

Constructing the Epistemology of Islamic Education for Curriculum Development and Learning Practices: Lecturers' Perspectives at IAI Nusantara Asshiddiqiyah Lempuing OKI

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Received: 13-03-2026

Revised: 23-04-2026

Accepted: 12-05-2026

KEYWORDS

Islamic education
epistemology;
lecturers' perspectives;
higher education;
Knowledge construction.

ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the importance of understanding the epistemological construction of Islamic education within Islamic universities, particularly how lecturers interpret sources, assess validity, and orient their academic practice. This research aims to analyze the epistemological construction of Islamic education from lecturers' perspectives and to identify its implications for the development of Islamic learning and science. The research uses a qualitative approach within an empirical study. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, and then analyzed thematically through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study show that the epistemological construction of Islamic education, as understood by lecturers, relies on the integration of revelation, reason, experience, and social reality as the basis for knowledge development. This perspective is reflected in the lecturer's views on the relationship between religious science and general science, the purpose of Islamic education, and learning strategies that emphasize the balance of normative, rational, and contextual aspects. This research enriches the study of epistemology in Islamic education through empirical data and offers implications for strengthening scientific paradigms, curriculum design, and learning practices in Islamic universities.

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Introduction

The debate on the epistemology of Islamic education has resurfaced as there is a growing demand that Islamic education not only survive as a normative system, but also be able to respond to social changes, institutional changes, and the orientation of future education in a reflective manner (Asnawi & Zuhdi, 2025; Tan & Hasman, 2024). Islamic education, therefore, needs to be reconstructed on an authentic, coherent, and dialogical scientific framework so as not to get stuck in the dichotomy between Islamic tradition and the needs of contemporary education (Abdalla, 2025; F. Ahmed & Chowdhury, 2025). In this context, an educational framework rooted in *the Islamic worldview* is considered important for maintaining the philosophical coherence, moral direction, and scientific orientation of Islamic education amid modernity (Adebolajo, 2022; Agbaria, 2024). At the same time, contemporary Islamic education must be adaptable to technological

developments and pedagogical innovations to remain relevant to the challenges of the times (Abdelnour, 2025; Mustafa et al., 2025).

Several previous studies have shown that the discussion of the epistemology of Islamic education no longer stops at the normative level, but has moved towards conceptual criticism, knowledge integration, and strengthening academic orientation in Islamic universities (Suwendi et al., 2024; Tiara & Danu, 2023). Previous research also reveals that the development of contemporary Islamic education increasingly emphasizes the importance of unifying Islamic science and general science through institutional policies, curriculum, and learning practices that are more integrative and relevant to the challenges of the times (Luckyardi et al., 2025; Suwendi et al., 2024). In addition, several studies confirm that lecturers have a central position in transforming Islamic values into professional competence, academic ethics, and learning processes, so that the quality of Islamic higher education is greatly influenced by the value framework and scientific orientation they build (Khimmatalliev et al., 2025; Orgianus, 2024). Other studies show that Islamic education in the digital and global era demands a pedagogical model that is not only adaptive to technological developments and future needs, but also remains rooted in spirituality, moral responsibility, and the goal of character formation (Murdiyanto, 2025; Rizal, 2025).

Previous research has extensively examined the epistemology of Islamic education at the conceptual level, knowledge integration, institutional policies, and curriculum development. However, there are still a few studies that specifically examine the epistemological construction of Islamic education from the perspective of lecturers, the main actors in Islamic higher education. Existing studies focus more on learning systems, policies, and models in general, so it is not enough to explain how lecturers understand the source of knowledge, the validity of knowledge, the relationship between revelation and reason, the integration of religious science and general science, and its implications for learning practices and academic culture. In addition, empirical research on local Islamic universities remains relatively limited. Therefore, this research is directed to fill this gap by empirically examining the epistemological construction of Islamic education from the perspective of lecturers at IAI Nusantara Asshiddiqiyah Lempuing OKI.

Based on these conditions, this research's novelty lies in presenting empirical evidence on the epistemological construction of Islamic education from the perspective of lecturers at IAI Asshiddiqiyah Lempuing OKI. The novelty of this research lies not only in the specific research loci that have not been widely studied but also in its analysis, which positions lecturers as epistemic subjects rather than merely curriculum implementers. Thus, this study seeks to explain how the epistemological construction of Islamic education is constructed, negotiated, and operated in the context of Islamic higher education at the institutional level. This position also addresses the need for empirical research on the reconstruction and integration of Islamic education epistemology within real institutional contexts.

