



Reframing Educational Dualism in Indonesia: From Epistemological Integration to Institutional and Social Integration

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Abstract

Purpose – This study examines educational dualism in Indonesia as a multidimensional problem involving epistemological separation, institutional differentiation, and social inequality. It addresses the limited integration between knowledge-integration discourse and sociological analysis by arguing that epistemological reconciliation alone is insufficient without institutional and social transformation.

Design/methods/approach – The study employs qualitative library research with a sociological-conceptual approach. Peer-reviewed studies, primarily published between 2021 and 2026, were purposively selected alongside foundational works. The literature was analyzed through historical-institutional analysis, thematic-conceptual comparison, and Bourdieusian interpretation using the concepts of *field*, *habitus*, cultural capital, social capital, symbolic capital, and social reproduction.

Findings – Islamic educational institutions have increasingly developed integrative forms through curricular expansion, institutional transformation, and the incorporation of scientific, technological, vocational, and professional knowledge. However, epistemological and institutional integration do not automatically eliminate symbolic hierarchies, unequal recognition, or differences in capital convertibility. The study identifies three interconnected levels of integration: epistemological, institutional, and social integration.

Research implications/limitations – The proposed framework may inform the evaluation of knowledge-integration policies and institutional reform. However, the library-based design does not empirically measure capital accumulation, institutional prestige, or graduate mobility across educational pathways.

Originality/value – The study extends knowledge-integration discourse by introducing a three-level framework that links epistemological reconstruction, institutional implementation, and social integration through a Bourdieusian perspective.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's education system exhibits a distinctive institutional character in the relationship between religious education and general education. Madrasahs, *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), and Islamic higher education institutions have developed within Islamic educational traditions with structures, orientations, and institutional histories that differ from those of general schools and universities. These differences are not merely administrative in nature, but are closely related to the historical formation of the education system, the development of epistemological paradigms, the distribution of state authority, and societal perceptions regarding the value and legitimacy of each educational track. In this context, educational dualism should be understood not only as a separation between religious knowledge and general knowledge, but as a historically, epistemologically, institutionally, and socially interrelated problem.

Historically, the formation of this dualism is closely linked to the development of education during the colonial period. The educational policies of the Dutch East Indies government developed modern schools primarily oriented toward administrative and socio-economic colonial needs, while *pesantren* and Islamic educational institutions developed through their own trajectories outside the main colonial education structure. Daulay et al. (2026) show that colonial education policy had a discriminatory character and led Islamic education to develop relatively independently through *pesantren* and madrasahs. However, this development does not imply that Islamic educational institutions were static or entirely isolated from modernization. Budiharso et al. (2026), for instance, demonstrate processes of adaptation and transformation within *pesantren* through encounters with modern educational models. Thus, educational dualism is better understood as the outcome of a complex historical process involving institutional differentiation, power relations, adaptation, and negotiation between Islamic educational traditions and modern education systems.

After independence, the position of Islamic education experienced increasing recognition and transformation within the national education system. However, the differentiation in governance between religious education and general education continues to shape distinct institutional structures. Hidayati et al. (2023), through a systematic literature review of studies on educational dualism in Indonesia, show that the issue is not only rooted in colonial policy, but also relates to government policies, the position of madrasahs within the education system, limitations in knowledge development, and the persistence of the dichotomy between religious and general sciences. This indicates that dualism cannot be explained as a passive historical legacy, but is continuously reproduced and negotiated through policies, institutional structures, curricula, and contemporary educational practices.

At the epistemological level, this dualism is associated with the division between knowledge categorized as religious sciences and knowledge referred to as general or modern sciences. Within various discourses of Islamic education, this separation has long been criticized for producing epistemic fragmentation and limiting the capacity of Islamic educational institutions to respond to scientific and societal developments. Critiques of this dichotomy have given rise to various knowledge reconstruction projects, ranging from the Islamization of knowledge developed by Ismail Raji al-Faruqi and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, the "scientification of Islam" proposed by Kuntowijoyo, to the integration–interconnection paradigm of M. Amin Abdullah. Although these approaches differ in their

starting points and epistemological constructions, they share a common effort to reject a rigid separation between religious knowledge and modern scientific knowledge.

This discourse on knowledge integration has gradually shifted from the conceptual realm to institutional implementation. The transformation of several State Islamic Institutes (IAIN) into State Islamic Universities (UIN) represents one important manifestation of this shift. Various Islamic universities have developed their own integration paradigms, such as the *Spider Web* model at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, the *Tree of Knowledge* model at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, and other integration frameworks. Aziz et al. (2026) show that these models represent different epistemological architectures in efforts to move beyond disciplinary dichotomies. Kandiri et al. (2026) also find that several UINs have translated integration paradigms into curriculum development that seeks to unify Islamic values and modern sciences. Meanwhile, Nasution et al. (2026) demonstrate that the integration–interconnection paradigm has evolved into a strategic framework increasingly embedded in Islamic higher education policy and practice in Indonesia.

