Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam
p-ISSN: 2339-1413 | e-ISSN: 2621-8275
Vol. 14, No. 1, 2026
DOI: https://doi.org/10.36667/jppi.v14i1.2351

The Malay Islamic Monarchy (MIB) and the Future of Islamic Higher Education in Brunei Darussalam

Muhammad Amsyar Rahman
Faculty of Usuluddin, Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA), Brunei Darussalam
Email: mrahmanamsyar76@unissa.edu.bn

Irfan Hakim Jumat
Faculty of Usuluddin, Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA), Brunei Darussalam
Email: jumatnurhakimirfan@unissa.edu.bn

Amira Sofea Sulaiman
Faculty of Usuluddin, Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA), Brunei Darussalam
Email: amirasofeasulaiman36@unissa.edu.bn

Received: 20-12-2025 | Revised: 25-4-2026 | Accepted: 27-5-2026

Abstract

This article examines the Malay Islamic Monarchy, commonly known as MIB, as a foundational framework for understanding the future of Islamic higher education in Brunei Darussalam. It argues that MIB is not merely a symbolic national ideology, but a moral, cultural, epistemological, and governance framework that shapes educational policy, curriculum orientation, teacher formation, institutional identity, and graduate expectations. Using a qualitative library-based approach, the article analyzes scholarly works and policy-related studies on MIB, Islamic education, Brunei's education system, bilingual policy, digital transformation, teacher education, and Islamic finance. The discussion shows that Islamic higher education in Brunei faces a complex task. It must preserve Islamic values, Malay cultural identity, and monarchical legitimacy while responding to globalization, English-medium academic culture, digital learning, economic diversification, and international higher education standards. The article proposes an adaptive MIB-based model of Islamic higher education built on ideological continuity, integration of naqli and aqli knowledge, reflective pedagogy, bilingual competence, ethical digital engagement, and institutional accountability. The study contributes to the discourse on Islamic higher education by showing how a national Islamic philosophy can function not only as a mechanism of identity preservation, but also as a dynamic framework for educational renewal and global relevance.

Keywords

Malay Islamic Monarchy, MIB, Islamic higher education, Brunei Darussalam, Islamic education policy, bilingual education, digital transformation, educational modernization

Introduction

The future of Islamic higher education in Brunei Darussalam cannot be understood merely as a question of institutional expansion, curriculum reform, or academic modernization. It is, more deeply, a question about how a small Muslim-majority state preserves its religious, cultural, and political identity while responding to changing regional and global conditions. In Brunei, this question is inseparable from the national philosophy of Malay Islamic Monarchy, commonly known as MIB. Muhammad and Baihaqy (2021) describe MIB as a foundational framework that links Islam, Malay culture, and monarchical governance within Brunei's educational and national development. This framework gives Islamic higher education a distinctive orientation. It is expected not only to produce competent graduates, but also to cultivate morally responsible, spiritually grounded, and culturally rooted citizens.

Since Brunei's independence in 1984, MIB has occupied a central place in the formation of national identity and public policy. Sharbawi and Mabud (2021) explain that the three components of Malay, Muslim, and Monarchy are not separate symbolic categories, but interrelated foundations of Bruneian identity. In education, this means that knowledge is never treated as a purely technical matter. It is connected to moral formation, loyalty to the nation, religious commitment, and social responsibility. Asbol, Brahim, and Abu Bakar (2022) show that educational policies in Brunei from the mid-twentieth century to the contemporary period have consistently been shaped by the broader aspiration to preserve national identity while accommodating educational development. This is precisely where the issue becomes interesting. How can Islamic higher education remain faithful to MIB while preparing students for a world shaped by globalization, digital technology, English-medium academic culture, and increasingly competitive knowledge economies?

This tension between continuity and change has become one of the most important issues in Brunei's Islamic educational landscape. Phan, Kumpoh, Wood, Jawawi, and Said (2021) note that education reform in Brunei needs to be understood within the broader context of globalization, national development, and state-led reform. The National Education System for the 21st Century, or SPN21, reflects this attempt to balance local values with contemporary competencies. Wood, Abdul Latif, and Said (2022) further indicate that teacher preparation in Brunei faces the challenge of responding to a changing world without abandoning the country's moral and cultural foundations. In our view, this is not a simple compromise between tradition and modernity. It is a continuing negotiation. Sometimes the negotiation looks smooth in policy language, yet in educational practice it can be far more complicated.

One major complication concerns curriculum and knowledge integration. Islamic higher education in Brunei is expected to maintain the authority of Islamic knowledge while engaging modern disciplines, professional skills, science, technology, and economic development. Madin et al. (2021a) show that the internalization of MIB values in curriculum requires deliberate strategies, not merely formal inclusion in subject content. Ahad and Baihaqy (2021) also emphasize the importance of teacher training in transmitting MIB values, especially within religious teacher education. These studies suggest that the success of MIB-based education depends not only on what is written in curriculum documents, but also on how educators understand, embody, and pedagogically translate those values. This point should not be underestimated. A curriculum may mention values repeatedly, yet students may not internalize them if teaching remains mechanical, overly textual, or disconnected from lived experience.

Language policy adds another layer of complexity. Malay has a special position in Brunei because it carries cultural memory, national identity, and the symbolic force of MIB. At the same time, English has become increasingly important in higher education, science, technology, international communication, and employment. Noor Azam and McLellan (2022) discuss shifting identities in Brunei's language ecology, while Sharbawi (2023) shows that language choice may be associated with religiosity and identity formation. More recently, Sharbawi and Jaidin (2026) demonstrate that parental views on Bahasa Melayu within bilingual education reveal continuing tensions between identity preservation and global competitiveness. It is therefore not enough to ask whether Malay or English should dominate. The more productive question is how Islamic higher education can develop bilingual competence without weakening the ethical and cultural role of Malay in MIB transmission.

Digital transformation has also changed the conditions under which Islamic education operates. Marsidi (2021) explains that MIB continues to be rearticulated through royal discourse in response to changing social conditions. Yet digital culture creates new spaces of influence that are not fully controlled by formal institutions. Ahad (2021) shows that local

influencers can shape public understandings of MIB beyond the classroom. Basir, Haji Sismat, and Ahmad (2024) demonstrate that Islamic universities have had to adapt to new learning conditions, while Susilawati et al. (2025) connect educational technology with the internationalization of Islamic higher education in Indonesia and Brunei. These developments raise a serious question. Can MIB-based Islamic higher education develop digital pedagogies that are creative and globally relevant, while still ethically disciplined and religiously meaningful?

This article examines the Malay Islamic Monarchy and the future of Islamic higher education in Brunei Darussalam by analyzing MIB as an educational, moral, institutional, and epistemological framework. It argues that MIB should not be understood as a static inheritance that merely preserves the past. Rather, MIB can function as a dynamic framework for guiding Islamic higher education through curriculum reform, teacher education, bilingual policy, digital transformation, institutional governance, and global engagement. The contribution of this article lies in its attempt to move beyond descriptive accounts of MIB as national ideology. It proposes that the future of Islamic higher education in Brunei depends on the capacity to reinterpret MIB as a living educational philosophy, one that anchors identity while enabling thoughtful adaptation to the demands of the contemporary world.

Literature Review

The literature on the Malay Islamic Monarchy, or MIB, generally agrees that Brunei Darussalam cannot be read through the usual categories of secular nation-state formation alone. Sharbawi and Mabud (2021) describe Brunei's national identity as being constructed through the interdependence of Malay culture, Islam, and monarchy, while Muhammad and Baihaqy (2021) show that this interdependence has become especially visible in the field of Islamic education. In this sense, MIB is not merely an official doctrine placed above educational institutions. It works as a moral language, a cultural grammar, and a political framework through which education is interpreted. This is important because Islamic higher education in Brunei is not expected to function only as a site of professional training. It is also expected to cultivate graduates who understand knowledge as connected to faith, public responsibility, and loyalty to the moral order of the nation.