Substantively, this study aims to analyze the epistemological construction of Islamic education from the perspective of lecturers at IAI Nusantara Asshiddiqiyah Lempuing OKI. These objectives are described into several focuses, namely: how lecturers understand the epistemology of Islamic education; how they view the source, validity, and orientation of knowledge; how they interpret the relationship between revelation, reason, and reality; how they view the integration of religious science and general science; and how the epistemological construction has implications for learning and academic culture in Islamic universities. Based on these objectives, the formulation of this research problem is: (1) how lecturers at IAI Nusantara Asshiddiqiyah Lempuing OKI understand the epistemological construction of Islamic education; (2) how the lecturer's views on the source, validity, and integration of knowledge in Islamic education; and (3) how the epistemological construction is manifested in learning practices and institutional contexts. This

formulation aligns with the need for empirical research linking the philosophical framework of Islamic education to the experiences of educational actors in the field.

This research is expected to contribute on two levels. At the theoretical level, this study enriches the epistemology of Islamic education by presenting empirical data on how lecturers, as academic actors, interpret and operationalize epistemological concepts in Islamic higher education. On a practical level, this research can serve as a basis for reflection on curriculum development, strengthening academic culture, and designing learning that is more integrative of revelation, reason, and social reality. Thus, this research is not only relevant to the development of Islamic educational studies but also important for Islamic universities seeking to strengthen their scientific identity amid the challenges of modernity, educational dualism, and the demands of social relevance.

Method

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach with an empirical case study design to understand, in depth, the epistemological construction of Islamic education from the perspective of lecturers in a specific institutional context, namely IAI Nusantara Asshiddiqiyah Lempuing OKI. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to examine the meaning, perspective, and process of academic meaning in a contextual and in-depth manner. Meanwhile, the case study design is used because this research focuses on phenomena tied to a specific institutional setting, which requires a complete understanding of the context, actors, and dynamics surrounding it. (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Priya, 2021).

Participants

The subjects of this research are lecturers purposively selected based on several criteria, namely, active teaching, understanding the discourse of Islamic education, and involvement in academic development within the university environment. The purposive sampling technique is used because qualitative research does not aim to obtain statistical representations but rather to select informants who are richest in information and most relevant to the research focus. Thus, the selection of lecturers as the main informants is based on the consideration that they have adequate academic experience, understanding, and reflection on the epistemological construction of Islamic education in higher education practice (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025; Campbell et al., 2020).

Instruments

The main instrument in this study is the researcher, as a human instrument, because qualitative research places the researcher as the party who directly determines the research focus, selects informants, collects data, interprets findings, and draws conclusions. To support the direction of the data collection process, this study uses supporting instruments, including interview guidelines, observation guidelines, documentation guidelines, and grids for research instruments. The supporting instruments are prepared based on the research focus so that data collection takes place in a systematic, directed, and consistent manner with the research objectives (Chand, 2025; Demirci, 2024).

The grid of research instruments is compiled to map the research focus, the aspects studied, the indicators, the data collection techniques, and the data sources. This grid serves as an operational guide to keep the data-mining process focused on the main dimensions of the epistemological construction of Islamic education from the lecturers' perspective.