Integration is not limited to higher education. Sulanam et al. (2026) show that the integration of religious and general curricula in pesantren occurs through complex institutional negotiation processes, rather than a simple merging of two curricular structures. Integration is formed through the division of instructional roles, multi-actor governance, habituation processes, and institutional arrangements that allow pesantren traditions and formal education systems to coexist. These findings indicate that educational dichotomy can no longer be understood through a simple opposition between “religious” and “general” education. In practice, Islamic educational institutions increasingly produce hybrid and evolving forms of integration.

Nevertheless, the success of integration at the epistemological, curricular, and institutional levels does not automatically imply that the social consequences of educational dualism have been resolved. Here, the perspective of sociology of education becomes crucial. Education is not merely a site of knowledge transmission, but also a space for the formation of *habitus*, the accumulation of various forms of capital, symbolic recognition, and the reproduction of social positions. In Pierre Bourdieu’s framework, educational institutions function as a *field* in which actors bring and accumulate economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital, whose value is determined by specific social structures. Therefore, differences between educational tracks do not only produce variations in curriculum and institutional identity, but may also relate to differences in legitimacy, opportunities, and social mobility available to students.

Recent studies demonstrate the relevance of this perspective in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. Roqib (2021) shows that pesantren can function as agents enabling upward social mobility, indicating that Islamic education does not always operate as a linear mechanism of class reproduction. Suprajitno & Kurniawan (2022), using Bourdieu’s concepts of cultural capital and social reproduction, further show how Mandarin language proficiency in pesantren can be converted into cultural and symbolic capital that opens mobility opportunities for students, most of whom come from working-class backgrounds. On the other hand, Rofiqi et al. (2026) demonstrate that *pesantren* educational practices also reproduce traditional knowledge, social hierarchies, and moral dispositions through authority relations embedded in everyday learning practices.

These findings suggest that the relationship between Islamic education and social reproduction is more complex than the assumption that madrasahs or *pesantren* merely serve as educational pathways for specific social groups. Islamic education can simultaneously function as a space of *habitus* and hierarchy reproduction, cultural and symbolic capital formation, as well as a site of social transformation and mobility. Hidayah et al. (2025), for instance, show how cultural and symbolic capital is used by Islamic educational institutions to maintain institutional identity and authority, while Musonif et al. (2025) demonstrate that collaboration between madrasahs and *pesantren* forms a *religious habitus* through sustained habituation and social interaction. Masita et al. (2026) further highlight a dialectic between a “blessing-oriented habitus” and competence-based rationality, enabling Islamic educational institutions to perform both reproductive and transformative social functions.

The literature on educational dualism and knowledge integration has thus developed along at least three main trajectories. First, historical studies explain the formation of dualism through colonial policies, the transformation of Islamic education, and the development of national education policies (Budiharso et al., 2026; Daulay et al., 2026; Hidayati et al., 2023). Second, epistemological studies focus on critiques of knowledge dichotomies and the construction of Islamization, integration, and interconnection paradigms as alternatives for unifying religious and modern sciences (Nasution et al., 2026; Prihatin et al., 2025). Third, implementation-oriented studies show that integration has moved into curricula, higher education institutions, *pesantren*, and learning practices (Aziz et al., 2026; Kandiri et al., 2026; Sulanam et al., 2026). Meanwhile, Bourdieu-based studies have explained the formation of *habitus*, cultural capital, symbolic capital, authority, and social reproduction in various Islamic educational institutions, but they are generally limited to single-institution or localized analyses.

This situation leaves an important analytical gap. Knowledge integration has so far been primarily assessed based on its success in connecting religious and modern disciplines, designing integrative curricula, or transforming institutional architecture. However, epistemological and institutional integration does not automatically equate to social integration. Changes in knowledge paradigms do not necessarily transform the symbolic value of educational tracks, the distribution of capital acquired by students, opportunity structures, or education’s capacity to expand social mobility. In other words, the problem of dualism is not resolved once religious and general sciences are conceptually integrated or placed within the same institution; it must also be examined in terms of how each educational track produces, accumulates, and converts capital and gains legitimacy within the national educational *field*.

Based on this gap, this article proposes an analysis of educational dualism through three interrelated levels of integration: epistemological integration, institutional integration, and social integration. Epistemological integration concerns efforts to overcome the division between religious and general sciences; institutional integration refers to the translation of this paradigm into curricula, governance, and inter-institutional relations; while social integration refers to education’s capacity to reduce symbolic hierarchies, expand capital conversion, and open more equitable opportunities for mobility. Bourdieu’s perspective is used to explain how *field*, *habitus*, cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital operate in the relationship between educational structures and social reproduction.

