary teaching demands?
4. How can teaching practices in Islamic higher education be rethought to better integrate religious commitments with globally relevant pedagogical approaches?

2. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a Negotiative–Integrative Theoretical Framework to examine how teaching practices in Islamic higher education are shaped through the interaction of faith-based educational principles and contemporary global pedagogical influences. Rather than viewing Islamic pedagogy and global teaching models as competing or incompatible systems, the framework conceptualizes them as complementary domains that interact through educators' ongoing processes of interpretation, adaptation, and decision-making. This perspective reflects contemporary understandings of teaching as a dynamic, situated, and meaning-making practice rather than a purely technical activity (Biesta, 2023; Rahimi & Oh, 2024). It also aligns with broader discussions regarding the changing nature of teaching in increasingly globalized higher education environments (Oleksiyenko et al., 2021).

The framework consists of three interrelated dimensions: (1) Islamic pedagogical foundations, (2) global constructivist pedagogical influences, and (3) negotiated pedagogical practice. The first dimension provides the normative and epistemological foundation for teaching. Rooted in the Islamic principle of the unity of knowledge, Islamic pedagogy integrates intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions of learning. Knowledge encompasses both revealed and acquired forms, and education is directed toward cognitive development as well as ethical refinement and spiritual growth (Brooks & Ezzani, 2022; Chanifah et al., 2021; Suhayib & Ansyari, 2023). Within this perspective, educators are expected not only to facilitate learning but also to guide students' moral and intellectual development (Saada, 2023; Jenuri et al., 2025). Teaching is therefore understood as a value-laden activity oriented toward meaningful and accountable forms of knowledge.

The second dimension recognizes the influence of contemporary constructivist approaches that have become prominent in higher education worldwide. Constructivist pedagogy emphasizes active learning, critical thinking,

collaboration, student engagement, and learner autonomy (Barnes & Marlatt, 2022; O'Connor, 2022). These approaches have encouraged more participatory and inquiry-based teaching practices, often supported by digital technologies and pedagogical innovation (Panakaje et al., 2024; Mohamed Hashim et al., 2022). However, because many constructivist models are grounded in secular assumptions regarding knowledge and authority, their application within Islamic higher education often involves adaptation rather than direct adoption. Consequently, global pedagogical approaches are viewed in this framework as resources for innovation that may be selectively integrated in ways that remain consistent with Islamic educational values (Talukder, 2021; Saada & Magadlah, 2021).

The third dimension represents the mediating process through which educators reconcile and integrate these influences in practice. Drawing on the view that teaching is inherently situated and agentic, the framework positions educators as active negotiators who continuously make judgments about how to balance religious commitments, institutional expectations, student needs, and contemporary pedagogical trends (Biesta, 2023). Rather than implementing fixed models, educators adapt, reinterpret, and combine diverse pedagogical influences according to their specific contexts. Such practices often result in hybrid and context-sensitive forms of teaching that reflect both continuity with Islamic traditions and responsiveness to contemporary developments (Karwadi et al., 2025; Riwanda et al., 2025). This perspective also resonates with broader calls to engage alternative epistemologies and move beyond dominant pedagogical paradigms in higher education (Lumbard, 2025; Khoo, 2026).

The framework informed both data analysis and interpretation. Islamic pedagogical foundations guided the identification of themes related to educational purpose, values, moral formation, and conceptions of knowledge. Global constructivist influences informed the analysis of teaching strategies associated with active learning, student participation, critical thinking, collaboration, and instructional innovation. The dimension of negotiated pedagogical practice served as an interpretive lens for examining how educators adapted, balanced, or integrated these influences in response to contextual demands. Together, these three dimensions provided the coding categories and analytical structure used to understand how participants conceptualized and enacted their teaching practices.