Table 1. Instrument Grid

Research Focus	Aspects Studied	Indicator	Data Collection Techniques	Data Source
The epistemological construction of Islamic education from the perspective of lecturers	Lecturers' understanding of the epistemology of Islamic education	Epistemological definition of Islamic education: How Lecturers Interpret the Essence of Knowledge in Islamic Education	In-depth interviews	Lecturer
The epistemological construction of Islamic education from the perspective of lecturers	Sources of knowledge in Islamic education	Revelation, reason, experience, intuition, and social reality as sources of knowledge	In-depth interviews, documentation	Lecturers, academic documents
The epistemological construction of Islamic education from the perspective of lecturers	Validity and truth of science	The Measure of Truth of Knowledge; the relationship of the postulates of naqli and aqli; The basis of the legitimacy of knowledge	In-depth interviews	Lecturer
The epistemological construction of Islamic education from the perspective of lecturers	Integration of religious and general sciences	The lecturer's views on the dichotomy or integration of knowledge; Forms of integration in learning	In-depth interviews, observations	Lecturer, learning process
The epistemological construction of Islamic education from the perspective of lecturers	Hierarchy and scientific orientation	The position of religious science, general science, practical science, and moral-spiritual science in Islamic education	In-depth interviews	Lecturer
The epistemological construction of Islamic education from the perspective of lecturers	Epistemological implications for learning	Learning strategies; teaching approach; normative, rational, and contextual emphasis	In-depth interviews, observations	Lecturers, learning activities
The epistemological construction of Islamic education from the perspective of lecturers	Epistemological manifestations in academic documents	Reflection of epistemological views in the curriculum, RPS, vision-mission, and	Documentation	Curriculum, RPS, vision-mission, institutional archives

perspective of lecturers		institutional documents		
The epistemological construction of Islamic education from the perspective of lecturers	The institutional context of epistemological formation	Academic culture, scientific traditions, and institutional values that influence lecturers' perspectives	Observations, interviews, documentation	Lecturers, campus environment, documents

Data Collection

The data for this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data is obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. In contrast, secondary data is sourced from various academic documents, including curricula, RPS, institutional visions and missions, and other institutional archives related to the research focus. The simultaneous use of primary and secondary data is intended to enable a fuller understanding of the epistemological phenomenon being studied, in terms of lecturers' views, ongoing academic practices, and the institutional context that shapes them. (Surawy-Stepney et al., 2023; Tisdell et al., 2025).

In-depth interviews were conducted to explore lecturers' views on the sources of knowledge, the validity of knowledge, the relationship between revelation and reason, and the scientific orientation in Islamic education. Observations were conducted to understand the academic context and learning practices on campus, while documentation was used to trace the formal traces of epistemological constructions across various institutional documents. The application of several of these data collection techniques aims to produce rich, reflective, and contextual data, so that the analysis carried out rests not only on the informant's narrative, but also on the praxis reality and documentary evidence that supports it (Chand, 2025; Demirci, 2024).

Based on the grid of these instruments, the interview guidelines are designed to explore lecturers' understanding of the epistemology of Islamic education, sources of knowledge, the validity of knowledge, the relationship between revelation and reason, the integration of religious science and general science, and the implications of this integration for learning. The observation guidelines are focused on the academic context, learning interactions, the use of scientific reference sources, and patterns of scientific integration in the lecture process. Meanwhile, documentation guidelines are used to examine the curriculum, RPS, institutional visions and missions, academic guidelines, and policy archives that are relevant to the institution's epistemological orientation.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is carried out theatically and interpretively through several stages, namely a thorough reading of the data, initial coding, category grouping, theme development, study of inter-theme relationships, and extraction of meaning according to the research focus. Thematic analysis was chosen because it systematically identifies patterns of meaning while allowing researchers to conduct in-depth interpretations of informants' experiences, views, and constructs. With this approach, the data are not only classified, but also interpreted to find the structure of meaning that underlies the lecturer's perspective on the epistemology of Islamic education (S. K. Ahmed et al., 2025; Braun & Clarke, 2023).

Trustworthiness

The validity of the data is maintained through source triangulation, member checking, and triangulation techniques. Triangulation is carried out by comparing the consistency of data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. In contrast, member checking is conducted by

asking informants to review the interview summary or the researcher's interpretation to confirm the intended meaning. This step is important for strengthening the credibility, dependability, and trustworthiness of qualitative research, so that the findings have a strong interpretive basis and can be accounted for academically (Meydan & Akkaş, 2024; Schafer & Phillippi, 2025).

Through this procedure, this research is expected to produce an in-depth description and interpretation of how lecturers construct the epistemological framework of Islamic education, particularly regarding knowledge sources, knowledge hierarchies, the integration of religious science and general science, and their implications for learning in Islamic universities. Thus, the method used serves not only to reveal the views of the informant, but also to explain how such epistemological constructions operate in the academic context and the praxis of Islamic higher education (S. K. Ahmed, 2024; Cheong et al., 2023).

