

Curriculum Innovation in Arabic and Islamic Studies through Entrepreneurial Approaches in Nigerian Universities

***Yahya Isiaq Oluwatosin¹, Olaniyan-Shobowale Khadijat Olushola², Owoyale-Abdulganiy Ibrahim Solahudeen³, Zakariyah Mikhail Poopo⁴, Kewulere Adam Olasunkanmi⁵.**

^{1,2,5}Lagos State University, Lasu Main Rd, Ojo, Lagos 102101, Lagos, Nigeria

^{3,4}Alhikmah University, Adewole housing estate, Adeta Rd, Ilorin 240281, Kwara, Nigeria
*isiaq.yahya@lasu.edu.ng

ABSTRACT: *This research investigates entrepreneurial strategies for curriculum development and enhancement in Arabic and Islamic studies education in Nigeria to meet the demands of the 21st century. Nigeria, with its rich Islamic heritage and rapidly evolving educational landscape, presents a unique context for exploring innovative approaches to curriculum design. The study focuses on integrating entrepreneurial principles, skills, and pedagogies into the Arabic and Islamic studies curriculum to equip students with the competencies needed for success in the modern world. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative research methods, the research examines current curriculum frameworks, pedagogical practices, and educational policies related to Arabic and Islamic studies in Nigeria. It explores the feasibility, effectiveness, and challenges of incorporating entrepreneurial concepts such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and innovation into the curriculum. Additionally, the study investigates the role of community engagement and stakeholder collaboration in enriching the curriculum with real-world learning experiences. Through this research, insights were gained into how entrepreneurial strategies can enhance Arabic and Islamic studies education in Nigeria, empowering students with the skills, knowledge, and mindset necessary to thrive in the dynamic global landscape of the 21st century.*

Penelitian ini menyelidiki strategi kewirausahaan untuk pengembangan dan peningkatan kurikulum dalam pendidikan studi Arab dan Islam di Nigeria untuk memenuhi tuntutan abad ke-21. Nigeria, dengan warisan Islam yang kaya dan lanskap pendidikan yang berkembang pesat, menyajikan konteks yang unik untuk mengeksplorasi pendekatan inovatif dalam desain kurikulum. Studi ini berfokus pada pengintegrasian prinsip-prinsip kewirausahaan, keterampilan, dan pedagogi ke dalam kurikulum studi Arab dan Islam untuk membekali siswa dengan kompetensi yang dibutuhkan untuk sukses di dunia modern. Mengacu pada kombinasi metode penelitian kualitatif dan kuantitatif, penelitian ini mengkaji kerangka kurikulum terkini, praktik pedagogis, dan kebijakan pendidikan terkait studi Arab dan Islam di Nigeria. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi kelayakan, efektivitas, dan tantangan dalam menggabungkan konsep-konsep kewirausahaan seperti berpikir kritis, pemecahan masalah, dan inovasi ke dalam kurikulum. Selain itu, penelitian ini menyelidiki peran keterlibatan masyarakat dan kolaborasi pemangku kepentingan dalam memperkaya kurikulum dengan pengalaman belajar di

dunia nyata. Melalui penelitian ini, wawasan diperoleh tentang bagaimana strategi kewirausahaan dapat meningkatkan pendidikan bahasa Arab dan studi Islam di Nigeria, memberdayakan siswa dengan keterampilan, pengetahuan, dan pola pikir yang diperlukan untuk berkembang dalam lanskap global yang dinamis di abad ke-21.

Keywords: *Arabic and Islamic Studies; Curriculum Design and Enhancement; Curriculum Development; Entrepreneurial Strategies.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The dawn of the 21st century has ushered in an unprecedented transformation across global socio-economic structures, predominantly driven by rapid technological advancements, the forces of globalisation, and evolving market dynamics. Within this context, higher education institutions worldwide face increasing pressure to transcend their traditional role of imparting theoretical knowledge. They are now compelled to produce graduates who are not only academically proficient but also equipped with robust entrepreneurial competencies that enable them to navigate, adapt to, and actively shape the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) global economy (Bezanilla et al., 2020). This shift necessitates fundamentally re-evaluating and enhancing academic curricula to embed critical thinking, innovation, problem-solving, and adaptive leadership (Altbach et al., 2009).