Within this framework, this study aims to analyze the historical and institutional formation of educational dualism between religious and general education in Indonesia, explain how this dualism operates as an arena of social production and reproduction, and assess the extent to which knowledge integration paradigms and practices can move beyond epistemological unification toward institutional and social transformation. The article argues that the problem of educational dichotomy cannot be resolved solely through knowledge reconstruction and curricular integration. More substantive integration requires the interconnection of epistemological reconstruction, institutional transformation, and changes in the social mechanisms that determine legitimacy and mobility within the education system.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative library research design with a sociological-conceptual approach to examine educational dualism and knowledge integration in Islamic education in Indonesia. The design was chosen because the study does not aim to measure educational inequality or social mobility empirically, but to critically synthesize scholarly literature on the historical formation of dualism, epistemological debates on knowledge integration, institutional implementation, and their implications for social reproduction. The analysis integrates perspectives from the history of Islamic education, knowledge integration discourse, and the sociology of education.

The literature corpus consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2021 and 2026, supported by classical theoretical works. Sources were identified through keyword combinations such as educational dualism, dichotomy of knowledge, Islamic education, madrasah, pesantren, knowledge integration, and social reproduction, using Boolean search strategies. Selection was conducted purposively based on relevance to four main areas: historical-institutional formation of dualism, epistemological critiques of knowledge dichotomy, implementation of knowledge integration in educational practice, and sociological implications related to capital, habitus, symbolic legitimacy, and social mobility. Only studies directly engaging with these themes were included to ensure analytical coherence.

Data were analyzed through three interconnected stages. First, a historical-institutional analysis traced the development of educational dualism within colonial and post-independence educational structures. Second, a thematic-conceptual analysis compared major models of knowledge integration, including Islamization of knowledge and integration-interconnection approaches. Third, a sociological analysis employed Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, and capital to examine how educational structures produce and distribute symbolic, cultural, and social capital, and how these processes relate to social reproduction and mobility. The findings were then synthesized into three levels of integration—epistemological, institutional, and social—to assess whether knowledge integration transforms not only educational structures but also the mechanisms of legitimacy and social opportunity within Islamic education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical-Institutional Production of Educational Dualism

The historical literature demonstrates that the dual structure of Indonesian education emerged through a long process rather than through a single institutional decision. Colonial education contributed significantly to the differentiation between Western-style schooling and Islamic educational institutions, but the latter did not merely occupy a passive position outside modernization. Pesantren, madrasahs, and other Islamic institutions responded through adaptation, selective accommodation, curricular transformation, and the preservation of religious authority. Consequently, the historical formation of dualism should be understood as a dialectical relationship between differentiation and adaptation.

Sari et al. (2026) describe the development of Islamic education in the Indonesian archipelago as a genealogy of hybridity in which Islamic educational traditions repeatedly negotiated external forms of knowledge and institutional modernity. Their analysis suggests that Islamic education constructed a “third space” rather than simply choosing between traditionalism and secular-modern education. Such hybridity emerged through encounters among transnational Islamic scholarly networks, pesantren traditions, colonial modernity, and later technological and institutional change. This finding challenges a rigid historical narrative in which Islamic education is portrayed merely as the traditional counterpart of modern schooling.

A similar pattern appears in the historical-epistemological analysis of Risnawati & Idrus (2026). They show that Islamic educational institutions developed through continuing processes of accommodation involving local traditions, Islamic epistemological structures, colonial pressures, and state institutionalization. Colonial policies strengthened educational differentiation and epistemological subordination, yet the development of madrasahs also represented an adaptive response to this differentiation. Thus, institutional dualism simultaneously generated marginalization and stimulated organizational innovation within Islamic education.

The transformation continued after independence. Formal recognition of madrasahs, the expansion of state Islamic education, curricular standardization, and the transformation of IAIN into UIN progressively reduced some institutional boundaries. Hanif et al. (2024) demonstrate that Islamic education has increasingly moved from a predominantly *tafaqquh fi al-din* orientation toward the incorporation of applied sciences and professional competencies. Pesantren have introduced vocational education, information technology, entrepreneurship, and other applied fields, while madrasahs and Islamic higher education institutions have expanded their academic scope. This development indicates that institutional differentiation does not necessarily correspond to epistemological isolation.

Nevertheless, differentiation remains meaningful because institutional systems continue to operate through distinct historical trajectories, bureaucratic structures, curricula, forms of authority, and symbolic identities. From a Bourdieusian perspective, these institutions occupy different positions within the broader educational *field*. Their positions are shaped not only by formal status, but also by the amount and composition of capital they possess and by the recognition assigned to particular credentials, competencies, networks, and cultural identities.

The persistence of dualism therefore should not be interpreted simply as evidence that integration policies have failed. Rather, it shows that institutional transformation occurs unevenly. Islamic educational institutions have become increasingly hybrid, but historical

classifications and structures of recognition may continue to organize how different educational trajectories are socially perceived. The result is a paradox: the epistemological boundaries between religious and general knowledge are increasingly porous, while institutional and symbolic boundaries may remain socially consequential (Rahmatullah, 2026).