Negotiative–Integrative Theoretical Framework for Teaching Practices in Islamic Higher Education

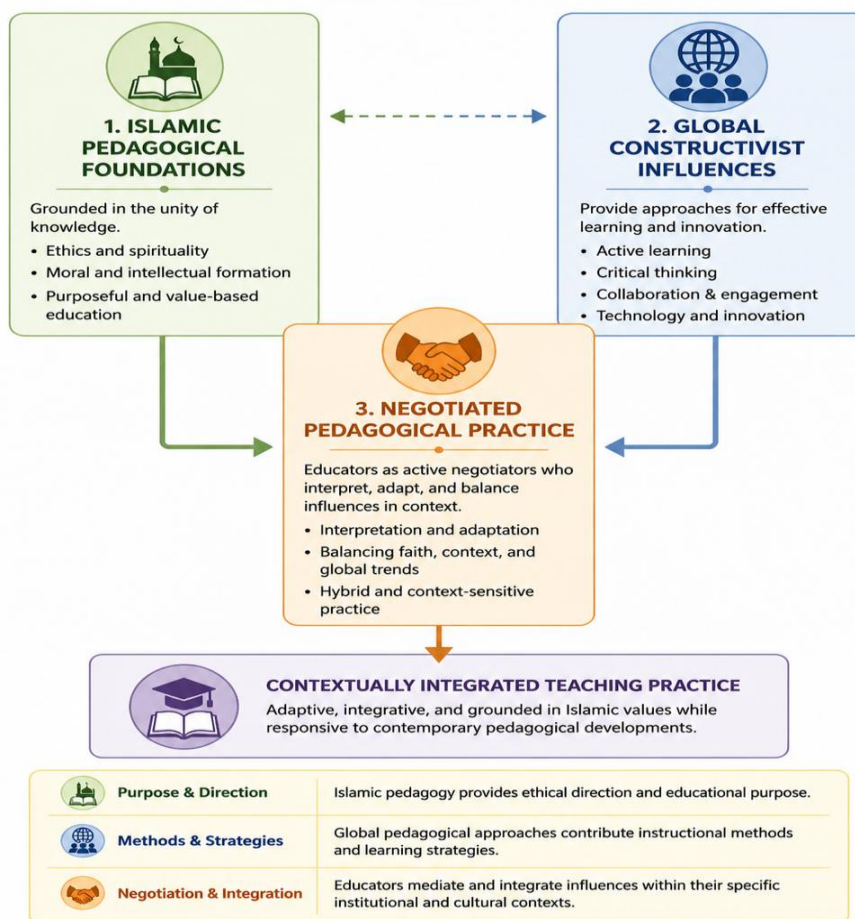


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

As illustrated in Figure 1, teaching in Islamic higher education is conceptualized as emerging from the dynamic interaction of these three dimensions. Islamic pedagogy provides ethical direction and educational purpose, global pedagogical approaches contribute instructional methods and strategies, and negotiation processes mediate their integration within specific institutional and cultural contexts. The resulting pedagogy is therefore neither exclusively traditional nor wholly global but adaptive, integrative, and contextually grounded. This framework is particularly relevant to the present study because it enables a nuanced examination of how educators understand, negotiate, and enact teaching practices within contemporary Islamic higher education settings.

3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative design to examine how educators in Islamic higher education understand and enact the relationship between faith and pedagogy in a globalized context. A qualitative approach was considered most appropriate because the study seeks to capture complex meanings, lived experiences, and contextually embedded practices that are not readily captured through quantitative measures. It allows for an in-depth examination of how

educators interpret their roles, negotiate competing pedagogical expectations, and construct teaching practices shaped by both Islamic values and global influences (Biesta, 2023; Rahimi & Oh, 2024). Such an approach is particularly relevant for investigating pedagogical practices situated at the intersection of cultural, religious, and institutional dynamics (Oleksiyyenko et al., 2021).

The research was situated within an interpretive paradigm, which assumes that reality is socially constructed, and that knowledge is co-constructed through individuals' interactions with their social, cultural, and institutional contexts. Within this paradigm, the study adopted a multiple-case study design, focusing on selected Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia. This design enabled a rich, contextualized understanding of pedagogical practices across different institutional settings while facilitating cross-case comparisons to identify both shared patterns and context-specific variations, particularly in environments where religious and secular perspectives intersect (Waluyo et al., 2025).

Participants were purposively selected based on their relevance to the research questions. The study involved 24 lecturers from Islamic higher education institutions, representing diverse academic disciplines, varying years of teaching experience, and different institutional types. This number was considered sufficient to achieve data saturation, as recurring patterns and themes became evident across participants' accounts. The inclusion criteria required participants to be actively engaged in teaching and to have experience navigating both religious and academic dimensions of instruction, ensuring alignment with the study's focus on integrative pedagogical practices (Karwadi et al., 2025; Riwanda et al., 2025). Data were collected through multiple qualitative methods to ensure depth and triangulation.