Historically, the relationship between education and state formation in Brunei has developed through a long process of policy consolidation. Muhammad and Petra (2021) trace the development of Brunei's education system as a movement from traditional forms of religious instruction toward more structured national education, while Asbol, Brahim, and Abu Bakar (2022) show that education policies from 1954 to 2020 were repeatedly shaped by the need to align schooling with the concept of Malay Islamic Monarchy. This historical background matters because it prevents us from treating contemporary Islamic higher education reform as a sudden response to globalization. It is better understood as part of a longer national project. Brunei has continually attempted to modernize education while keeping it anchored in Islam, Malay identity, and monarchical legitimacy. The tension is real, but it is not new.

MIB also has a legal and political dimension. Asbol (2022) places the development of Islamic law in Brunei within a historical relationship with Malay Islamic Monarchy, suggesting that MIB provides a normative frame for understanding law, governance, and public morality. Jammes and Hoon (2022), in their study of religious care and moral economy during the COVID-19 period, further illustrate how trust, religious interpretation, and state authority interact in Brunei's public life. For Islamic higher education, this means that institutional governance cannot be separated from broader forms of religious and political legitimacy. Universities and religious teacher education institutions operate within a moral-political environment where knowledge, law, loyalty, and religious discipline are mutually connected. Admittedly, this may look restrictive from some liberal perspectives. Yet within

Brunei's own framework, it is seen as a way of sustaining social coherence and religious continuity.

At the level of curriculum, the key theoretical issue is the integration of revealed knowledge and rational knowledge. Madin et al. (2021a) show that the internalization of MIB values in the Year 7 curriculum depends on intentional strategies, while Madin et al. (2021b) reveal that teacher educators' perceptions of the MIB curriculum affect how these values are translated pedagogically. Although these studies focus mainly on school-level curriculum, their implications for Islamic higher education are significant. They suggest that curriculum integration is not achieved simply by inserting Islamic content into modern subjects. It requires a deeper epistemological arrangement in which naqli knowledge, or knowledge derived from revelation, interacts constructively with aqli knowledge, or knowledge developed through reason, inquiry, and empirical engagement. Without this integration, Islamic higher education risks falling into a familiar dualism between religious authenticity and modern competence.

The literature on Islamic higher education in the wider region helps clarify this point. Idris, Sirat, and Da Wan (2019), in their discussion of Islamic-based higher education institutions in Malaysia, argue that such institutions play an important role in developing sustainable Islamic communities. Mazlan et al. (2025) similarly discuss integrated education in Malaysian Islamic higher education by highlighting both its promise and its institutional challenges. These studies are useful for Brunei because they show that integration is not only a philosophical aspiration. It is also an organizational problem involving curriculum structure, faculty capacity, governance, graduate outcomes, and institutional culture. Puspitasari et al. (2025), although writing on Ma'had Aly in another context, remind us that cultural barriers and institutional limitations can slow the movement toward competitive Islamic higher education. Brunei's case is different, of course, but the challenge of integration remains comparable.

Teacher education occupies a particularly strategic place in this literature. Ahad and Baihaqy (2021) discuss the training of MIB among teachers at Brunei's Religious Teachers University College, emphasizing the role of teacher preparation in sustaining national philosophy. Wood, Abdul Latif, and Said (2022) also show that preparing teachers for a changing world requires attention to policy reform, professional competence, and contextual challenges. This is where MIB becomes pedagogically consequential. Teachers are not simply transmitters of information. They are expected to embody a moral orientation. Ma'mun et al. (2025), although focusing on Indonesian Islamic junior high school teachers through Bourdieu's lens, provide a useful theoretical reminder that teacher identity and agency are shaped by institutional fields, values, and professional habitus. In Brunei, this suggests that MIB-based teacher education must cultivate not only knowledge of doctrine, but also reflective agency.

The question of pedagogy is also linked to language. Noor Azam and McLellan (2022) examine language, society, and shifting identities in Brunei, while Sharbawi (2023) investigates the relationship between language and religiosity. Their findings point to a sensitive issue in Bruneian education. Malay is not simply a medium of communication. It carries symbolic weight as a marker of culture, religion, and national belonging. Yet English has become increasingly important for higher education, scientific communication, employability, and international participation. Sharbawi and Jaidin (2026) show through parental perspectives that Bahasa Melayu continues to be valued within bilingual education, but English is also seen as necessary for future opportunity. This creates a tension that Islamic higher education cannot avoid. The issue is not whether English should be rejected. The more difficult task is to prevent bilingualism from becoming cultural displacement.

Recent studies on English for Islamic education sharpen this concern. Noorashid and Jamil (2024) identify foreign language anxiety among learners of English for Islamic

Education in Brunei, while Noorashid and Alkaff (2026) examine whether English and Islamic education represent a clash of cultures or a compatible reality for religious trainee teachers. These works are important because they move the debate beyond ideology into classroom experience. Students and trainee teachers may support the value of English, yet still experience anxiety, hesitation, or identity negotiation when religious knowledge is mediated through a foreign language. Mumin (2023), through a qualitative study of code-switching and code-mixing in Brunei religious schools, shows that bilingual pedagogy already occurs in practice. The theoretical implication is quite clear. Bilingual Islamic higher education should be designed deliberately, not left to informal linguistic improvisation.

Globalization and digitalization form another body of literature relevant to this study. Phan et al. (2021) contextualize educational reform in Brunei within globalization, while Gin and King (2022) position contemporary Brunei within wider social, political, and cultural transformations. Digital change adds another layer. Marsidi (2021) shows that MIB continues to be articulated through the Sultan's titahs as a transformative vision, but Ahad (2021) demonstrates that public understandings of MIB are also shaped beyond the classroom through local influencers. This shift should not be dismissed as a marginal cultural phenomenon. It means that young people increasingly encounter religious and national narratives through digital platforms, informal personalities, and fragmented media flows. Islamic higher education, therefore, must compete with other sources of meaning while also learning how to use digital media responsibly.

Educational technology studies reinforce this need for adaptation. Lubis (2009) had already discussed educational technology as a teaching aid for integrated Islamic education in Brunei, long before digital learning became as urgent as it is today. Ni'mah and Rahmawati (2023), through a systematic literature review, show that educational technology in Islamic education has become a growing field of inquiry, especially in relation to learning innovation. Basir, Haji Sismat, and Ahmad (2024) examine how an Islamic university adapted to the new normal, while Susilawati et al. (2025) discuss educational technology-based strategies for the internationalization of Islamic higher education in Indonesia and Brunei. These studies suggest that digitalization should not be treated only as a tool. It is also a pedagogical environment, one that shapes authority, attention, interaction, and the formation of religious understanding.

Another relevant area is economic transformation, especially Islamic finance. Yusuf, Shah, Ayaz, and Buaben (2018) discuss the realities and future prospects of interest-free banking and finance in Brunei, while Besar, Aziz, and Dahlan (2024) emphasize the role of the Islamic community and government in developing Islamic finance. Jabeen and Ringim (2017), through their conceptual discussion of human capital development, help frame Islamic finance education as part of broader capacity building. This literature matters because Islamic higher education should not be imagined only as preservation of heritage. It also has to prepare graduates for ethical participation in economic life. In Brunei, Islamic finance offers a concrete field where Sharia knowledge, professional expertise, state policy, and MIB-based moral economy can meet. If designed carefully, it can become one pathway through which Islamic higher education contributes to national diversification.

Based on these bodies of literature, this article adopts a theoretical framework that understands MIB as an integrated educational paradigm. It has at least five dimensions. First, it functions as an ideological foundation for national and religious identity. Second, it provides an epistemological orientation for integrating naqli and aqli knowledge. Third, it shapes pedagogy through moral internalization and teacher formation. Fourth, it frames language policy as a negotiation between Malay-Islamic identity and global academic participation. Fifth, it offers an ethical lens for digital transformation, institutional governance, and economic development. Müller (2018) reminds us, through his analysis of hybrid pathways to orthodoxy in Brunei, that religious authority in Brunei can adapt through

bureaucratic, scientific, and social mechanisms. In a similar way, MIB-based Islamic higher education may be seen not as a fixed relic of the past, but as a living framework that must continually negotiate continuity, adaptation, and future possibility.