This distinction is important for evaluating integration. If dualism is treated only as an epistemological problem, the expansion of scientific curricula within Islamic institutions might appear sufficient to resolve it. However, if dualism is also embedded in institutional position and social recognition, curricular reform alone cannot guarantee equivalent legitimacy or opportunity. Historical integration therefore constitutes only the first movement toward a more substantive transformation.

Educational Dualism as a Field of Capital and Social Reproduction

Bourdieu's framework allows educational dualism to be examined not merely as a difference between curricula but as a structure of differentiated capital and recognition. Educational institutions operate within a *field* in which particular forms of knowledge, qualifications, dispositions, networks, and identities acquire different values. Students do not simply obtain knowledge from educational institutions; they accumulate forms of cultural, social, and symbolic capital that may later be converted into academic, occupational, religious, or social advantages.

In this context, Islamic educational institutions should not automatically be positioned as sites of disadvantage. The literature instead demonstrates that they produce forms of capital whose value depends on the social field in which they are mobilized. Religious knowledge, mastery of classical texts, linguistic competence, moral discipline, alumni networks, relationships with religious authorities, and institutional reputation may operate as significant forms of cultural and symbolic capital. Their convertibility, however, varies according to context.

The study by Jatmiko et al. (2025) is particularly useful for understanding this tension. Their Bourdieusian analysis of a Muhammadiyah modern Islamic school examines how an Islamic educational institution negotiates its historical social mission amid the neoliberalization of education. The case points to a fundamental tension within contemporary Islamic schooling: institutions must maintain distinctive religious and social values while simultaneously competing within an educational field increasingly structured by market expectations, institutional reputation, academic performance, and middle-class aspirations. Integration in such a setting is therefore not merely an intellectual project; it is also a strategy for maintaining position and legitimacy within a competitive educational field.

The emergence of integrated Islamic schools provides another illustration. Ningrum et al. (2025), in their study of Muslim middle-class families within the Integrated Islamic Schools Network, show how Islamic educational environments interact with the cultural aspirations, religious practices, and social identities of an emerging Muslim middle class. Their analysis of philanthropy demonstrates that educational practices can transform religious commitment into forms of social piety and institutional participation. This indicates that Islamic education may itself become a site for the production and accumulation of distinctive forms of middle-class religious and symbolic capital.

These findings complicate the conventional assumption that religious education and general education correspond neatly to lower- and upper-class social positions. Contemporary

Islamic education is socially heterogeneous. Some pesantren serve economically disadvantaged communities; others develop elite, international, entrepreneurial, scientific, or technologically oriented programs. Madrasahs likewise vary substantially in institutional resources and social reputation. Integrated Islamic schools increasingly attract urban Muslim middle-class families. Consequently, the social effects of educational dualism cannot be inferred simply from institutional labels.

What matters sociologically is the conversion capacity of capital. A form of capital produced within one educational environment becomes socially advantageous only when it is recognized within another relevant field. Religious competence may carry substantial symbolic authority within pesantren networks but have different exchange value in professional employment. Conversely, scientific, linguistic, digital, or vocational competencies acquired within Islamic institutions may enable students to convert religiously embedded education into wider academic and occupational opportunities.

This mechanism explains why institutional innovation can influence social mobility. The introduction of applied sciences, foreign languages, digital competence, and professional skills into pesantren and madrasah does more than diversify curricula. It potentially expands the portfolio of cultural capital available to students. At the same time, established religious competencies and social networks remain valuable forms of capital rather than disappearing under modernization.

The dialectic between reproduction and transformation is therefore central. Islamic educational institutions reproduce *habitus* through routines, discipline, religious authority, language, ritual, and moral expectations. Yet the same institutions may also produce new dispositions and competencies that enable students to move across social fields. Educational reproduction should thus not be understood only as the perpetuation of inequality. In Bourdieu's terms, reproduction concerns the transmission of dispositions and capital; whether this transmission reinforces or transforms social position depends on how capital is recognized and converted.

This interpretation changes the way educational dualism should be evaluated. The core problem is not simply the existence of distinct Islamic and general educational institutions. Institutional diversity itself need not constitute inequality. The sociological problem arises when one educational trajectory is systematically endowed with forms of capital that are more easily recognized, converted, or rewarded across dominant social fields, while another remains confined to narrower domains of recognition.

Accordingly, social integration does not require the elimination of distinctive Islamic educational identities. Rather, it requires greater permeability between fields and broader convertibility of the capital generated within different educational pathways. From this perspective, reducing dualism means enabling religious competencies, scientific knowledge, professional skills, social networks, and institutional credentials to interact without creating rigid hierarchies of educational worth.

From Epistemological Reconstruction to Institutional Integration

The literature demonstrates that efforts to overcome the dichotomy of knowledge have entered a new phase. Earlier debates focused heavily on whether modern sciences should be Islamized, reconstructed, or placed in dialogue with revealed knowledge.

Contemporary studies increasingly examine how these ideas are translated into curricula, pedagogy, institutional governance, scientific practice, and interdisciplinary learning.