The primary data collection method was semi-structured interviews with all 24 participants. Each interview lasted approximately 45 - 90 minutes, followed a predefined interview guide, and was audio-recorded with participants' consent for transcription and analysis. In addition, classroom observations were carried out with a subset of 10 lecturers to examine how pedagogical practices were enacted in real settings, particularly in relation to student-centred learning, value integration, and instructional strategies shaped by global and local influences (Panakaje et al., 2024; Barnes & Marlatt, 2022). Furthermore, document analysis was undertaken on relevant teaching materials, such as course syllabi and lesson plans, to provide contextual support and to examine how pedagogical intentions were formally articulated, including the integration of ethical and value-based learning outcomes (Suhayib & Ansyari, 2023).

Data analysis followed an iterative thematic analysis approach, conducted iteratively and systematically. The process began with familiarization through repeated reading of interview transcripts and observation notes, followed by initial coding to identify meaningful units of data. Codes were then grouped into broader categories and themes reflecting patterns related to faith, pedagogy, and negotiation processes. Throughout the analysis, constant comparison was used to refine themes and ensure coherence across cases. The analysis was guided by the

theoretical framework while remaining open to emergent insights grounded in the data, particularly those reflecting tensions between constructivist pedagogies and value-based educational orientations (O'Connor, 2022; Saada & Magadlah, 2021). To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed. Credibility was enhanced through methodological triangulation and member checking; whereby selected participants reviewed and validated the researchers' interpretations. Transferability was supported through thick description of the research context and participants. Dependability and confirmability were strengthened by maintaining a comprehensive audit trail and engaging in ongoing reflexive practice regarding the researchers' positionality and its potential influence on the research process.

4. Findings

The findings demonstrate that teaching in Islamic higher education is a situated, negotiated, and value-infused practice, shaped by the interaction between Islamic epistemology and global pedagogical expectations.

4.1 How do educators conceptualize the relationship between faith and Pedagogy in a global era?

Participants consistently conceptualized pedagogy as inseparable from faith, framing teaching as both an intellectual and moral endeavour. Out of 24 participants, 21 explicitly described teaching as a form of worship, emphasizing intentionality as central to pedagogical practice:

"Before entering the classroom, I always renew my intention. Teaching is part of worship, so the way I teach must reflect Islamic values."
(Participant 4)

This orientation was reinforced by other participants who highlighted responsibility and accountability as integral to teaching:

"Teaching is not just a job. It is a responsibility for what students become, not only what they know." (Participant 9)

"Every lesson must have purpose, not only academically but also in shaping character." (Participant 18)

A dominant theme was the notion of holistic education, where cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions are integrated. Eighteen participants emphasized that learning outcomes should extend beyond knowledge acquisition:

"Success is not only when students understand the material, but when their attitudes and behaviour improve." (Participant 16)

This perspective was further elaborated by participants who stressed the long-term impact of education:

"We are preparing students for life, not only for exams. So their values must be developed alongside knowledge." (Participant 7)

Document analysis corroborated this conceptualization. Of the 36 documents reviewed, 28 syllabi included affective or ethical learning outcomes, such as responsibility, honesty, and discipline. In addition, 12 syllabi explicitly linked

these outcomes to course activities, indicating an intention to integrate values into the learning process rather than treating them as abstract goals. Observation data provided further support. In 7 out of 10 observed classes, lecturers began sessions with short reflective statements or contextual framing that connected the topic to broader ethical or personal development. In 4 cases, lecturers revisited these points at the end of the session, reinforcing the idea that learning carried both intellectual and moral significance.

At the same time, participants acknowledged the relevance of global pedagogical ideas. Nineteen lecturers expressed positive attitudes toward student-centred learning, though with important qualifications:

"We adopt active learning, but it must be within boundaries. Students need guidance, especially in interpreting knowledge." (Participant 1)

Other participants emphasized the need to balance engagement with direction:

"Modern methods are useful, but they must not remove the role of the lecturer in guiding understanding." (Participant 11)

Observation data supported this dual orientation. In all 10 observed classes, sessions began with structured lecturer input, such as mini-lectures or conceptual framing, followed by interactive components including discussion or group work. In 6 classes, lecturers explicitly linked student contributions back to key concepts or broader purposes, ensuring coherence and direction. This pattern suggests that participants conceptualized pedagogy as a guided, value-oriented engagement, where interaction is encouraged but remains anchored in clear epistemological and ethical frameworks.