Method

This study employs a qualitative library-based research design to examine how the Malay Islamic Monarchy shapes the future direction of Islamic higher education in Brunei Darussalam. The choice of this design is based on the nature of the research problem, which is conceptual, interpretive, and policy-oriented rather than statistical. Muhammad and Baihaqy (2021) provide an important starting point for understanding MIB as a framework of Islamic education, while Sharbawi and Mabud (2021) help position MIB within the wider formation of Brunei's national identity. In this sense, the study does not seek to measure educational outcomes numerically. It seeks to interpret how MIB operates as an educational philosophy, a moral framework, and an institutional orientation within Brunei's Islamic higher education landscape.

The data were drawn from scholarly works, book chapters, journal articles, and policy-related studies dealing with MIB, Islamic education, Brunei's national education system, language policy, teacher education, curriculum reform, educational technology, and Islamic finance. Asbol, Brahim, and Abu Bakar (2022) are used to trace the historical relationship between education policy and MIB, while Madin et al. (2021a) and Madin et al. (2021b) are useful for understanding curriculum internalization and teacher educators' perceptions of MIB. Studies by Noor Azam and McLellan (2022), Sharbawi (2023), Noorashid and Jamil (2024), and Sharbawi and Jaidin (2026) are also examined to understand the relationship between language, identity, religiosity, and bilingual education. This range of sources allows the study to read Islamic higher education not as an isolated sector, but as part of Brunei's larger cultural, religious, and political formation.

The analytical procedure follows conceptual analysis and thematic synthesis. Conceptual analysis is used to clarify the meaning of MIB as an educational paradigm, especially in relation to Malay identity, Islamic values, monarchy, knowledge integration, and institutional governance. Thematic synthesis is used to identify recurring issues across the literature, including curriculum reform, teacher formation, language tension, digital transformation, economic diversification, and future institutional adaptation. Phan et al. (2021) and Wood, Abdul Latif, and Said (2022) help frame these themes within wider educational reform, while Basir, Haji Sismat, and Ahmad (2024) and Susilawati et al. (2025) support the discussion of digital adaptation. The main limitation of this study is that it does not include interviews, surveys, or institutional fieldwork. Therefore, its findings should be read as an analytical framework that can guide future empirical research.

Results and Discussion

The discussion in this section shows that the Malay Islamic Monarchy is not simply an ideological background to Islamic higher education in Brunei Darussalam. It operates more actively as a framework that shapes educational purpose, curriculum imagination, teacher formation, language policy, digital adaptation, economic orientation, and institutional governance. Muhammad and Baihaqy (2021) place MIB at the center of Islamic education in Brunei, and this is not a small claim. It means that educational reform in Brunei cannot be interpreted only through global higher education standards, employability indicators, or modernization agendas. It must also be read through the moral and national vocabulary of Malay culture, Islam, and monarchy. In that sense, Brunei's Islamic higher education is located in a rather delicate position. It is asked to remain faithful to a historically rooted national philosophy, but also to respond to pressures that come from globalization, bilingualism, digital culture, and changing forms of knowledge production.

MIB as the Ideological Foundation of Islamic Higher Education in Brunei Darussalam

The ideological foundation of Islamic higher education in Brunei Darussalam is inseparable from MIB. Sharbawi and Mabud (2021) explain that Malay, Muslim, and Monarchy are not merely separate identity markers, but interrelated foundations of Brunei's national imagination. This relationship gives Islamic higher education a specific moral task. It is not designed only to produce academically qualified graduates. It is also expected to form citizens who understand themselves as part of a religiously grounded, culturally Malay, and politically monarchical society. Here, higher education becomes more than a neutral institution for knowledge transfer. It becomes a space where identity, loyalty, ethics, and intellectual formation are brought together.

Muhammad and Baihaqy (2021) show that MIB and Islamic education in Brunei are closely connected through the state's effort to preserve religious and national values. This connection is visible in curriculum, institutional culture, and teacher education. Yet the influence of MIB should not be reduced to formal policy statements. It also shapes the deeper assumptions about what education is for. In many secular higher education systems, education is often described in relation to individual autonomy, labor market readiness, research productivity, or innovation. These aims are also relevant in Brunei, of course. However, within the MIB framework, they are placed inside a wider moral order. Knowledge is expected to serve religion, society, national stability, and responsible citizenship.

The Islamic dimension of MIB gives Islamic higher education its ethical and spiritual orientation. Asbol (2022), in discussing Islamic law in Brunei, shows that Islam has become deeply intertwined with the country's legal and political development. This has implications for higher education because Islamic knowledge is not treated as a peripheral subject. It provides the moral basis for understanding governance, public life, and human responsibility. Jammes and Hoon (2022) also show that religious care and moral economy in Brunei are linked to trust, discipline, and public authority, especially during moments of crisis. Their analysis helps us see that Islam in Brunei functions not only as private belief, but also as a public framework for social organization. Islamic higher education, therefore, is expected to sustain this ethical public role.

The Malay component of MIB is equally important. Noor Azam and McLellan (2022) discuss language, society, and shifting identities in contemporary Brunei, and their work reminds us that Malayness is not simply a matter of ethnicity or linguistic preference. It carries cultural memory, social belonging, and symbolic continuity. In Islamic higher education, this means that knowledge formation is also tied to cultural rootedness. Students are not only introduced to universal academic discourses, but also to the historical and cultural location from which they speak. This is a subtle but important point. A graduate may master global theories, English academic language, and modern professional skills, yet still feel detached from the cultural world that gives moral meaning to those skills. MIB attempts to prevent that detachment.

The monarchical dimension gives MIB institutional authority and policy direction. Marsidi (2021) demonstrates that the Sultan's titahs articulate MIB as a transformative vision that responds to changing social conditions. The monarchy is not only a political symbol, but also a source of educational direction and moral legitimacy. Muhammad and Petra (2021) show that the development of Brunei's education system has long been connected to state formation and national policy priorities. In this setting, Islamic higher education is situated within a governance structure where religious values, national development, and monarchical leadership are intertwined. One may debate how this differs from more pluralistic or liberal models of higher education, but within Brunei's own framework, this configuration is seen as a source of coherence.

The challenge, however, is that ideological coherence does not automatically produce educational quality. Asbol, Brahim, and Abu Bakar (2022) show that Brunei's education policies have consistently developed in relation to MIB, but policy alignment alone is not enough. Islamic higher education must demonstrate that MIB can guide critical thinking, research development, pedagogical innovation, and professional competence. It would be too easy, and not very helpful, to treat MIB merely as a doctrine to be repeated. The more serious task is to interpret MIB as a living educational philosophy. In our view, this is where the future of Islamic higher education in Brunei will be tested. Can MIB remain an anchor of identity while also becoming a source of intellectual creativity and institutional renewal?

Curriculum Reform and the Integration of Naqli and Aqli Knowledge

Curriculum reform in Islamic higher education in Brunei cannot be separated from the question of knowledge integration. Madin et al. (2021a) show that the internalization of MIB values in curriculum requires deliberate strategies, while Madin et al. (2021b) indicate that teacher educators' perceptions influence how the MIB curriculum is understood and delivered. Although their studies focus on school-level contexts, the implications are highly relevant for Islamic higher education. Curriculum is never only a list of subjects. It is a statement about what kinds of knowledge are considered valuable, what kinds of persons are being formed, and what kinds of society education is expected to support.