At the epistemological level, however, integration remains contested. Amelina et al. (2026), using Fazlur Rahman's neo-modernist thought as a critical framework, distinguish substantive knowledge integration from what may be described as symbolic integration. They argue that integration becomes superficial when it is limited to attaching Qur'anic verses, Hadith, or Islamic terminology to otherwise unchanged disciplinary structures. More substantive integration requires reconstruction of ways of thinking so that religious tradition, modern knowledge, historical criticism, and ethical responsibility enter into genuine intellectual interaction.

This distinction is crucial because institutional adoption of integration discourse does not necessarily produce epistemological transformation. Universities may formulate integration paradigms, schools may include Islamic values in science subjects, and pesantren may add general subjects to their curricula while preserving an underlying separation in how knowledge itself is understood and taught. Thus, the existence of an integrative curriculum should not automatically be treated as evidence of epistemological integration.

Aulia et al. (2026) provide empirical support for the significance of curricular integration. Their study found that an integrative Islamic education curriculum was associated with relatively low levels of epistemological fragmentation among students and stronger synthesis of an Islamic worldview. Although such findings are context-specific, they suggest that curricular design can influence how students perceive relationships among different forms of knowledge. Integration therefore has implications not only for institutional structures but also for the cognitive dispositions or *habitus* through which learners understand knowledge.

Recent case studies further reveal that meaningful integration is usually multilayered. Sholihin et al. (2026), in their study of Al-Falah Pesantren, show that Islam–science integration operates through a tawhid-based epistemological vision, hybrid curriculum, classroom and laboratory activities, *Bahtsul Masail*, digital leadership, and institutional support. Importantly, the study also identifies uneven implementation across subjects and educational levels, particularly in teacher collaboration, interdisciplinary planning, integrative assessment, and institutional evaluation. This indicates that moving from epistemological commitment to institutional practice requires organizational capacity, not merely philosophical consensus.

Prayogo et al. (2025) reach a similar conclusion through their analysis of science excellence programs in pesantren education. Their findings identify institutional commitment, reflective pedagogy, collaborative learning, and experiential activities as central components of successful integration. Scientific competence is developed alongside ethical awareness, discipline, and leadership. Here, integration operates not through the disappearance of disciplinary boundaries but through an educational environment in which scientific activity and Islamic ethical formation are mutually connected.

Other educational contexts demonstrate that integration can also be highly contextual. Firnanda et al. (2026), studying Islamic Religious Education in an aerospace vocational school, show how Islamic ethical concepts can be connected to vocational principles such as precision, safety, procedural discipline, accountability, and professional responsibility. This is sociologically significant because it indicates that knowledge integration

may increase the convertibility of religious capital into professional dispositions. Religious education becomes connected not only to moral identity but also to competencies recognized within technical and occupational fields.

At the pesantren level, Manaf et al. (2025) emphasize that successful integration depends on unified curriculum design, leadership, technology use, and collaboration with higher education institutions. Their findings also identify constraints such as digital inequality, budget limitations, and geographic location. Such constraints demonstrate that integration has a material and structural dimension. Institutions cannot implement epistemological ideals equally when their access to teachers, laboratories, technologies, funding, and academic networks differs substantially.

This finding is important because it shifts the discussion from curriculum content to the conditions of institutional integration. Two institutions may formally endorse the same integration paradigm but possess very different capacities to implement it. Consequently, integration itself may become stratified. Well-resourced institutions can translate integration into laboratories, bilingual programs, research, international networks, and digital pedagogy, while under-resourced institutions may remain limited to textual or symbolic forms of integration.

The comparison by Kawaid et al. (2025) between knowledge integration experiences in Malaysian and Indonesian universities further illustrates the importance of governance and implementation. Their study identifies broad philosophical similarities between institutions but meaningful differences in governance and the clarity of operational plans. This suggests that epistemological integration acquires institutional significance only when supported by clear structures, implementation mechanisms, faculty capacity, and sustained organizational commitment.

Therefore, the transition from epistemological to institutional integration is not automatic. It involves at least four movements: reconstructing the relationship between forms of knowledge, translating that reconstruction into curricula, creating pedagogical practices capable of enacting it, and providing institutional resources that allow it to operate consistently. The distinction also helps explain why educational dichotomy may persist despite widespread rhetorical acceptance of integration.

Beyond Knowledge Integration: Toward Social Integration

The preceding analysis suggests that contemporary Islamic education has made substantial progress at the epistemological and institutional levels. Religious and general knowledge are increasingly combined in curricula; pesantren incorporate scientific, vocational, and digital competencies; Islamic universities develop interdisciplinary architectures; and schools experiment with pedagogies that connect scientific reasoning with religious ethics. Yet these developments leave a more difficult sociological question unanswered: does integration also transform the social structure of educational opportunity?