4.2 How are teaching practices enacted at the intersection of Islamic values and global pedagogical approaches?

Analysis of classroom practices revealed three dominant enactment patterns, each supported by converging evidence across interviews, observations, and documents.

4.2.1 Guided Student-centred Pedagogy

While student-centred strategies were widely used, they were consistently scaffolded by strong lecturer control. In interviews, 20 participants described their role as a *"facilitator and guide"*, rather than a passive facilitator:

"Students are active, but I must ensure they are on the right track. Otherwise, the learning loses direction." (Participant 10)

Additional interview data reinforced this positioning:

"Discussion is important, but I always bring them back to the key concept at the end." (Participant 4)

Observation data showed that 8 out of 10 classes included structured group discussions. In all 8 cases, discussions were followed by lecturer-led clarification or correction, and in 6 cases, lecturers explicitly connected student responses to ethical or value-based considerations. In 5 observed sessions, lecturers also used guiding questions during group work, such as prompting students to justify

answers or relate ideas to broader responsibilities, indicating active scaffolding during, not just after, discussion. Field notes illustrate this pattern:

"After group presentations, the lecturer summarized key points and added: 'In Islam, knowledge must lead to responsibility.' Students nodded and took notes." (Observation 3)

4.2.2 Embedded Value Integration

Rather than separating religious content from academic subjects, lecturers embedded values within disciplinary teaching. This was evident in 17 interviews, where participants described integrating ethics into subject matter:

"Even in methodology courses, I emphasize honesty and accountability as key principles." (Participant 22)

Another participant added:

"I try to connect every topic with real-life behaviour, not just theory." (Participant 8)

Document analysis confirmed this integration where 24 out of 36 documents included explicit references to ethical principles. 11 course rubrics incorporated criteria such as integrity, responsibility, and respectful collaboration. Then, 9 lesson plans included sections linking content to character development or real-world application. Further, observation further revealed that lecturers frequently used value-oriented framing where in 7 classes, lecturers explicitly linked content to ethical implications. In 4 cases, short reflective moments were inserted, asking students to consider the moral relevance of the topic. For example:

"The lecturer reminded students that plagiarism is not only an academic violation but also a matter of personal integrity." (Observation 7)

4.2.3 Selective Pedagogical Adaptation

Participants demonstrated strategic selectivity in adopting global pedagogical approaches. While tools such as PowerPoint, learning management systems, and project-based tasks were used, they were adapted to fit contextual needs.

"We use modern methods, but not blindly. We choose what is suitable for our students and values." (Participant 6)

This selectivity was also reflected in interviews where 15 participants emphasized "filtering" or "adjusting" external approaches rather than fully adopting them. Observation data showed that 7 classes used digital tools (slides, videos, or online platforms) and 5 classes incorporated collaborative tasks or mini-projects. However, in all cases, sessions retained clear structure, sequencing, and lecturer direction. In 6 observed classes, instructions for activities were highly structured (e.g., step-by-step tasks, time limits, expected outputs), indicating that autonomy was carefully managed rather than open-ended. A field note illustrates this balance:

"Students worked in groups using online materials, but the lecturer monitored closely and intervened to keep discussions focused." (Observation 6)

This pattern reflects adaptation rather than adoption, where global methods are filtered through contextual and value-based considerations, resulting in structured yet participatory learning environments.

4.3 What tensions and challenges do educators encounter?

Across interviews, observations, and document analysis, four major areas of tension were consistently identified: authority versus autonomy, critical thinking versus respect for tradition, institutional and global pressures, and pedagogical preparedness.

4.3.1 Authority vs. Autonomy

A central and recurring tension concerns the balance between lecturer authority, which is deeply rooted in Islamic educational traditions, and the emphasis on student autonomy promoted by global pedagogical models. While participants generally supported active learning, 18 out of 24 lecturers expressed concern about what they described as “uncontrolled interpretation” when students are given too much independence.