Result

The results of the study show that the epistemological construction of Islamic education in the campus environment is understood as a scientific framework that integrates revelation, reason, and social reality within a single educational process. Based on field data obtained during the research, the lecturers view the epistemology of Islamic education as not only a matter of the origin of knowledge but also one related to the basis, method, validity, purpose, and direction of knowledge use in academic life. Science is positioned not only as an intellectual tool, but also as a means of forming faith, morals, manners, and scientific responsibility. In the interview, it appeared that Islamic education is understood to have a peculiarity because it is based on revelation, uses reason, and is directed toward the formation of civilized individuals who can develop knowledge responsibly. These findings are strengthened by observational results showing that lecturers not only deliver material conceptually but also instill academic ethics, politeness in interactions, scientific honesty, and responsibility in the learning process. Campus documentation also shows that the value orientation is evident in institutional representations that affirm Islamic students' identity as knowledgeable, ethical, religious, disciplined, trustworthy, active, and responsible.



Figure 1. The poster “Civilized: Islamic Student Identity” represents the campus’s academic culture, emphasizing the integration of students’ scientific orientation, character, and Islamic identity.

The interview data also show that the sources of knowledge in Islamic education are understood to include the Qur'an, Hadith, intellect, empirical experience, and social reality. Revelation is placed as the primary source that provides normative direction and the basis for values in the development of knowledge. At the same time, reason functions to understand, explain, interpret, and develop knowledge. Empirical experience and social reality serve as sources that broaden understanding, as Islamic education is seen as having to relate to real life, societal problems, and the challenges of the times. In terms of the validity of knowledge, it is considered legitimate if it has a strong normative basis, can be rationally accounted for, and yields benefits in academic and social life. These findings are in line with observational results showing that learning in the classroom starts from normative fundamentals, then develops through reasoning, logical explanations, and examples that are close to students' lives. Students were given space to express their understanding and experience, and then the discussion was redirected to the Islamic framework and academic logic. The documentation supports these findings through visual media and campus activities that demonstrate the integration of intellectuality, moral responsibility, and value orientation, so that the knowledge developed in the academic environment is oriented not only to material mastery but also to ethical and religious dimensions.

During the study, it was also found that the relationship among revelation, reason, and reality is understood as interrelated and mutually reinforcing in the scientific construction of Islamic education. Revelation functions as a basic guideline, reason as a means of understanding and developing knowledge, and social reality as a space for the application, testing, and interpretation of knowledge. In the interview, all of these elements seem to be present together in lecturers' views of learning. The results of the observations show that learning follows a pattern that moves from normative explanations to reasoning and contextual attribution. Lecturers start the material from the basis of Islam, then develop it through rational explanations and social relevance. Students are involved in discussions and are directed to connect the material with their academic and social life experiences. This pattern shows that learning does not stop at the explanation of the text, but moves on to the use of reason and the reading of context. The documentation shows that there is a forum for academic studies and discussions that brings together lecturers and students in the campus's scientific room. This documentation shows that strengthening scientific insight occurs not only through formal lectures but also through study activities that support the connection among Islamic values, reasoning, and reality reading.



Figure 2. Academic study and discussion forums are a record of strengthening the campus's intellectual tradition by building connections among Islamic values, academic reason, and social reality.

Findings from subsequent research indicate that religious science and general science are not entirely separate fields. Based on interviews, religious science is understood as a source of values, ethics, and life orientation, while general science is understood as an analytical tool and a means of problem solving. All fields of science are seen as having their own values and functions. Religious science is present in moral and spiritual development; general science supports the

development of insight and civilization; practical science is related to the needs of life; and moral-spiritual science is related to the formation of personality. The results of the observation show that these integration efforts are beginning to be seen in learning. Islamic educational materials are not only explained within an abstract religious framework. Still, they are also linked to contemporary issues such as the ethics of technology use, social change, academic responsibility, and the challenges of modern life. In the classroom, learning does not stop at normative explanations but is directed toward understanding relevant to the needs of the times. An emphasis on discipline, responsibility, discussion ethics, and character building also appears to be part of the learning process. The documentation shows that campus academic activities combine appreciation for student achievement, organizational participation, and Islamic nuances. The documentation of the awarding of certificates and awards shows that there is space for appreciation of students' intellectual development in a religious and collective academic environment.