This question requires distinguishing between three levels of integration. Epistemological integration concerns how religious and modern knowledge are conceptualized in relation to one another. Institutional integration concerns how this relationship is translated into curricula, governance, pedagogy, credentials, and organizational structures. Social integration, however, concerns the effects of these transformations on recognition, capital distribution, educational hierarchy, and mobility.

The distinction is necessary because achievement at one level does not guarantee achievement at the next. A university may successfully develop an integrative epistemology while its graduates continue to encounter unequal symbolic recognition. A pesantren may combine religious and scientific curricula but lack laboratories, digital infrastructure, institutional partnerships, or credentials that allow newly acquired competencies to be converted into wider opportunities. Conversely, an Islamic school may gain significant prestige and attract middle-class families while integration simultaneously becomes associated with educational commodification or restricted access.

Mansir (2026) provides a useful conceptual perspective on this problem. His review of Islam–science integration identifies several modes ranging from additive-textual integration to more interdisciplinary, ethical, and critical-transformative forms. Importantly, stronger models do not merely place religious references beside scientific content; they reshape how knowledge, evidence, ethical purpose, public reasoning, and educational practice are connected. This distinction can be extended sociologically: integration becomes socially transformative when it not only reorganizes curriculum but expands students’ capacity to participate meaningfully across educational, professional, and civic fields.

The transformation of Islamic education toward applied sciences offers evidence of this possibility. Hanif et al. (2024) describe the expansion of Islamic education into vocational skills, technology, professional knowledge, and applied sciences. Such developments potentially broaden the cultural capital available to students and reduce the institutional confinement associated with narrow educational specialization. However, their transformative effect depends on whether those competencies receive recognition beyond the institution itself.

Similarly, Sodikin (2026) shows that pesantren internationalization can involve curriculum integration, global academic networks, governance reform, research culture, and knowledge exchange while preserving Islamic scholarly authority. From a Bourdieusian perspective, these developments represent attempts to increase the volume and convertibility of institutional and student capital. International networks provide social capital; foreign-language competence and academic methodologies generate cultural capital; institutional reputation creates symbolic capital. Integration therefore acquires a social dimension when it expands the range of fields in which pesantren-generated capital can operate.

However, such transformation also raises a risk: integration may reduce one form of dualism while creating new stratification within Islamic education itself. Institutions with sufficient economic resources, networks, technology, and qualified personnel can develop internationally oriented or science-intensive programs, while institutions with limited resources may struggle to do so. In this scenario, the old divide between religious and general education may gradually be supplemented by a new divide between elite-integrative and resource-constrained Islamic institutions.

This possibility is especially important in the context of market-oriented education. The competition for prestige, facilities, international programs, technological visibility, and middle-class enrolment can transform integration into a form of institutional distinction. The Bourdieusian perspective therefore cautions against assuming that every expansion of

educational choice necessarily produces equality. Integration can generate new capital, but access to that capital may itself be uneven.

Consequently, social integration should not be understood as institutional homogenization. Madrasahs, pesantren, Islamic schools, and general schools do not need to become identical. Their distinctive histories, pedagogies, religious traditions, and institutional identities constitute legitimate forms of educational diversity. What requires transformation is the mechanism by which difference becomes hierarchy.

Based on the literature synthesis, social integration can be understood through three interconnected processes. First, capital expansion requires educational institutions to provide students with religious, scientific, linguistic, digital, professional, and social competencies rather than confining them to narrowly defined knowledge domains. Second, capital conversion requires these competencies and credentials to be recognized across educational, professional, and civic fields. Third, symbolic equalization requires institutional difference not to become an automatic basis for lower prestige or restricted opportunity.

This framework clarifies why knowledge integration is necessary but insufficient. Epistemological reconstruction can overcome conceptual fragmentation; institutional reform can translate integration into educational practice; but social integration requires attention to the structures that determine which forms of knowledge and credentials receive recognition and which students can convert them into future opportunities.

A Three-Level Framework for Reframing Educational Dualism

The synthesis of the findings supports a three-level framework for understanding and reframing educational dualism in Indonesia, consisting of epistemological integration, institutional integration, and social integration. As illustrated in Figure 1, these three levels should not be understood as isolated dimensions, but as a progressive and interconnected process through which the fragmentation of knowledge is first addressed conceptually, translated into educational structures and practices, and ultimately evaluated according to its consequences for recognition, capital distribution, and social opportunity. The framework therefore extends the conventional discourse of knowledge integration beyond the reconciliation of religious and general sciences toward the question of whether such integration produces meaningful institutional and social transformation.

At the first level, epistemological integration addresses the fragmentation of knowledge. The central task is to construct intellectually coherent relationships among revelation, Islamic scholarly traditions, social sciences, natural sciences, technology, and professional knowledge. Integration at this level requires more than the addition of religious texts to existing disciplinary content. Rather, it involves epistemic dialogue, methodological reconstruction, interdisciplinary coherence, and the integration of knowledge with ethical and normative orientations. This level therefore provides the intellectual foundation for overcoming the rigid distinction between “religious” and “general” knowledge.