“If students are too free, they may misunderstand important concepts, especially related to religion.” (Participant 8)

“Freedom in learning must be guided. Otherwise, it leads to confusion rather than knowledge.” (Participant 6)

Several participants framed their role as guardians of accurate understanding, particularly in areas connected to religious knowledge:

“As lecturers, we are responsible not only academically but also ethically. Misunderstanding can have serious consequences.” (Participant 12)

Observation data strongly substantiated this tension. In 5 out of 10 observed classes, lecturers actively intervened during student discussions to correct, redirect, or refine student contributions. These interventions typically occurred when students expressed interpretations considered conceptually weak or problematic, discussions drifted away from the intended learning objectives, and peer disagreements escalated without resolution. For example:

“During a group discussion, a student suggested a highly relativistic interpretation of ethical behaviour. The lecturer intervened immediately, clarifying that ethical principles are not entirely relative.” (Observation 4)

Additionally, in 3 observed cases, discussions were shortened prematurely due to concerns about misunderstanding:

“The lecturer stopped the discussion midway, stating that the topic required clearer guidance to avoid confusion.” (Observation 7)

These patterns indicate that while autonomy is encouraged, it is carefully bounded, resulting in a form of guided participation rather than fully open inquiry.

4.3.2 Critical Thinking vs. Respect for Tradition

A second major tension lies in negotiating the relationship between critical inquiry and respect for established knowledge and scholarly authority. While all 24 participants expressed support for critical thinking, 16 explicitly qualified this support, particularly in relation to religious content.

"Critical thinking is important, but students must not question everything without proper understanding." (Participant 19)

"We teach them to think critically, but also to respect established knowledge and scholars." (Participant 2)

"There are limits. Not all knowledge should be debated freely." (Participant 17)

Observation data revealed how this operates in practice. In this context, in 4 classes, lecturers encouraged students to critique theories or case studies. However, in 3 of these cases, lecturers later narrowed or redirected the scope of critique, particularly when discussions approached sensitive areas. For instance:

"Students were invited to critique a theoretical framework, but when one student questioned an interpretation related to religious knowledge, the lecturer redirected the discussion toward established perspectives." (Observation 1)

Document analysis further highlighted this issue where 26 out of 36 syllabi included critical thinking as a learning outcome. However, none clearly defined what critical thinking means within this specific educational context. This lack of clarity leaves lecturers to individually interpret and manage the boundaries of critical engagement, often leading to cautious implementation.

4.3.3 Institutional and Global Pressures

Participants also reported significant tension arising from external institutional and global expectations, particularly related to accreditation, quality assurance, and standardization. These pressures often require lecturers to adopt visible forms of modern pedagogy, sometimes without sufficient contextual adaptation.

"Accreditation requires active learning, so we must demonstrate it in our teaching." (Participant 2)

"Sometimes we apply methods not because we fully believe in them, but because they are required." (Participant 15)

"There is pressure to appear modern, even if the substance is not fully aligned." (Participant 9)

Document analysis strongly supports this finding. All 36 reviewed syllabi aligned with national standards emphasizing student-centred learning, active participation, and measurable outcomes. However, none provided explicit guidance on integrating these approaches with value-based educational principles. This creates a gap between policy and practice, where institutional frameworks promote global pedagogical norms, and lecturers must

independently determine how to adapt these norms to their context. Observation data revealed the practical consequences. In 6 classes, student-centred activities such as group discussions and presentations were present but appeared procedural rather than deeply integrated. In 4 cases, these activities lacked clear connection to broader learning goals. As noted in field observations:

"Students were actively engaged in discussion, but the activity appeared disconnected from both conceptual depth and broader educational purpose." (Observation 8)

4.3.4 Pedagogical Preparedness

A further significant tension relates to limited pedagogical preparation, particularly in integrating different teaching approaches. 17 participants explicitly reported a lack of targeted training, identifying a major gap in professional development.