In Islamic educational thought, the integration of naqli and aqli knowledge is central. Naqli knowledge refers to knowledge derived from revelation, transmitted religious sources, and Islamic scholarly traditions. Aqli knowledge refers to knowledge produced through reason, empirical inquiry, analysis, and human intellectual effort. Muhammad and Baihaqy (2021) suggest that Islamic education in Brunei seeks to preserve religious identity while engaging modern educational needs. This aspiration reflects the broader challenge of avoiding an artificial separation between Islamic knowledge and contemporary disciplines. If religious knowledge is treated as sacred but isolated, and modern knowledge is treated as useful but morally neutral, Islamic higher education will reproduce the very dualism it seeks to overcome.

The integration of naqli and aqli knowledge is not a decorative slogan. It requires curriculum design that allows Islamic studies, science, technology, economics, law, governance, and social sciences to speak to one another. Idris, Sirat, and Da Wan (2019), in their discussion of Islamic-based higher education institutions in Malaysia, show that Islamic higher education can contribute to sustainable Islamic communities when it links knowledge with social responsibility. Mazlan et al. (2025) also emphasize that integrated education in Islamic higher education requires institutional commitment and faces practical challenges. These studies are useful for Brunei because they suggest that integration must be planned at the level of program structure, learning outcomes, assessment, faculty development, and institutional ethos.

The SPN21 reforms provide an important context for this discussion. Phan et al. (2021) place Brunei's educational reform within globalization and national development, while Wood, Abdul Latif, and Said (2022) discuss the need to prepare teachers for a changing world. These studies show that Brunei is not rejecting modern educational competencies. Rather, it seeks to adapt them within its own moral and cultural framework. Shahrill et al. (2024), in their overview of basic education in Brunei, also point to reform efforts that attempt to balance foundational learning with contemporary needs. For Islamic higher education, this means that curriculum reform must include critical thinking, research literacy, digital competence, professional readiness, and global awareness without weakening the Islamic and MIB-based orientation of knowledge.

The difficulty lies in implementation. It is one thing to say that Islamic higher education must integrate religious and modern knowledge. It is another thing to design

courses where this integration becomes intellectually serious. For example, Islamic finance should not only teach technical financial instruments and then add Sharia principles as a separate component. It should help students understand how Islamic ethics reshapes assumptions about risk, justice, wealth, debt, social welfare, and economic responsibility. Yusuf, Shah, Ayaz, and Buaben (2018) show that interest-free banking and finance in Brunei has significant prospects, while Besar, Aziz, and Dahlan (2024) emphasize the role of the Islamic community and government in developing Islamic finance. These works suggest that curriculum integration can be tested in concrete fields where Islamic principles and modern expertise meet.

Digital technology offers another example. Lubis (2009) had already discussed educational technology as a teaching aid for integrated Islamic education in Brunei, and more recent works by Ni'mah and Rahmawati (2023) show that educational technology has become increasingly significant in Islamic education. If digital literacy is taught only as technical competence, Islamic higher education may produce students who are skilled but ethically unprepared. If digital technology is rejected as external to tradition, students may be left without the tools needed to participate in contemporary knowledge environments. The curriculum must therefore ask a more difficult question. How can digital competence be shaped by Islamic responsibility and MIB-based moral awareness?

Curriculum reform must also avoid excessive compartmentalization. Puspitasari et al. (2025), although discussing Ma'had Aly in a different national context, show that cultural barriers and institutional challenges can affect the competitiveness of Islamic higher education. This insight is relevant because Islamic institutions often face the risk of protecting tradition in ways that make reform slow or fragmented. Brunei's advantage is that MIB provides a strong shared framework. Yet this advantage can become a limitation if it discourages critical curriculum evaluation. A faithful curriculum is not necessarily a static curriculum. In fact, if faithfulness is understood properly, it should include the courage to ask whether existing programs truly prepare students to serve religion, society, and the future.

For that reason, Brunei's Islamic higher education needs a curriculum model that is rooted but not closed. Such a model should preserve Islamic foundations, strengthen Malay cultural identity, respect monarchical governance, and at the same time engage global knowledge systems. It should train students to read classical Islamic sources, analyze contemporary problems, use digital tools ethically, participate in multilingual academic environments, and contribute to public life. This is not an easy curriculum to build. It may even produce tensions among faculty, policymakers, and students. Yet those tensions are not signs of failure. They are signs that Islamic higher education is working within a complex reality, where tradition and modernity must be held together with care.

Pedagogy, Teacher Education, and the Internalization of MIB Values

Pedagogy is one of the most decisive issues in the future of MIB-based Islamic higher education. Ahad and Baihaqy (2021) emphasize the importance of training MIB among teachers in Brunei's Religious Teachers University College, and their discussion points to a broader educational truth. Values are not internalized simply because they appear in curriculum documents. They become meaningful when teachers embody them, interpret them, and translate them into learning experiences that students can understand. This is why teacher education has a strategic place in Brunei. Teachers are not merely classroom professionals. They are moral mediators between national philosophy, Islamic values, and the lived experience of students.

Madin et al. (2021a) describe internalization strategies of MIB philosophy in curriculum, while Madin et al. (2021b) show that teacher educators' perceptions affect the delivery of MIB-related learning. These findings suggest that the success of MIB education

depends heavily on teacher understanding and commitment. A teacher who treats MIB as a formal requirement may deliver it mechanically. A teacher who understands MIB as a living moral framework may connect it with ethical decision-making, citizenship, social responsibility, and contemporary challenges. The difference between these two approaches is not trivial. It may determine whether students experience MIB as an imposed doctrine or as a meaningful framework for life.

Teacher identity is also shaped by institutional culture. Ma'mun et al. (2025), through Bourdieu's lens, show that teacher identity and agency are influenced by institutional fields, values, and professional habitus. Although their study concerns Indonesian Islamic education, the theoretical insight is useful for Brunei. Teachers are formed by the institutions in which they study, the values they repeatedly encounter, and the professional expectations that surround them. In Brunei's Islamic higher education, the formation of teacher identity must therefore include more than mastery of subject matter. It must include moral reflexivity, cultural confidence, pedagogical creativity, and the ability to mediate between inherited values and contemporary realities.

The problem is that value-based pedagogy can easily become overly didactic. If MIB is taught mainly through lectures, memorization, or formal explanation, students may understand its components but fail to see its relevance. Wood, Abdul Latif, and Said (2022) argue that teacher preparation in Brunei must respond to a changing world, and this implies a need for more active and reflective pedagogies. Reflective learning encourages students to ask how MIB relates to digital behavior, environmental responsibility, social media ethics, professional integrity, economic justice, and intergenerational responsibility. Dialogical pedagogy allows students to discuss tensions without abandoning respect for religious and national foundations. Contextual pedagogy connects values with real situations. These approaches may be more demanding, but they are also more likely to produce internalization.

Basir, Haji Sismat, and Ahmad (2024) show that Islamic university adaptation during the new normal required flexibility in teaching and learning. Their findings remind us that pedagogy is not fixed. It changes when learning environments change. The pandemic period, digital platforms, hybrid learning, and online assessment all challenged traditional assumptions about religious and higher education. In MIB-based Islamic higher education, these changes raise a serious pedagogical question. How can teachers preserve moral seriousness when learning increasingly occurs through screens, platforms, and fragmented attention? This question may sound practical, but it is also philosophical. It concerns the conditions under which moral formation can occur in a digital age.

Teacher preparedness remains a key concern. Noorashid and Jamil (2024) show that learners of English for Islamic Education may experience foreign language anxiety, while Noorashid and Alkaff (2026) examine attitudes toward English among religious trainee teachers. These studies suggest that future teachers may face layered challenges. They must understand Islamic content, embody MIB values, teach in multilingual contexts, and use digital tools effectively. It is unsurprising if some feel uncertain. The solution is not to demand competence abstractly, but to design teacher education programs that provide sustained support. Faculty development, mentoring, reflective practicum, bilingual pedagogy training, and digital teaching competence should become part of an integrated teacher formation model.