The second level, institutional integration, concerns the translation of epistemological commitments into educational practice. As shown in Figure 1, this process involves curriculum design, interdisciplinary pedagogy, teacher capacity development, assessment, governance, infrastructure, research, institutional partnerships, and credential systems. The literature demonstrates that such translation is not automatic. Institutions may formally adopt a discourse of integration while differing substantially in their capacity to implement it. Financial

resources, qualified educators, facilities, technology, institutional networks, and governance therefore become important enabling conditions for transforming epistemological integration into sustained educational practice.

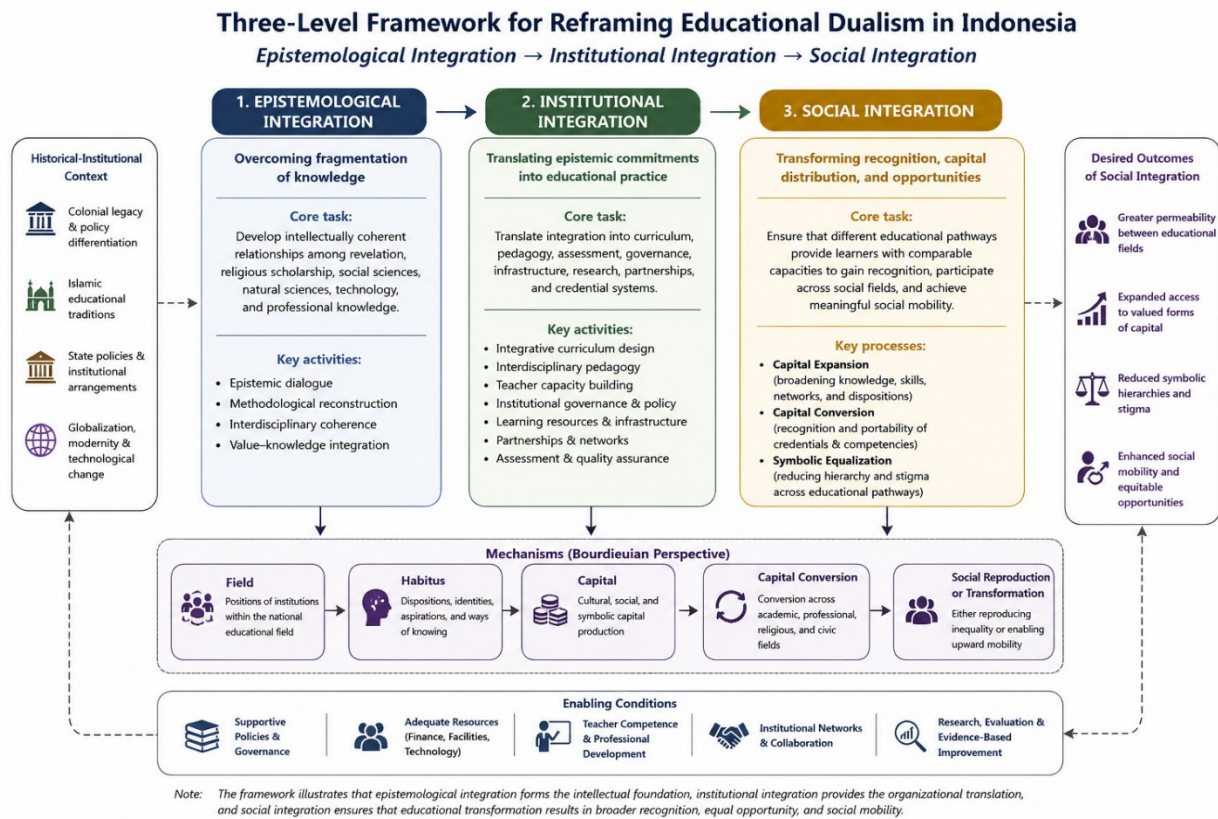


Figure 1. Three-Level Framework for Reframing Educational Dualism in Indonesia

The third level, social integration, shifts the analytical focus from the organization of knowledge and institutions toward the distribution of recognition and opportunity. Social integration concerns whether different educational pathways provide learners with comparable opportunities to accumulate valuable forms of capital, convert those forms of capital across educational, professional, religious, and civic fields, and obtain meaningful social recognition. As illustrated in Figure 1, this level can be understood through three interconnected processes: capital expansion, capital conversion, and symbolic equalization. Capital expansion refers to broadening the range of knowledge, competencies, networks, and dispositions available to learners; capital conversion concerns the portability and recognition of these resources across different social fields; while symbolic equalization refers to reducing hierarchies and stigma attached to particular educational pathways.