Figure 3. The activity of awarding students in the context of the Maulidiyah Anniversary serves as a testament to the campus's appreciative culture, which combines academic achievements, participation, and Islamic nuances.

Field data also show that lecturers' epistemological views directly influence how they manage learning. From the interview results, an overview emerged: learning was directed toward understanding, reflection, dialogue, and the development of students' critical reasoning, while memorization was not the main goal. Islamic values are present in learning through academic ethics, scientific honesty, discipline, responsibility, and respect for dissent. Religious materials are also connected to social reality, so that learning is connected to students' real lives. The observations reinforce these findings, showing that the class takes place in a dialogical and reflective atmosphere. Lecturers provide opportunities for students to ask questions, express opinions, and engage with the material. The learning process shows the strengthening of conceptual understanding, student involvement in discussions, and emphasis on manners in academic interactions. The documentation shows student involvement in various campus academic activities, so that students appear to be present not only as lecture participants but also as academic subjects involved in scientific forums, organizations, and campus activities that expand their learning experience.

In the institutional context, the interview results show that the campus's vision, mission, academic culture, curriculum, and scientific traditions influence the formation of science within the university environment. The academic life of the campus is characterized by studies, joint forums, and scientific-religious activities that strengthen the intellectual and religious atmosphere. The results of the observation show that academic life takes place not only in the classroom but also in study forums, joint activities with the academic community, and student organization activities. Lecturers and students are involved in the same space in academic-religious activities, so the campus atmosphere reflects collective, participatory academic interaction. The documentation shows the involvement of lecturers and students in various campus activities. Photos of the activities show that academic culture is built in a communal, participatory, and religious atmosphere.



Figure 4. The collective involvement of the academic community in campus activities serves as a documentation of a participatory, communal, and religious academic culture.

In addition, the results of the study show that the development of the epistemology of Islamic education takes place amid the dynamics of modernity, the advancement of science and technology, increasingly technical academic demands, and pragmatic tendencies in higher education. Based on interviews, these conditions are present as part of the reality faced by lecturers in the process of learning and scientific development. The results of observations show that learning materials are associated with several issues, including technological problems, changes in student behavior, media use ethics, and contemporary social challenges. This shows that the learning process takes place amid ongoing social changes that directly relate to the student experience. The documentation shows that campus activities continue to emphasize students' values, identity, and moral orientation within the academic environment. Visual media, study forums, and activities with the academic community demonstrate the strengthening of Islamic values amid the dynamics of modern campus life.

Overall, the results of the study show that the epistemological construction of Islamic education on campus is grounded in the positioning of revelation as the basis of values, reason as a means of developing knowledge, and social reality as a space for knowledge actualization. This construction can be seen in interview results, observed learning practices, and documentation of campus academic activities and culture. The overall field data show that Islamic education in higher education is aimed at strengthening knowledge, cultivating manners, developing academic responsibility, and connecting knowledge with social life.

Table 2. Research Findings on the Epistemological Construction of Islamic Education from the Perspective of Lecturers.

Subfocus	Key Findings	Field Evidence
Understanding the epistemology of Islamic education	Epistemology is understood as the foundation of science, integrating revelation, reason, and moral orientation.	Interviews, learning observations, and Islamic student identity posters
Source and validity of knowledge	Knowledge is sourced from revelation, reason, empirical experience, and social reality; Normative foundations, rationality, and usefulness determine the validity of science.	Interviews and observation of the learning process
The relationship of revelation, reason, and reality	The three are understood to complement each other in learning and developing knowledge	Interviews, class observations, and study forums

Integration of religious and general sciences	Religious science and general science are seen as interconnected in the orientation of Islamic education.	Interviews, observations, and documentation of academic activities
Implications for learning	Learning emphasizes understanding, dialogue, reflection, and critical reasoning, not mere memorization	Classroom observation and student engagement
Institutional context	The campus's academic culture supports the strengthening of Islamic values, identity, and intellectual traditions.	Documentation of campus forums, awards, and community activities