MIB internalization also requires institutional consistency. Ahad and Baihaqy (2021) suggest that religious teacher education institutions play a central role in transmitting MIB, but institutional culture must support what the curriculum teaches. If students hear about Islamic ethics in class but encounter weak academic integrity, poor mentoring, or bureaucratic indifference in institutional life, value internalization becomes difficult. This is a simple point, but it is often neglected. Students learn not only from what lecturers say. They learn from how institutions treat time, responsibility, dialogue, fairness, excellence,

and care. MIB-based higher education must therefore cultivate an institutional environment where values are not only explained but also practiced.

Teacher education is strategic because teachers carry MIB beyond higher education institutions. They enter schools, religious learning spaces, families, and communities. Muhammad and Petra (2021) show that Brunei's education system has developed through a long process of institutional formation, and teachers have always been central to this process. If future teachers are trained only to repeat content, MIB may survive formally but weaken substantively. If they are trained to think, teach, guide, and model values reflectively, MIB may remain meaningful for younger generations. In our view, the future of Islamic higher education in Brunei depends significantly on this pedagogical transformation. The classroom is not the whole nation, of course, but it is one of the places where the nation learns to imagine itself.

Language Policy, Bilingual Education, and the Negotiation of Islamic-Malay Identity

Language policy is one of the most sensitive and revealing issues in Brunei's Islamic higher education. Noor Azam and McLellan (2022) show that language, society, and identity in Brunei are undergoing shifts, while Sharbawi (2023) demonstrates that language choice can be related to religiosity and identity formation. These studies make it clear that language is not merely an instructional tool. It carries symbolic, cultural, and religious significance. Malay is closely associated with national identity, cultural continuity, and the transmission of MIB. English, meanwhile, has become increasingly important for science, technology, higher education, employment, and international academic communication. The tension is not imaginary. It is lived in classrooms, homes, policy debates, and student aspirations.

Asbol, Brahim, and Abu Bakar (2022) show that Brunei's education policies have long been connected to MIB, and language has been part of that connection. Malay affirms the cultural and national component of MIB. It anchors students in the historical memory and symbolic world of Brunei. If Malay weakens too much in higher education, especially in Islamic and MIB-related fields, there is a risk that students may become academically competent but culturally detached. Yet it would be simplistic to present English only as a threat. English provides access to global scholarship, international networks, scientific literature, and professional opportunity. The real challenge is not choosing one language against the other. It is building a bilingual educational model that does not sacrifice identity for competitiveness or competitiveness for identity.

Sharbawi and Jaidin (2026) show through parental perspectives that Bahasa Melayu continues to hold strong ideological value in Brunei's bilingual education policy, even as English remains highly valued for future success. This finding reflects a broader social negotiation. Parents, students, teachers, and policymakers may support Malay as a language of belonging while also seeing English as necessary for mobility. Islamic higher education must take this negotiation seriously. If English becomes dominant in ways that marginalize Malay, MIB transmission may become weaker. If Malay is defended in ways that limit students' global academic participation, graduates may struggle in wider knowledge economies. Neither outcome is ideal.

The issue becomes more complex in religious teacher education and Islamic studies. Noorashid and Jamil (2024) identify foreign language anxiety among English for Islamic Education learners in Brunei. This shows that English-medium Islamic learning can create emotional and cognitive barriers, not only linguistic ones. Students may understand religious concepts better in Malay or Arabic, yet they may need English to participate in global academic discourse. Noorashid and Alkaff (2026) examine whether English for Islamic education represents a clash of cultures or a compatible reality, and their work invites a more nuanced position. English does not automatically undermine Islamic education. But without

careful pedagogy, it may create distance between religious meaning and linguistic expression.

Mumin (2023) shows that code-switching and code-mixing are already used in Brunei religious schools, especially among Generation X and millennial teachers. This suggests that bilingual pedagogy is not merely a policy aspiration. It is already happening in practice, sometimes informally and creatively. In Islamic higher education, this practice can be developed more systematically. Code-switching can help clarify concepts, reduce anxiety, and connect global terminology with local meaning. However, it should not become random linguistic movement. It needs pedagogical intention. Lecturers should know when English supports academic precision, when Malay preserves cultural resonance, and when Arabic terms are necessary for theological accuracy. This is where bilingual pedagogy becomes an intellectual skill, not just a classroom habit.

Language also affects authority. In Islamic education, terms such as tawhid, adab, amanah, sharia, maqasid, and ummah carry conceptual depth that may not be fully captured by English equivalents. Translating them is possible, but translation always involves interpretation. At the same time, global academic discourse often requires English-language articulation. The task for Islamic higher education is therefore to train students to move responsibly between languages without flattening meaning. Sharbawi (2023) suggests that language and religiosity are linked in ways that deserve careful attention. If language choice shapes identity, then bilingual education is not merely a technical arrangement. It is part of moral and cultural formation.

The future of Islamic higher education in Brunei depends on a thoughtful bilingual policy. Such a policy should strengthen Malay as the language of national identity and MIB transmission, maintain Arabic as a key language of Islamic sources, and develop English as a language of global academic participation. This threefold orientation may be difficult, but it reflects the actual complexity of Brunei's educational reality. Students need cultural rootedness, religious literacy, and global competence. A mature MIB-based higher education system should not fear multilingualism. It should guide it. The danger is not English itself, but unreflective linguistic hierarchy. The opportunity is not Malay alone, but a balanced language ecology where identity and global engagement support rather than cancel each other.

Digital Transformation, Social Media, and the Recontextualization of MIB

Digital transformation has changed the environment in which Islamic higher education operates. Basir, Haji Sismat, and Ahmad (2024) show that Islamic universities have had to adapt to new learning conditions, while Susilawati et al. (2025) discuss educational technology-based strategies for internationalizing Islamic higher education in Indonesia and Brunei. These studies indicate that digitalization is no longer an optional supplement. It has become part of the educational landscape. For Brunei, the question is not whether Islamic higher education should use technology. It already must. The more important question is how digital tools can be used without weakening the moral, religious, and cultural orientation of MIB.

Digital platforms create new spaces of religious learning and identity formation. Ahad (2021) shows that local influencers affect public understanding of the state philosophy beyond the classroom. This finding is especially important because it shows that MIB is no longer mediated only by formal institutions, textbooks, teachers, or official discourse. Young people encounter interpretations of religion, culture, nationalism, and ethics through social media, short videos, online personalities, and algorithmic recommendation systems. Some of these influences may support MIB values. Others may simplify, distort, or commercialize them. Islamic higher education cannot ignore this shift. If it does, it may continue teaching values in formal spaces while students form their imaginations elsewhere.

Marsidi (2021) shows that the Sultan's titahs articulate MIB as a transformative vision that responds to social change. This means that MIB itself has an adaptive dimension. It is not merely a nostalgic return to the past. Digital culture, however, requires a different kind of adaptation because it changes the speed, form, and authority of communication. In a lecture hall, knowledge often moves through structured explanation. On social media, knowledge appears as fragments, images, captions, emotional appeals, and viral claims. This does not mean that digital media are inherently shallow. But they do require new forms of literacy. Students need to know how to evaluate religious content, verify sources, recognize manipulation, and engage ethically in online spaces.

Ni'mah and Rahmawati (2023) show that educational technology in Islamic education has become an important research field, and Lubis (2009) had already argued that technology could support integrated Islamic education in Brunei. These works remind us that technology can serve Islamic educational aims when used thoughtfully. E-learning modules, digital storytelling, online archives, interactive Qur'anic studies, virtual seminars, and digital research platforms can expand access and deepen learning. In MIB-based higher education, digital storytelling may be especially useful because it can connect national history, Islamic ethics, Malay culture, and contemporary student experience. It can make MIB more intelligible to younger generations without reducing it to slogans.