Nigeria, as Africa's most populous nation and a country with a rich, vibrant Islamic heritage and a significant Muslim population, presents a unique and critical case study for this educational imperative. The disciplines of Arabic and Islamic Studies are deeply entrenched within the nation's educational and cultural fabric, reflecting its historical contexts and religious identity (Abdul-Raheem, 2019). However, a growing body of criticism highlights a significant problem: the curriculum governing these disciplines has remained largely static and theoretical. Consequently, despite their specialised knowledge, graduates often face significant underemployment and struggle to contribute meaningfully to socio-economic development, an issue exacerbated by the nation's pressing challenges of youth unemployment (Arroisi et al., 2022).

The statement of this problem is thus clear. A critical disconnect exists between the theoretical orientation of the current Arabic and Islamic Studies curriculum in Nigerian universities and the practical, entrepreneurial skills required for success in the 21st-century landscape (Kamalul Ariffin et al., 2022). The curriculum notably lacks specialised entrepreneurship content that leverages the inherent opportunities within Islamic fields. This includes, but is not limited to, Islamic Finance and Banking, Halal Industry Management, Arabic Language Services, Islamic Cultural Consultancy, and Technology and Innovation in Islamic Services. This gap creates an urgent need for scholarly investigation and curricular innovation to enhance these venerable disciplines' relevance, practicality, and impact (Mollah & Zaman, 2015).

To address this problem, the primary objective of this research is to investigate and develop actionable entrepreneurial strategies for enhancing the curriculum of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Nigerian universities. Specifically, this study aims to determine the existing gaps in the current curriculum concerning entrepreneurial skills and

ascertain effective methodologies for their integration. It further seeks to evaluate the perceived benefits of such an incorporation for students, educators, and the wider community, while also assessing stakeholder perceptions and attitudes. Crucially, the research will investigate potential implementation challenges and devise strategies to mitigate them, culminating in the proposal of a structured, actionable framework for holistic curriculum enhancement (Bezanilla et al., 2020).

However, a significant gap persists in the literature. While these studies successfully identify discrete opportunities, there is a conspicuous lack of empirical and framework-driven research that focuses on systematically integrating these entrepreneurial strategies into the specific curriculum structures of Arabic and Islamic Studies programmes within the Nigerian socio-economic context. Previous research has largely remained sector-specific or theoretical, failing to provide a holistic, actionable model for curricular transformation that is academically sound and practically feasible (Ratten & Usmanij, 2021). This study seeks to fill this void. Its novelty is synthesising these dispersed concepts into a coherent, practical, and culturally sensitive curriculum framework tailored explicitly for Nigerian universities. By doing so, it moves beyond mere critique to offer an empirically-grounded model designed to bridge the deep traditions of Islamic scholarship with the dynamic demands of the 21st-century economy, thereby contributing significantly to educational policy, graduate employability, and national development (Thompson et al., 2021).

II. METHOD

This study adopted a descriptive research design to investigate the integration of entrepreneurial strategies into the Arabic and Islamic Studies curriculum within Nigerian universities. The target population encompassed all available lecturers and Arabic and Islamic Studies students in the country. A sample was selected from this population using a convenience sampling technique. This resulted in a final cohort of 132 lecturers and 527 students from institutions across Northern and Southern Nigeria to ensure geographical representation.

Data were collected using a self-developed instrument titled the “Questionnaire on the Revitalisation of the Arabic and Islamic Studies Curriculum for Nigerian Universities”. The questionnaire, comprising a bio-data section (A) and a Likert-scale section (B) addressing the research questions, was distributed electronically via email and social media platforms (Benlahcene, 2023). The collected data were analysed quantitatively using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 23). Descriptive statistics, specifically simple percentages, were used to summarise the respondents' bio-data, while mean scores and standard deviations were computed to analyse the responses to the research questions.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Distribution of respondents based on lecturers' and students' university

	University Lecturers'	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Lagos State University	31	23.48
	Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin	51	38.64

	Lagos State University of Education	12	9.09
	Kwara State University, Malete	14	10.61
	University of Lagos	11	8.33
	University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State	13	9.85
	Total	132	100.0
	University Students'	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Lagos State University	162	30.74
	Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin	107	20.30
	Lagos State University of Education	86	16.31
	Kwara State University, Malete	48	9.10
	University of Lagos	63	11.95
	University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State	61	11.57
	Total	527	100.0

Table 1 above shows that, 23.5% of the respondents (Lecturers) are from Lagos State University, 20.30% are from Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, 9.09% are from Lagos State University of Education, 10.61% are from Kwara State University, Malete, 8.33% are from University of Lagos, while the remaining 9.85% are from University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State.