"We are told to use modern methods, but not how to combine them effectively." (Participant 13)

"There is no clear model, so we develop our own approach through experience." (Participant 20)

"Most training focuses on general teaching strategies, not on our specific context." (Participant 5)

Observation data reflected this variability where 3 lecturers demonstrated highly coherent integration of teaching approaches, 5 showed partial and inconsistent integration, and 2 relied primarily on conventional teaching methods with limited adaptation. This inconsistency was also evident in teaching documents. Some lesson plans showed clear alignment between objectives, methods, and assessments. Others listed multiple strategies without clear rationale or integration. A field note illustrates this gap:

"The lecturer expressed strong educational values in the interview, but these were not consistently reflected in classroom practice." (Observation 9)

4.4 How can teaching practices be rethought?

Building on the tensions identified earlier, participants not only described challenges but also articulated and enacted emerging pedagogical responses, as explained below.

4.4.1 Intentional Alignment

A strong and recurring finding was that effective teaching, from participants' perspectives, depends on the alignment between pedagogical techniques and underlying moral intentions. This was expressed by 22 out of 24 participants, indicating near-consensus.

"The method must serve the intention. If the intention is good, the method should support it." (Participant 11)

"We cannot just use methods because they are modern. We must ask: does this help students become better human beings?" (Participant 14)

"Even group work must have adab (ethics). Otherwise, it is just activity without meaning." (Participant 3)

Participants emphasized that pedagogical decisions were not neutral but ethically charged, requiring continuous reflection on purpose (*niyyah*). This intentionality shaped not only *what* was taught, but *how* it was delivered and evaluated. Observation data provided strong corroboration. In 6 out of 10 observed classes, lecturers explicitly articulated learning intentions that combined academic and moral dimensions. For example:

"Today we learn about research design, but also about honesty in collecting data, because in Islam, knowledge must be trustworthy."
(Observation 5)

In these classes, alignment was visible across the lesson structure that opening reflections connected content to ethical or religious values. Then, activities were framed not only cognitively but also morally. Also, closing summaries reinforced both conceptual understanding and ethical implications. Field notes indicate that such classes were more coherent and focused, with fewer digressions and higher student engagement:

"Students remained attentive throughout. The lecturer repeatedly linked discussion points to both theory and responsibility, creating a clear sense of purpose." (Observation 2)

By contrast, in 4 observed classes where intentional alignment was less explicit, teaching appeared more fragmented. Activities (e.g., discussions, presentations) were present but lacked clear integration with broader educational purposes, resulting in what one field note described as:

"Active but disconnected participation - students engaged in tasks but without a unifying direction." (Observation 8)

Document analysis further reinforced this distinction. Among the 36 documents, 15 syllabi demonstrated strong alignment, where learning outcomes, teaching methods, and assessments consistently reflected both academic and ethical goals. Then, 21 documents showed partial or weak alignment, with ethical outcomes listed but not clearly integrated into teaching strategies or assessment criteria. This suggests that intentional alignment remains uneven, often dependent on individual lecturer awareness rather than systematic design.

4.4.2 Pedagogical Flexibility

A second defining feature was pedagogical flexibility, understood as the ability to adapt teaching strategies in response to context, content, and student needs while maintaining value commitments. This was emphasized by 20 participants, often in contrast to rigid methodological prescriptions.

"There is no single method. We adjust depending on the topic and students." (Participant 20)

"Some topics need discussion, others need explanation. We cannot force one model for everything." (Participant 9)

"Flexibility is important, but the values remain constant." (Participant 17)

Observation data revealed significant variation across the 10 classrooms, even within the same institution. In this case, were predominantly discussion-based, with extended student interaction. 4 classes used a blended approach (mini-lecture + group work + feedback). Then, 3 classes were more lecture-centred but included brief interactive segments. However, across all variations, two consistent patterns emerged: lecturer presence remained strong (e.g., guiding, summarizing, correcting); and moral framing was intermittently inserted, regardless of method. For instance:

"In a predominantly lecture-based session, the lecturer paused midway and asked students to reflect on how the concept relates to responsibility in real life." (Observation 6)

Document analysis revealed a contrasting pattern. While classroom practices were flexible, most documents appeared methodologically standardized: 29 out of 36 syllabi listed similar teaching methods (e.g., discussion, presentation, lecture). Then, few documents specified when or why different methods should be used. This suggests that flexibility is largely tacit and practice-based, rather than formally articulated in instructional design.

4.4.3 Institutional Support

While intentional alignment and flexibility were evident at the individual level, participants consistently highlighted the lack of institutional structures to support systematic integration. This theme emerged in 18 interviews, indicating a widespread concern.