Bourdieu's concepts provide the sociological mechanism connecting these three levels. The concept of *field* explains how educational institutions occupy different positions within the national educational space and compete for resources, recognition, and legitimacy. *Habitus* explains how educational environments shape students' dispositions, identities, aspirations, and ways of understanding knowledge. Cultural, social, and symbolic capital explain the resources produced and accumulated through particular educational trajectories,

while capital conversion determines whether those resources retain value when individuals move between academic, professional, religious, and civic fields. The interaction of these mechanisms may either reproduce existing educational hierarchies or enable social transformation and upward mobility.

Figure 1 therefore emphasizes that knowledge integration cannot be evaluated solely by the coexistence of religious and general subjects within the same curriculum. Epistemological integration forms the intellectual foundation, institutional integration provides the organizational translation, and social integration constitutes the broader sociological outcome. A weakness at one level can limit transformation at the next. Epistemological innovation without institutional capacity may remain rhetorical, while institutional integration without broader recognition and capital convertibility may leave existing social hierarchies largely unchanged.

The framework also highlights several enabling conditions that cut across all three levels, including supportive policy and governance, adequate financial and technological resources, teacher competence and professional development, institutional networks and collaboration, and continuous research and evaluation. These conditions are important because the capacity to implement integration is unevenly distributed across Islamic educational institutions. Without attention to such inequalities, integration itself may become a source of new stratification, distinguishing well-resourced institutions capable of developing interdisciplinary, technological, and internationally connected programs from institutions with more limited resources.

Accordingly, the framework does not advocate institutional homogenization. Madrasahs, pesantren, Islamic schools, and general schools may retain their distinctive histories, traditions, curricula, and educational identities. Educational diversity becomes sociologically problematic not because institutions are different, but when such differences are converted into rigid hierarchies of legitimacy and opportunity. The primary objective of social integration is therefore to create greater permeability between educational fields, expand access to valued forms of capital, reduce symbolic hierarchies and stigma, and strengthen equitable opportunities for social mobility.

From this perspective, substantive knowledge integration should satisfy three interconnected conditions. First, it must overcome epistemic fragmentation without eliminating disciplinary specificity. Second, it must be translated into sustained institutional practices rather than remaining at the level of philosophical discourse. Third, it must improve the social convertibility and recognition of the capital generated through different educational pathways. These conditions explain why the resolution of educational dualism requires more than curricular reform or conceptual reconciliation.

The framework presented in Figure 1 consequently reframes educational dualism in Indonesia as a multidimensional problem involving epistemic separation, institutional differentiation, and unequal capital conversion. This formulation constitutes the sociological extension proposed by this study. The success of knowledge integration should therefore ultimately be assessed not only by whether religious and general sciences can coexist within an integrated curriculum, but also by whether educational transformation enables learners from different institutional pathways to acquire transferable competencies, obtain

comparable recognition, participate across social fields, and pursue meaningful social mobility.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that educational dualism in Indonesia is not merely an epistemological separation between religious and general knowledge, but a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by historical differentiation, institutional structures, symbolic recognition, and the distribution of educational capital. The literature shows that Islamic educational institutions have continuously adapted to modern educational demands through curricular expansion, institutional transformation, and the incorporation of scientific, technological, vocational, and professional knowledge. At the same time, these developments do not automatically eliminate differences in legitimacy, resource access, or the social value attached to different educational pathways. Educational dualism should therefore be understood as a problem of epistemic separation, institutional differentiation, and unequal capital conversion.

The main conceptual contribution of this study lies in the three-level framework of epistemological integration, institutional integration, and social integration. Epistemological integration addresses the fragmentation of knowledge; institutional integration translates integrative ideas into curriculum, pedagogy, governance, infrastructure, and educational practice; while social integration concerns the capacity of different educational pathways to provide learners with transferable forms of capital, broader recognition, and meaningful opportunities for mobility. From a Bourdieusian perspective, the success of integration depends not only on the coexistence of religious and general sciences, but also on how *field*, *habitus*, cultural capital, social capital, symbolic capital, and capital conversion interact within the broader educational structure. Integration is therefore substantive only when intellectual reconstruction is accompanied by institutional capacity and the reduction of rigid symbolic hierarchies.

This study is limited by its qualitative library-based design and therefore does not empirically measure differences in capital accumulation, institutional prestige, graduate mobility, or social recognition across pesantren, madrasahs, Islamic schools, and general schools. Future research should examine the proposed three-level framework through comparative and empirical studies involving students, graduates, families, educational institutions, and policy environments. Particular attention should be given to how different forms of cultural, social, and symbolic capital are produced and converted across educational fields, and whether contemporary knowledge-integration initiatives genuinely expand social mobility or unintentionally create new forms of stratification within Islamic education.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

In the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) utilized Gemini and ChatGPT to assist with language editing, grammar correction, improving readability, and refining the organization and presentation of the manuscript. These AI-assisted technologies were used solely as supporting tools and did not independently determine the study's arguments, interpretations, theoretical framework, or conclusions. All AI-assisted outputs were critically reviewed, verified against the relevant scholarly sources, and revised by the author(s), who

assume full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, originality, and final content of the publication.

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