However, the above table also shows that 30.74% of the students' respondents are from Lagos State University, 23.48% are from Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, 16.31% are from Lagos State University of Education, 9.10% are from Kwara State University, Malete, 11.95% are from University of Lagos, and the remaining 11.57% are from University of Ilorin.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents based on their teaching experience

	Teaching experience	Frequency	Percent
	Below 5 years	22	16.7
	5 - 10 years	33	25.0
Valid	11 - 15 years	44	33.3
	16 - 20 years	11	8.3
	Above 20 years	22	16.7
	Total	132	100.0

Table 2 above shows that 16.7% of the respondents have below 5years of teaching experience, 25.0% have 5-10years of teaching experience, 33.3% have 11-15years of teaching experience, and 8.3% have 16-20years of teaching experience. The remaining 16.7% have 20 years or more of teaching experience.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents (students) based on their year of study

	Year of Study	Frequency	Percent
	100Level	127	24.1
	200Level	124	23.5

Valid	300Level	132	25.0
	400Level	120	22.8
	500Level	12	2.3
	900Level	12	2.3
	Total	527	100.0

Table 3 above shows that 24.1% of the respondents (Students) are from the 100 level, 23.5% are from the 200 level, 25% are from the 300 level, 22.8% are from the 400 level, 2.3% are from the 500 level, and the same percentage is from the 900 level.

Table 4. Distribution of respondents (students) based on their major/field of study

	Major/Field of Study	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Islamic Studies	158	29.98
	Islamic Studies Education	275	52.18
	Arabic Language	35	6.64
	Arabic Language Education	60	11.38
	Total	527	100.0

Table 4 above shows that 29.98% of the students are from Islamic Studies, 52.18% are from Islamic Studies Education, 6.64% are from Arabic Language, while the remaining 11.38% are from Arabic Language Education.

Table 5. The current gaps in Nigerian universities' Arabic and Islamic Studies education curriculum.

	Items	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Complexity of the topics	22	16.7
	Complexity of the topics; Limited entrepreneurial and practical applications	11	8.3
	Lack of integration with modern technology	22	16.7
	Lack of integration with modern technology; Limited entrepreneurial and practical applications	11	8.3
	Lack of integration with modern technology; Insufficient focus on contemporary issues; Outdated teaching methods	11	8.3
	Lack of integration with modern technology; Insufficient focus on contemporary issues.....	33	25.0
	Outdated teaching methods	22	16.7
	Total	132	100.0

Table 5 provides information for the answer to research question one. The table shows that 16.7% of the Lecturers thought that the complexity of the topics is the current gap in Nigerian universities' Arabic and Islamic Studies education curriculum, 8.3% view the complexity of topics, along with a lack of practical applications, as problematic. 16.7% highlights the lack of integration with modern technology as a critical problem. 8.3% of respondents are concerned with the lack of technological integration and insufficient entrepreneurial and practical applications. 8.3% point out a triad of issues: lack of modern technology, insufficient contemporary content, and outdated teaching methods. The largest percentage (25%) indicates concern over the lack of modern technology and insufficient attention to contemporary issues, while the remaining 16.7% view outdated teaching methods as a major issue.

Table 6. Ways entrepreneurial skills can be effectively integrated into the Arabic and Islamic Studies education curriculum in use across universities in Nigeria.