"We need training that specifically addresses Islamic pedagogy in modern contexts." (Participant 5)

"Most workshops focus on general teaching methods, not how to integrate them with our values." (Participant 13)

Observation data further illustrated the consequences of this gap. Across the 10 classes, only 3 lecturers demonstrated highly coherent integration of faith and pedagogy. Then, 5 showed partial integration, with occasional but inconsistent value connections. Finally, 2 showed minimal integration, relying primarily on technical teaching methods.

Field notes suggest that this variation was not due to lack of commitment, but rather uneven pedagogical preparation:

"The lecturer expressed strong Islamic values in interviews, but these were not consistently visible in classroom practice." (Observation 9, linked to Participant 18)

Participants also emphasized the need for context-specific training programs, collaborative platforms for sharing practices, and institutional recognition of faith-integrated pedagogy.

5. Discussion

This study set out to examine how teaching practices in Islamic higher education are conceptualized and enacted at the intersection of faith and global pedagogical expectations. Interpreted through the Negotiative-Integrative Theoretical Framework, the findings reveal not simply a coexistence of faith and pedagogy, but a complex process of negotiation among epistemological commitments, institutional expectations, and pedagogical aspirations. While the findings indicate efforts toward integration, the analysis suggests that this process is often partial and uneven, with tensions that remain difficult to reconcile in practice. These dynamics reflect broader transformations in higher education shaped by globalization and evolving pedagogical expectations (Oleksiyenko et al., 2021; Rahimi & Oh, 2024).

A key finding is that educators position faith as the primary epistemological anchor of teaching, framing pedagogy as a morally purposeful activity oriented toward holistic human development. This aligns with Islamic pedagogical traditions that emphasize ethical formation and the unity of knowledge (Brooks & Ezzani, 2022; Chanifah et al., 2021). At the same time, the findings suggest that this strong normative orientation may shape the ways in which pedagogical innovation is interpreted and enacted. While faith appears to provide coherence and purpose, it may also influence how educators engage with approaches that require reconsideration of authority, knowledge construction, and learner agency.

Rather than indicating resistance to innovation, the findings point to the need for a more nuanced understanding of how pedagogical change is mediated by faith-informed educational commitments. In this sense, the study adds complexity to discussions of value-based education by suggesting that normative clarity alone does not automatically lead to pedagogical transformation. This observation resonates with Biesta's (2023) argument that education must be understood not only in terms of purpose but also in terms of how different purposes shape pedagogical possibilities.

The study further demonstrates that global pedagogical approaches, particularly student-centred learning, are often selectively appropriated rather than fully internalized. Although participants expressed strong support for active learning, classroom practices frequently reflected forms of guided participation in which lecturer authority remained prominent. This pattern suggests an ongoing negotiation between constructivist ideals and faith-informed conceptions of knowledge authority (O'Connor, 2022; Barnes & Marlatt, 2022).

Rather than representing a complete synthesis of these perspectives, the findings indicate that educators may adapt student-centered approaches in ways that remain consistent with existing pedagogical and epistemological commitments. Such patterns resonate with broader critiques of constructivist pedagogy, which highlight the challenges of translating student-centered ideals into practice across diverse contexts (O'Connor, 2022). They also suggest that epistemological commitments grounded in religious traditions play an important role in shaping how pedagogical reforms are interpreted and enacted.

From a critical perspective, these findings raise important questions about the extent to which such pedagogical adaptations foster higher-order thinking and meaningful critical engagement. While the present study did not directly examine student learning outcomes, the observed emphasis on guided participation indicates that opportunities for critical engagement are carefully negotiated within boundaries shaped by faith-informed understandings of knowledge, authority, and educational purpose.

This finding reflects broader debates within Islamic education concerning the relationship between critical pedagogy and religious epistemological frameworks (Saada & Magadlah, 2021; Karwadi et al., 2025). It also supports arguments that meaningful critical engagement in faith-based educational contexts requires careful epistemological integration, rather than the uncritical adoption of globally dominant pedagogical models (Lumbard, 2025). Furthermore, the findings suggest that, in the absence of explicit institutional guidance, educators are often required to negotiate these epistemological boundaries individually, resulting in diverse interpretations and variations in classroom practice across institutional contexts.