Discussion

The epistemological construction of Islamic education in higher education can be understood as a scientific building that links the normative orientation of Islam with academic reasoning, so that the development of knowledge is not positioned as a value-free process, but as part of the formation of civilized, reflective, and responsible educational subjects (F. Ahmed & Chowdhury, 2025; Roqib et al., 2021). This interpretation is in line with the study of the integration of knowledge in Islamic universities which emphasizes that the relationship between Islamic science and general science must move from institutional slogans to operational academic praxis, as well as in line with the study of the revitalization of Islamic studies in state Islamic universities which shows the importance of multidisciplinary and contextual approaches in the transformation of contemporary Islamic higher education (Muthohirin, 2025; Suwendi et al., 2024). Within this framework, the legitimacy of knowledge is not only determined by normative foundations, but also by its ability to build ethical orientation, strengthen the meaning of learning, and foster socio-religious responsibility in academic life, so that the epistemology of Islamic education functions at the same time as the basis of knowledge and the moral horizon of higher education (Mustakim et al., 2021; Wulan et al., 2021).

The relationship between revelation, reason, and social reality is more accurately understood as a relationship that interprets and reinforces each other, not as three independent domains, because modern education has never been completely neutral from the value horizon and moral orientation that shapes the direction of knowledge and academic practice (Biesta, 2025; Nasir & Rijal, 2021). This argument is in line with the finding that strengthening values in Islamic education in higher education requires an internalization process that does not stop at the symbolic level, but must be present in institutional governance, learning, and the formation of an inclusive and moderate academic culture (Andrianto et al., 2026; Chotimah et al., 2025). Thus, the epistemology of Islamic education on campus is not enough to be positioned as a discourse on educational philosophy, but needs to be understood as an operational framework that directs the curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional culture in an integrated manner, especially when Islamic universities are required to respond to the issues of inclusivity, learning transformation, and strengthening value orientation in academic life (Khaeroni et al., 2023; Munadirin et al., 2023).

The theoretical implication of this position is the need to frame the epistemology of Islamic education as an integrative-ethical epistemology, that is, a framework that not only addresses the sources and methods of knowledge but also the purpose of civilization, scientific manners, and the social responsibility of the sciences produced. The practical implication is that learning in Islamic universities needs to be designed in a more dialogical, reflective, and contextual way so that students not only master the material but also can reason, weigh, and connect knowledge to real problems responsibly. This direction is in line with the demands of knowledge integration in Islamic higher education and with the strengthening of institutional values in the governance of modern

Islamic universities. The institutional implication is that institutional vision, academic culture, lecturer development, and quality assurance systems need to explicitly link scientific integrity, academic manners, and the social relevance of science so that the strengthening of epistemology does not remain a normative narrative but becomes a stable academic habit.

The main limitation of this kind of research lies in the strong influence of the institutional context, so that the epistemological formulation that appears at one university is not necessarily identical to the pattern that develops at other Islamic campuses with different histories, policies, and academic cultures. Another limitation arises when the dimensions of academic culture and pedagogical orientation are more prominent than the reading of curriculum documents, assessments, and quality policies, even though the literature shows that the relationships among philosophical foundations, institutional structures, and the direction of scientific development highly determine epistemological transformation. Based on this, further research needs to be expanded comparatively in several Islamic universities, involving lecturers, students, curriculum managers, and institutional leaders, and combining academic cultural analysis with the review of curriculum documents and evaluation systems to test the extent to which the integration of revelation, reason, and social reality is truly institutionalized in the Islamic higher education system. At the practical level, Islamic universities also need to develop lecturer training grounded in the epistemology of Islamic education, strengthen the integration of manners and academic integrity into the curriculum, and build interdisciplinary scientific forums that bring together the normative foundations of Islam with technological issues, social change, and contemporary challenges in higher education.

Conclusion

The epistemological construction of Islamic education in higher education shows that the development of science occurs through the integration of revelation, reason, and social reality, forming a complete scientific foundation. Islamic education thus functions not only as a means of transmitting knowledge, but also as a process of forming manners, academic integrity, and social responsibility in the intellectual life of the campus. This orientation emphasizes that the epistemology of Islamic education plays a strategic role in building an academic culture that not only values the mastery of knowledge but also links it to values, ethics, and social relevance. Therefore, strengthening the epistemology of Islamic education is important for guiding the development of a higher education environment capable of producing reflective, characterful, and responsive academics.

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