	Items	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Project-based learning	22	16.7
	Project-based learning; Collaboration with local businesses and organisations.....	66	50.0
	Collaboration with local businesses and organisations	22	16.7
	Collaboration with local businesses and organisations; Internship and experiential learning opportunities	11	8.3
	Development of online courses and digital resources	11	8.3
	Total	132	100.0

Table 6 provides information for the answer to research question two. The table shows that 50% of the respondents (Lecturers) emphasise project-based learning and collaboration with local businesses and organisations as the most significant strategy. 16.7% of the respondents support project-based learning alone, and an equal percentage support collaboration with local businesses and organisations independently. 8.3% of them endorse internship and experiential learning opportunities in addition to business collaboration, while the remaining 8.3% focus on developing online courses and digital resources as effective entrepreneurial skills that should be integrated into the curriculum of Arabic and Islamic Studies education across universities in Nigeria.

Table 7. The perceived benefits of incorporating entrepreneurial strategies in the Arabic and Islamic Studies education curriculum for students, educators, and the larger community

	Items	Frequency	Percent
Valid	It will meet the contemporary standards if all measures required are put in place	22	16.7
	Very relevant and useful	22	16.7
	To see Arabic and Islamic Studies leading in all spheres of human endeavour, as in the past.	22	16.7

It should be included as one of the compulsory subjects for all Muslim students	11	8.3
To change the view of the Ulama in the country	11	8.3
The role plays in fostering understanding and harmony among different groups	11	8.3
To lead the world of morality and be part of empowerment engulfment	11	8.3
To make students more productive	11	8.3
Both of them are developing rapidly	11	8.3
Total	132	100.0

Table 7 provides information for the answer to research question three. The table shows that 16.7% of the respondents (Lecturers) believe that Arabic and Islamic Studies will meet contemporary standards if all required measures are implemented. 16.7% of the respondents supported those that are very relevant and useful. 16.7% of them perceived the benefits as taking a lead in all spheres of human endeavour, as it was in the past. 8.3% of the respondents support making Arabic and Islamic Studies a compulsory subject for all Muslim students, and the same percentage believe it can change the view of the Ulama in the country. 8.3% also emphasise its role in fostering understanding and harmony among different groups, 8.3% advocate leading morality and empowerment, and the same percentage see the benefit as making students more productive. In comparison, the remaining 8.3% assert that both subjects will develop rapidly.

Table 8. The stakeholders in Arabic and Islamic Studies will be favourably disposed to include entrepreneurial skills in the curriculum of Arabic and Islamic studies in Nigerian universities

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
The current Arabic and Islamic Studies curriculum meets my academic and personal interests	527	3.53	1.374	Agreed
The curriculum is relevant to contemporary issues and challenges in today's world	527	3.46	1.306	Agreed
The course materials and textbooks are up-to-date and reflective of current knowledge in the field	527	3.20	1.277	Agreed
The teaching methods used in the curriculum are engaging and effective	527	3.61	1.198	Agreed
Incorporating modern technology and digital tools into the curriculum would enhance my learning experience	527	4.49	.806	Agreed
Practical applications of Arabic and Islamic Studies, such as internships or real-world projects, would be valuable	527	4.13	1.043	Agreed

The curriculum should include opportunities for student-led projects and entrepreneurial activities	527	4.25	.927	Agreed
I believe that partnerships with industries or community organisations could provide beneficial learning experiences for me	527	4.29	.779	Agreed
I feel that the current resources and facilities are adequate for supporting innovative approaches in the curriculum	527	2.82	1.370	Disagreed
I believe that my Lecturers will be open to incorporating new ideas and approaches into the curriculum	527	4.06	1.129	Agreed
Additional funding or resources would improve the quality and innovation of the Arabic and Islamic Studies curriculum	527	4.44	.804	Agreed
I would like to see more integration of interdisciplinary studies within the Arabic and Islamic Studies curriculum	527	4.10	1.260	Agreed
The Arabic and Islamic Studies program should be restructured to better align with global educational standards and practices	527	4.28	1.071	Agreed
I am enthusiastic about the potential for entrepreneurial and innovative changes in the curriculum	527	3.94	1.194	Agreed
Valid N (listwise)	527			