Importantly, the study indicates that these tensions extend beyond individual pedagogical choices and are influenced by institutional conditions. The strong alignment of institutional documents with global standards, combined with limited guidance regarding the integration of faith-based values and contemporary pedagogical approaches, appears to create competing expectations for educators. Lecturers are encouraged to implement student-centred learning while simultaneously maintaining faith-based commitments, yet few institutional mechanisms are available to support the reconciliation of these expectations. This observation reflects broader patterns in higher education reform, where global models are adopted without sufficient contextual adaptation (Bhuiyan, 2026; Mohamed Hashim et al., 2022). As a result, pedagogical practices may be shaped by external accountability pressures alongside local educational values, echoing concerns about the instrumentalization of teaching in globalized systems (Aly et al., 2022).

The issue of pedagogical preparedness further highlights this challenge. The reliance on individual experimentation and trial-and-error approaches suggests that integration currently depends substantially on the initiative and interpretive capacity of individual educators rather than on systematic institutional support. This finding is consistent with research emphasizing the need for more structured and context-sensitive professional development in higher education (Panakaje et al., 2024; Zahn et al., 2025).

Taken together, the findings suggest that the relationship between Islamic pedagogy and global pedagogical models may be understood as a form of constrained hybridity. While elements of both traditions are evident, their interaction does not always result in a fully coherent pedagogical framework. Instead, ethical commitments, pedagogical practices, and institutional expectations often appear to operate alongside one another in ways that are only

partially integrated. This interpretation does not imply failure of integration; rather, it highlights the ongoing and negotiated nature of pedagogical adaptation in faith-based higher education contexts. In doing so, the study offers a more cautious perspective on hybridization processes and underscores the importance of examining how different knowledge systems interact, overlap, and sometimes remain in tension within educational practice (Khoo, 2026; Waluyo et al., 2025).

6. Conclusion

This study explored how teaching practices in Islamic higher education are conceptualized and enacted at the intersection of faith and global pedagogical approaches. The findings show that pedagogy in this context is best understood as a negotiated and context-dependent process, where educators actively balance religious commitments with contemporary teaching expectations. Faith emerged as the primary foundation of pedagogy, shaping the purpose of teaching as not only knowledge transmission but also moral and personal development.

At the same time, global approaches such as student-centered learning are selectively adapted rather than fully adopted. This produces hybrid practices in which interactive methods are used but remain structured and guided by the lecturer. However, this integration remains partial and uneven. Persistent tensions, particularly between authority and autonomy, critical thinking and respect for tradition, and institutional demands and pedagogical beliefs, limit the depth of pedagogical transformation. As a result, many practices reflect surface-level adaptation, where methods change but underlying assumptions about knowledge and teaching remain largely intact.

The study also shows that these challenges are structural as well as individual. Institutional policies promote global standards but provide limited guidance on how to integrate them with faith-based values. Consequently, educators rely on personal interpretation and experience, leading to variation and inconsistency in practice. Theoretically, the study supports a negotiative-integrative view of pedagogy, where teaching is shaped by the interaction between epistemological commitments, pedagogical resources, and contextual constraints. Empirically, it highlights how educators actively navigate these influences in everyday teaching. Practically, it underscores the need for clearer frameworks, targeted professional development, and stronger institutional support to enable more coherent integration.

Overall, rethinking teaching in Islamic higher education requires moving beyond partial adaptation toward systematic and contextually grounded approaches. Strengthening the connection between faith, pedagogy, and institutional practice is essential for developing teaching that is both educationally effective and meaningfully aligned with its value foundations. These conclusions should be considered in light of the study's limitations. As a qualitative multiple-case study conducted within a limited number of institutional settings, the findings are context-specific and are not intended to be statistically generalizable across all Islamic higher education contexts. In addition, the study focuses primarily on educators' perspectives and practices, which may not fully capture how

pedagogical integration is experienced by students or reflected in learning outcomes.

Future research could extend this work by examining a broader range of Islamic higher education institutions across different national and cultural contexts. Further studies might also explore students' perspectives on faith-informed pedagogy and investigate how negotiated pedagogical approaches influence student engagement, critical thinking, and holistic development over time. Such research would contribute to a deeper understanding of how faith and contemporary pedagogical principles can be integrated in ways that are both contextually responsive and educationally meaningful.

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