Yet digital transformation also brings risks. Müller (2018), in discussing hybrid pathways to orthodoxy in Brunei, shows that religious authority can be shaped through bureaucratic, scientific, and social processes. In digital spaces, authority becomes even more complex. A student may listen to a lecturer, follow a religious influencer, watch international Islamic content, read anonymous opinions, and participate in online debates in the same day. This plurality can enrich understanding, but it can also fragment authority. Islamic higher education must therefore help students develop criteria for religious trustworthiness. This includes knowledge of Islamic sources, awareness of scholarly tradition, ethical reasoning, and critical digital literacy.

Digital transformation also affects pedagogy. Online learning can increase flexibility, but it may reduce embodied interaction. It can widen access, but it can also produce passivity if poorly designed. Basir, Haji Sismat, and Ahmad (2024) suggest that adaptation to new learning conditions requires institutional readiness and pedagogical adjustment. In Islamic higher education, this adjustment must include questions of adab, attention, sincerity, academic integrity, and teacher-student relationship. These terms may sound traditional, but they are quite relevant in digital spaces. What does adab mean in online discussion? How should students engage religious disagreement on social media? How can lecturers cultivate seriousness when students learn through devices associated with distraction? These are practical questions, but also deeply moral ones.

The recontextualization of MIB in digital culture requires creativity and caution. If MIB is presented online only through rigid institutional messages, it may fail to engage students. If it is adapted too casually, it may lose depth. A balanced approach is needed. Islamic higher education institutions can develop digital content that is academically credible, visually engaging, ethically responsible, and rooted in MIB values. Susilawati et al. (2025) indicate that educational technology can support internationalization, and this opens another possibility. Brunei's Islamic higher education can use digital platforms not only to teach local students, but also to share its distinctive MIB-based educational model with wider Muslim and global audiences. This would turn digitalization into a form of intellectual diplomacy.

Islamic Finance, Human Capital, and Economic Diversification

Islamic higher education in Brunei should not be understood only as a guardian of religious and cultural continuity. It also has a role in national development, especially in

relation to human capital and economic diversification. Besar, Aziz, and Dahlan (2024) show that the Islamic community and government play important roles in developing Islamic finance in Brunei Darussalam, while Yusuf, Shah, Ayaz, and Buaben (2018) discuss the realities and future prospects of interest-free banking and finance. These studies suggest that Islamic finance is one area where MIB-based education can demonstrate practical relevance. It connects Sharia principles, economic governance, professional competence, and public trust.

Islamic finance requires more than technical knowledge. It requires moral reasoning. Students must understand contracts, risk-sharing, banking instruments, regulatory frameworks, and financial technology, but they must also understand justice, responsibility, trust, and the ethical purposes of wealth. Jabeen and Ringim (2017), in discussing human capital development, help frame this issue as a matter of capacity building. Human capital in an Islamic context should not be reduced to productivity alone. It should include ethical competence, social responsibility, and the ability to align professional work with moral values. This is where MIB can provide a distinctive educational orientation. It can help ensure that economic diversification does not become morally detached from Islamic principles and national identity.

Brunei's reliance on hydrocarbon resources makes economic diversification a continuing policy concern. Islamic finance, halal industries, Islamic tourism, digital economy initiatives, and knowledge-based sectors may all require graduates who are technically skilled and ethically grounded. Islamic higher education can contribute by designing interdisciplinary programs that combine Sharia, finance, economics, management, law, data literacy, and governance. This kind of curriculum would reflect the integration of naqli and aqli knowledge in a concrete professional field. It would also show that Islamic higher education is not limited to preparing religious teachers or scholars, although those roles remain important. It can also prepare professionals who carry Islamic ethics into economic institutions.

The challenge is institutional capacity. Islamic finance education must avoid two weaknesses. The first is excessive formalism, where students learn Sharia compliance as a checklist without understanding the ethical substance behind it. The second is excessive technicalism, where Islamic finance becomes nearly indistinguishable from conventional finance except in terminology. Besar, Aziz, and Dahlan (2024) suggest that government and community support are important for Islamic finance development, but higher education must ensure that this support is matched by strong academic programs. This requires qualified faculty, applied research, industry partnerships, case-based learning, and opportunities for students to engage real financial problems.

MIB provides a useful framework for this field because it links Islam, governance, and social responsibility. Asbol (2022) shows that Islamic law in Brunei is historically related to the MIB concept, and this relationship can support a finance education model grounded in legal and ethical seriousness. However, the future of Islamic finance education should not rely only on state support or symbolic Islamic identity. It must produce graduates who can compete professionally, reason ethically, and innovate responsibly. In that sense, Islamic higher education can help Brunei develop an economy that is not only diversified, but also morally coherent. That may sound ambitious, but it is precisely the kind of ambition that MIB-based higher education should be able to carry.

Institutional Governance and the Future Direction of Islamic Higher Education

Institutional governance is another important dimension of MIB-based Islamic higher education. Muhammad and Baihaqy (2021) show that MIB shapes Islamic education in Brunei, while Ahad and Baihaqy (2021) illustrate how teacher education institutions play a role in transmitting MIB values. These studies suggest that MIB is not only a curriculum

theme. It is also an institutional ethos. It influences how institutions define their mission, organize academic programs, cultivate staff identity, and understand their responsibility to society. Islamic higher education institutions in Brunei are therefore expected to align academic quality with religious and national commitments.

Governance within the MIB framework involves coordination between educational and religious authorities. Muhammad and Petra (2021) show that Brunei's education system has developed through state-led reform, while Asbol, Brahim, and Abu Bakar (2022) demonstrate that education policy has remained connected to MIB across historical periods. This gives Brunei a relatively coherent policy environment. Yet coherence can bring both strength and risk. Its strength lies in shared direction. Its risk lies in possible complacency. When institutional values are strongly affirmed, there may be less pressure to evaluate whether those values are actually internalized by students, faculty, and graduates. A claim of alignment is not the same as evidence of impact.

Quality assurance is therefore essential. MIB-based Islamic higher education should develop evaluative mechanisms that examine not only academic performance, but also moral formation, graduate contribution, research culture, community engagement, and institutional integrity. This does not mean reducing values to simplistic indicators. Some dimensions of moral formation are difficult to measure, and we should admit that. Still, difficulty does not justify neglect. Institutions can use graduate tracer studies, curriculum review, student reflection, community feedback, faculty evaluation, and research impact assessment to understand how MIB values are being translated into educational outcomes. The aim is not bureaucratic measurement for its own sake. The aim is responsible self-examination.

Faculty development is central to this process. Madin et al. (2021b) show that teacher educators' perceptions affect MIB curriculum implementation, and this insight applies broadly to higher education lecturers. Faculty members are not neutral deliverers of institutional missions. They interpret, embody, and sometimes reshape them. If lecturers understand MIB narrowly, students may receive a narrow education. If lecturers understand MIB as a dynamic framework for intellectual, moral, and social formation, Islamic higher education becomes more alive. Faculty development should therefore include Islamic epistemology, pedagogical innovation, bilingual competence, digital literacy, research ethics, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Institutional governance must also support research. Gin and King (2022), through their broader account of contemporary Brunei, show that Brunei's social and political development is multidimensional. Islamic higher education can contribute to this development by producing research on Islamic education, public ethics, language policy, digital religion, Islamic finance, family studies, governance, sustainability, and social change. However, research culture cannot grow only through formal encouragement. It requires funding, mentoring, publication support, academic networks, and an environment where critical inquiry is welcomed within the boundaries of religious and national responsibility. This balance is not always easy. Yet without research, Islamic higher education risks becoming primarily instructional rather than intellectual.

Future institutional innovation should not weaken religious identity. This concern is understandable. Many Muslim societies worry that modernization may gradually secularize educational institutions. But innovation and secularization are not identical. An Islamic university can modernize its governance, improve digital infrastructure, strengthen research, internationalize academic collaboration, and revise curriculum while remaining deeply Islamic. Susilawati et al. (2025) suggest that technology-based strategies can support internationalization in Islamic higher education, including in Brunei. The key is intentionality. Innovation must be guided by MIB values, not simply borrowed from global higher education models without adaptation.