Criterion Mean = 3.00

Weighted Mean = 3.50

Data in Table 8 showed the mean and standard deviation of responses of Students on Investigating Entrepreneurial Strategies for Curriculum Enhancement in Arabic and Islamic Studies for Nigerian universities. From the result, all the fourteen items have the following mean scores 3.53, 3.46, 3.20, 3.61, 4.49, 4.13, 4.25, 4.29, 2.82, 4.06, 4.44, 4.10, 4.28, and 3.94 respectively with the corresponding standard deviation of 1.374, 1.306, 1.277, 1.198, .806, 1.043, .927, .779, 1.370, 1.129, .804, 1.260, 1.071, and 1.194. Items 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12, and 13 were above the criterion mean rating of 3.00, while item 9 was below the criterion mean rating of 3.00. Since the weighted mean rating of 3.50 was higher than the criterion mean of 3.00, it implied that stakeholders in Arabic and Islamic Studies are favourably disposed to the inclusion of entrepreneurial skills into the curriculum of Arabic and Islamic studies in Nigerian universities.

Table 9. The challenges that might arise from implementing entrepreneurial strategies in Arabic and Islamic Studies education, and how they can be addressed

	Items	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Lack of resources and funding	33	25.0
	Lack of resources and funding; Resistance to change among Ulama.....	66	50.0
	Resistance to change among faculty	11	8.3
	Resistance to change among faculty.....	11	8.3
	Insufficient training and professional development	11	8.3
	Total	132	100.0

Table 9 provides information for the answer to research question five. The table shows that 25% of the respondents (Lecturers) thought that Lack of resources and funding is the challenge that might arise from the implementation of entrepreneurial strategies in Arabic and Islamic Studies education. The largest percentage (50%) indicates concern over a lack of resources and funding; resistance to change among *Ulamah*; resistance to change among faculty; Limited industry partnerships and collaboration; Institutional passiveness and bureaucratic hurdles. 8.3% view it as resistance to change among faculty. However, 8.3% also extended their opinion as resistance to change among faculty, insufficient training and professional development, limited industry partnerships and collaboration, institutional passiveness, and bureaucratic hurdles. The remaining 8.3% of respondents are concerned with insufficient training and professional development as challenges that might arise.

Table 10. How the challenges will be addressed

	Items	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Professional development and training programs	44	33.3
	Professional development and training programs; Increased funding and grants ...	77	58.3
	Administrative support and policy changes	11	8.3
	Total	132	100.0

Table 10 provides information for the answer to research question five. The table shows that 33.3% of the respondents (lecturers) thought that professional development and training programs would be most helpful in overcoming these challenges. The largest percentage (58.3%) indicates concern over professional development and training programs; increased funding and grants; Partnerships with industry and community organisations; Access to technology and digital tools; and Administrative support and policy changes would be helpful to overcome it, and 8.3% view that Administrative support and policy changes will address the challenges.

Table 11. The suggested framework to develop and enhance the Arabic and Islamic Studies education curriculum in Nigerian universities through entrepreneurial strategies

	Items	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Facilitating partnerships with related industries and community organisations	11	8.3
	Incorporating technology and digital tools	22	16.7
	Incorporating technology and digital tools, developing practical skills and real-world applications.....	66	50.0
	Developing practical skills and real-world applications	22	16.7
	Promoting student-led projects and initiatives	11	8.3
	Total	132	100.0

Table 11 provides information for the answer to research question six. The table shows that 50% of the respondents (Lecturers) emphasise facilitating partnerships with related industries and community organisations as the most suggested framework to develop and enhance the Arabic and Islamic Studies education curriculum in Nigerian universities through entrepreneurial strategies. 16.7% of the respondents support incorporating technology and digital tools; the same percentage supports developing practical skills and real-world applications. 8.3% advocate facilitating partnerships with related industries and community organisations, while the remaining 8.3% focus on promoting student-led projects and initiatives as the suggested framework.

The main challenges in the current Arabic and Islamic Studies curriculum in Nigerian universities stem from the complexity of the topics, outdated teaching methods, and the lack of integration with practical applications, contemporary issues, and modern technology. To address this, integrating entrepreneurial skills through project-based learning, collaboration with local businesses, internships, and the development of digital resources could be an effective solution (Bin Masood & Arshad, 2023). This initiative is believed to bring significant benefits by repositioning Arabic and Islamic Studies as a leader in various fields and fostering moral development, and empowering students to become more productive. While almost all stakeholders are expected to support this inclusion, its implementation may face obstacles such as a lack of resources, resistance to change, and inadequate training (Nurhayati & Susanto, 2024). Therefore, the suggested framework for curriculum development should focus on technology incorporation, practical skills development, promotion of student-led projects, and facilitation of partnerships with industry and community organisations (Cheng & Wang, 2019).