The future direction of Islamic higher education in Brunei should therefore combine continuity and evaluation. Institutions should continue to affirm MIB as their philosophical foundation, but they should also ask whether their programs produce graduates who are intellectually capable, ethically grounded, culturally confident, and socially useful. This question may be uncomfortable at times. It may reveal gaps between aspiration and practice. But such gaps are precisely where reform becomes meaningful. MIB-based governance should not fear evaluation. If MIB is truly a living educational philosophy, then evaluation is one way of honoring it.

Toward an Adaptive MIB-Based Model of Islamic Higher Education

The preceding discussion suggests that Brunei needs an adaptive MIB-based model of Islamic higher education. This model should not treat MIB as a static doctrine preserved only through repetition. It should understand MIB as a living framework that can guide continuity, integration, reform, and future engagement. Marsidi (2021) shows that MIB has been articulated through royal discourse as a transformative vision, while Muhammad and Baihaqy (2021) show its deep connection with Islamic education. Taken together, these studies support the idea that MIB can function both as an anchor and as a compass. It anchors Brunei in Malay-Islamic-monarchical identity, and it offers direction for navigating change.

The first dimension of the model is ideological continuity. Islamic higher education in Brunei must continue to affirm Islam, Malay culture, and monarchy as foundational elements of national identity. Sharbawi and Mabud (2021) make clear that these elements are constitutive of Bruneian identity, not optional additions. However, ideological continuity should not mean intellectual closure. Students need to understand MIB historically, theologically, culturally, and politically. They should be able to explain why it matters, how it shapes society, and how it can respond to contemporary issues. A philosophy that students only memorize may survive formally. A philosophy that students understand critically and respectfully may remain alive.

The second dimension is epistemological integration. Islamic higher education should integrate naqli and aqli knowledge across curriculum, research, and professional formation. Idris, Sirat, and Da Wan (2019) and Mazlan et al. (2025) both show that integrated Islamic higher education requires more than aspiration. It requires institutional design. For Brunei, this means developing programs where Islamic knowledge interacts with economics, technology, governance, education, environmental studies, health, communication, and social sciences. The aim is not to Islamize knowledge superficially, but to cultivate students who can think from within an Islamic moral universe while engaging contemporary knowledge rigorously.

The third dimension is pedagogical transformation. Ahad and Baihaqy (2021) and Madin et al. (2021a) show that MIB internalization depends on teacher training and educational strategy. The adaptive model therefore requires reflective, dialogical, and contextual pedagogy. Students should not be passive recipients of values. They should be guided to examine how MIB relates to real problems, such as digital ethics, consumer culture, environmental responsibility, social trust, employment, public service, and intergenerational change. This kind of pedagogy may sometimes produce difficult questions. That is not necessarily dangerous. Properly guided, questions can deepen commitment rather than weaken it.

The fourth dimension is bilingual and intercultural competence. Sharbawi (2023), Sharbawi and Jaidin (2026), Noorashid and Jamil (2024), and Mumin (2023) collectively show that language is a central site of identity negotiation in Brunei. An adaptive model should strengthen Malay as a language of MIB identity, Arabic as a language of Islamic sources, and English as a language of global academic participation. This model would not ask students to abandon one linguistic world for another. It would train them to move across

linguistic worlds with clarity, confidence, and ethical responsibility. In an increasingly connected world, this may become one of Brunei's distinctive educational strengths.

The fifth dimension is digital and global engagement. Ahad (2021), Basir, Haji Sismat, and Ahmad (2024), Ni'mah and Rahmawati (2023), and Susilawati et al. (2025) show that digital culture and educational technology are reshaping Islamic learning. Brunei's Islamic higher education should therefore develop digital pedagogies, online resources, international collaborations, and research networks that express MIB values in contemporary forms. Digital engagement should not be merely technical. It should be ethical, theological, and pedagogical. It should help students become responsible digital Muslims and globally aware Bruneian citizens.

This adaptive model also allows Islamic higher education to contribute to economic and social transformation. Yusuf, Shah, Ayaz, and Buaben (2018), Besar, Aziz, and Dahlan (2024), and Jabeen and Ringim (2017) suggest that Islamic finance and human capital development are important areas for Brunei's future. Through MIB, Islamic higher education can prepare graduates who do not separate professional success from moral responsibility. This may be one of its most important contributions. In many parts of the world, higher education is under pressure to produce employable graduates. Brunei can respond to this pressure while still asking a deeper question about what kind of human beings and what kind of society such graduates will serve.

Brunei's Islamic higher education does not need to choose between tradition and modernity as if they were absolute opposites. Phan et al. (2021) show that globalization and reform in Brunei must be contextualized, and this is exactly the point. The future of Islamic higher education in Brunei lies in contextual adaptation. MIB can provide the moral and cultural ground for that adaptation, but it must be interpreted with intellectual seriousness, pedagogical creativity, and institutional honesty. It should preserve identity without becoming defensive, embrace modern knowledge without becoming rootless, and engage the world without losing its ethical center. That balance may never be perfect. Perhaps it does not need to be. What matters is that Brunei's Islamic higher education continues to negotiate it consciously, responsibly, and with a clear sense of its own civilizational purpose.

Conclusion

This article has argued that the future of Islamic higher education in Brunei Darussalam cannot be separated from the Malay Islamic Monarchy as the country's moral, cultural, religious, and political foundation. MIB is not merely a state ideology that stands outside educational life. It shapes the way Islamic higher education defines knowledge, citizenship, institutional responsibility, and human formation. Muhammad and Baihaqy (2021) help show that MIB is deeply embedded in Brunei's Islamic education, while Sharbawi and Mabud (2021) remind us that Malay identity, Islam, and monarchy form an integrated basis of Bruneian nationhood. Within this framework, Islamic higher education is expected to produce graduates who are not only academically capable, but also spiritually grounded, culturally rooted, ethically responsible, and committed to the national moral order.

At the same time, this article has shown that MIB-based Islamic higher education faces complex pressures. Curriculum reform requires a more serious integration of naqli and aqli knowledge. Teacher education must move beyond formal transmission toward reflective internalization of values. Language policy must protect Malay as a language of identity while strengthening English for global academic participation. Digital transformation also requires Islamic higher education to respond creatively to online learning, social media, and changing patterns of religious authority. Asbol, Brahim, and Abu Bakar (2022) show that Brunei's education policies have long been connected to MIB, yet the future challenge is not only policy alignment. It is whether institutions can translate MIB into meaningful educational practices.

The main contribution of this article lies in proposing an adaptive MIB-based model of Islamic higher education. Such a model does not force Brunei to choose between tradition and modernity. Instead, it invites a more careful negotiation between ideological continuity, epistemological integration, pedagogical renewal, bilingual competence, digital engagement, and institutional accountability. Future research may develop empirical studies involving Islamic higher education institutions, lecturers, students, policymakers, curriculum documents, and comparative Muslim-majority contexts. This is necessary because the vitality of MIB will ultimately be seen not only in official discourse, but in the lived quality of education itself.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to their colleagues for their helpful discussions, shared insights, and constructive comments, all of which contributed to the improvement of this manuscript.

Conflict of Interests

The authors affirm that no conflicts of interest have been disclosed. We also certify that the submitted manuscript is original and is not simultaneously being reviewed or considered for publication elsewhere.

Ethical Considerations

The materials consulted in this research, comprising articles, books, research papers, and scientific conference proceedings, were accessed and used in compliance with applicable copyright provisions and do not involve any copyright violations.

Disclaimer

Any views, interpretations, and assumptions expressed in this article are the sole responsibility of the authors and should not be understood as reflecting the official policy or position of their affiliated institutions or agencies.

REFERENCES

Ahad, N. M. (2021). MIB Beyond The Classroom: Local Influencers and Their Impact on The Public Understanding of The State Philosophy. in *International and Development Education* (pp. 305–321). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77119-5_15

Ahad, N. M., & Baihaqy, M. H. (2021). Training MIB Among Teachers in Brunei's Religious Teachers University College. in *International and Development Education* (pp. 219–233). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77119-5_11

Asbol, H. A. (2022). Islamic Law in Brunei Darussalam (1425–2014): A Historical Perspective and Its Relationship With The Malay Islamic Monarchy Concept. in *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Brunei* (pp. 155–169). https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003020431-12

Asbol, H. A., Brahim, A. H., & Abu Bakar, H. T. H. (2022). Education Policies in Brunei Darussalam (1954–2020): Developments and Their Relationship With The Concept of Malay Islamic Monarchy. in *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Brunei* (pp. 248–261). https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003020431-19

Basir, K. H., Haji Sismat, M. A., & Ahmad, S. S. (2024). Adapting and Implementing The New Normal: An Islamic University Perspective. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*, *16*(5), 1405–1419. https://doi.org/10.1108/JARHE-02-2023-0068

Besar, M. H. A. H., Aziz, J. A., & Dahlan, A. (2024). The Role of The Islamic Community and Government in The Development of Islamic Finance in Brunei Darussalam. *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences*, *22*(2), 100707–100721. https://doi.org/10.57239/PJLSS-2024-22.2.00809

Gin, O. K., & King, V. T. (2022). *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Brunei*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003020431

Idris, N. R. A. B., Sirat, M., & Da Wan, C. (2019). Toward Sustainable Islamic Communities in Malaysia: The Role of Islamic-Based Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs). in *Education in The Asia-Pacific Region* (Vol. 49, pp. 27–40). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-6532-4_3

Jabeen, R., & Ringim, K. J. (2017). Concept and Practices of Human Capital Development in Pakistan: A Conceptual Approach. *International Journal of Economic Research*, *14*(14 Part II), 275–288. https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85041372032&partnerID=40&md5=3efe09989d1777928b2edf561e270fc6

Jammes, J., & Hoon, C.-Y. (2022). Religious Care and Moral Economy Amidst COVID-19: Mimetic Consumption, Divine Vaccine and Disciplinary Trust in Brunei Darussalam. *Social Sciences and Missions*, *35*(3–4), 343–372. https://doi.org/10.1163/18748945-bja10062

Lubis, M. A. (2009). Educational Technology As A Teaching Aid on Teaching and Learning of Integrated Islamic Education in Brunei Darussalam. *WSEAS Transactions on Information Science and Applications*, *6*(8), 1370–1379. https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-70349612490&partnerID=40&md5=81edab01b6e623c8b57dbb2e695dc1cf

Ma'mun, N., Hartono, R., Mujiyanto, J., & Pratama, H. (2025). Teacher Identity and Agency Development of An Indonesian Islamic Junior High School: Bourdieu's Lens. *Munaddhomah*, *6*(3), 541–554. https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v6i3.1851

Madin, A. B., Makmun, R., Tarasat, S., Jaidi, N., Rahman, S. K. A., & Noorashid, N. (2021a). Internalisation Strategies of The Malay Islamic Monarchy Philosophy in Year 7 Curriculum in Brunei Darussalam. in *International and Development Education* (pp. 235–260). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77119-5_12

Madin, A. B., Makmun, R., Tarasat, S., Jaidi, N., Rahman, S. K. A., & Noorashid, N. (2021b). Malay Language and MIB Teacher Educators' Perceptions of The Year 7 MIB Curriculum. in *International and Development Education* (pp. 261–283). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77119-5_13

Marsidi, M. (2021). Melayu Islam Beraja in The Titahs of His Majesty The Sultan of Brunei (2011–2020): The Leader's Transformative Vision and Aspirations. in *International and Development Education* (pp. 67–83). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77119-5_4

Mazlan, M., Wakil, N. A. A., Noh, M. A. C., & Riyaldi, M. H. (2025). Integrated Education Approach in Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia: Challenges and Opportunities. *Global Journal Al-Thaqafah*, 115–128. https://doi.org/10.7187/GJATSI102025-8

Muhammad, N., & Baihaqy, M. H. (2021). MIB and Islamic Education in Brunei Darussalam: An Overview. in *International and Development Education* (pp. 85–103). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77119-5_5

Muhammad, N., & Petra, M. I. (2021). History and Development of The Brunei Education System. in *International and Development Education* (pp. 21–44). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77119-5_2

Müller, D. M. (2018). Hybrid Pathways To Orthodoxy in Brunei Darussalam: Bureaucratised Exorcism, Scientisation and The Mainstreaming of Deviant-Declared Practices. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *37*(1), 141–183. https://doi.org/10.1177/186810341803700106

Mumin, M. A. (2023). The Application of Code-Switching, Code-Mixing, and The Need For Bilingual Pedagogy in Brunei Religious (Ugama) Schools: A Qualitative Study Involving Generation X and Millennial Teachers. *World Journal of English Language*, *13*(8), 523–531. https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v13n8p523

Ni'mah, Z., & Rahmawati, H. (2023). Educational Technology in Islamic Education: A Systematic Literature Review. *ACM International Conference Proceeding Series*, 148–155. https://doi.org/10.1145/3637907.3637967

Noor Azam, H.-O., & McLellan, J. (2022). Language, Society and Change: Shifting Identities? in *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Brunei* (pp. 233–247). https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003020431-18

Noorashid, N., & Alkaff, S. N. H. (2026). Clash of Cultures Or Compatible Reality? Attitudes Towards English For Islamic Education Among Religious Trainee Teachers in Brunei. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education*. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2026.2625273

Noorashid, N., & Jamil, H. (2024). An Exploratory Investigation on Foreign Language Anxiety Among English For Islamic Education Learners in Brunei Darussalam. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, *21*(2), 211–234. https://doi.org/10.56040/nnhj2123

Phan, L. H., Kumpoh, A., Wood, K., Jawawi, R., & Said, H. (2021). Contextualising Globalisation, Education and Reform in Brunei Darussalam. in *International and Development Education* (pp. 1–18). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77119-5_1

Puspitasari, I. N. N., Zuhri, H. H., Yani, A., Jasmine, A. N., & Kurniasari, A. (2025). Cultural Barriers and Challenges of Ma'had Aly: The Path Towards A Competitive Islamic Higher Education Institution. *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, *8*(2), 464–479. https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v8i2.216

Shahrill, M., Ali, A. O., Abdullah, N. A., & Ebil, S. (2024). An Explorative Overview of Basic Education in Brunei Darussalam. *AIP Conference Proceedings*, *3052*(1). https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0201220

Sharbawi, S. (2023). Investigating Language and Religiosity in Brunei. *Contemporary Islam*, *17*(1), 157–185. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-023-00519-8

Sharbawi, S., & Jaidin, J. H. (2026). Parental Perspectives on The Role of Bahasa Melayu in Brunei's Bilingual Education Policy: A National Survey on Language Ideologies, Preferences and Management. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *29*(1), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2025.2586214

Sharbawi, S., & Mabud, S. A. (2021). Malay, Muslim and Monarchy: An Introduction To Brunei Darussalam and Its National Identity. in *International and Development Education* (pp. 45–66). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77119-5_3

Susilawati, S., Supriyatno, T., Yasin, A. F., Chakim, A., Hani'ah, Z., Putri, C. A., & Sabri, A. (2025). Educational Technology-Based Strategies For The Internationalization of

Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam. *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, *8*(2), 414–431. https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v8i2.63

Wood, K., Abdul Latif, S. N., & Said, H. (2022). Preparing Teachers For A Changing World: Developments and Challenges in Brunei Darussalam. in *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education: Innovations and Practices in Asia* (pp. 771–785). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-9785-2_39

Yusuf, J. B., Shah, H. S., Ayaz, M., & Buaben, J. M. (2018). Interest-Free Banking and Finance in Brunei Darussalam: Present Realities and Future Prospects. *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, *8*(2), 34–62. https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.82.03