The study aimed to investigate how entrepreneurial strategies can be effectively used to enhance the curriculum of Arabic and Islamic Studies education to be more relevant in Nigerian universities. While painstakingly looking at the statement of the problem, research purpose, as well as the research question, the study revealed several opportunities as well as challenges rendezvous below;

The study revealed that the current gap in Nigerian universities' Arabic and Islamic Studies education curriculum evolved from different angle which doesn't limited to

complexity of the topics that can overwhelm both the students and the lecturers, limited entrepreneurial and practical applications, Out-dated teaching methods is also seen as a major gap in Arabic and Islamic studies curriculum since the students will not be acquainted with relevant or contemporary knowledge as it will be expected from a university graduate, Insufficient focus on contemporary issues and Lack of integration with modern technology also create huge gap for a balance curriculum (Toledano & Gonzalez-Sanz, 2024).

This study also highlights the importance of integrating technology into the curriculum system by focusing on e-learning platforms, digital content creation, and Islamic app development, which are areas that can significantly boost students' ability to get acquainted with technology tools for religious and entrepreneurial purposes. This aligns with global trends toward tech-enhanced learning, providing students with religious knowledge and practical digital skills (Kamaludin et al., 2024). By incorporating entrepreneurial courses into the curriculum, Arabic and Islamic Studies students could benefit by diversifying their career opportunities, bridging the gap between religious knowledge and real-world application.

The study shows that the current Arabic and Islamic Studies curriculum is undoubtedly focused on traditional academic content with a parochial incorporation of entrepreneurial skills. The research cogently revealed valuable and favourable entrepreneurial opportunities (Andri Sungkowo et al., 2024). However, there is notable recognition and reformation among educators and policymakers of the need to prepare students with practical, business-related skills alongside academic knowledge. Entrepreneurial strategies like Islamic finance and banking, Halal industrial management, Islamic Media and Publishing, and Islamic cultural consultancy are key areas where curriculum enhancements can provide students with marketable skills relevant to the global economy (Kamaludin et al., 2024).

Apart from lack of necessary financial resources, complexity of the materials and qualified trained personnel to design and implement a curriculum that combines entrepreneurship with Islamic studies, the findings also significantly observed that many traditional scholars and institutions also served as challenges as they are resistant in altering the content and structure of the curriculum, fearing that it may dilute the core religious teachings (VanGronigen et al., 2023).

It was retrieved in 2024 through Naija scholar that, since one of the rationales behind this work is to widen the curriculum of the Arabic and Islamic studies students, the research suggested that having a framework that combines entrepreneurship with Islamic education can enhance both moral and academic development (Kurfi, 2022). Students are more likely to engage with the curriculum when they see clear practical applications of their studies in the real world by incorporating technology and digital tools. Without gainsaying, entrepreneurial education that is well-grounded with Islamic values promotes ethical business practices, fostering a new generation of morally upright entrepreneurs, which can balance economic growth (Bintang et al., 2023).

IV. CONCLUSION

The future of Arabic and Islamic Studies curriculum in Nigerian Universities lies in developing entrepreneurial education and embracing technological advancements, personalising learning experiences, emphasising soft skills, promoting sustainability,

incorporating global perspectives, and fostering industry collaboration. Addressing the identified research gaps will provide valuable insights and evidence to guide the evolution of entrepreneurial education, ensuring it remains relevant and impactful in preparing students for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

Integrating entrepreneurship into Arabic and Islamic Studies curricula requires a comprehensive, multi-pronged strategy. University management should develop strategies to bridge the gaps that hinder inclusion, while investing more heavily in the training of educators to enable them to master and teach both disciplines. Furthermore, curricula should maintain the integrity of religious content while seamlessly integrating entrepreneurial skills, prioritising technology-based courses and digital skills training to equip faculty, students, and communities with 21st-century competencies. To support this modern curriculum innovation, stakeholders and policymakers need to create frameworks that foster inclusivity and hold conferences to discuss and promote the importance of entrepreneurial skills within the broader context of Islamic education.

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