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How Syrian Jihadis Embraced Politics.

Oxford University Press. pp. 261.

ISBN 9780197765159.

Reviewer: *Mohamed Fouz Mohamed Zacky*

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Zouhir Gabsi (2024). *Muslim Perspectives on Islamophobia: From Misconceptions to Reason*. Palgrave Macmillan.
Reviewer: *Arief Arman*

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Transliteration Table: Consonants

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ب	b		ط	ṭ
ت	t		ظ	ẓ
ث	th		ع	‘
ج	j		غ	gh
ح	ḥ		ف	f
خ	kh		ق	q
د	d		ك	k
ذ	dh		ل	l
ر	r		م	m
ز	z		ن	n
س	s		ه	h
ش	sh		و	w
ص	ṣ		ء	’
ض	ḍ		ي	y

Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
اَ، اِ، اُ	a		آ، عَ، يَ	an
وُ	u		وْ	un
يَ	i		يْ	in
آ، اَ، اِ، عَ، يَ	ā		وْ	aw
وُ	ū		يْ	ay
يْ	ī		وْ	uww, ū (in final position)
			يْ	iyy, ī (in final position)

Source: ROTAS Transliteration Kit: <http://rotas.iium.edu.my>

The Role of Local Wisdom in Shaping Internationalisation Strategies of Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia

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Isriani Hardini**

Muhammad Jaeni***

Eros Meilina Sofa****

Thi Thu Huong Ho*****

Abstract: Local wisdom plays a pivotal role in the internationalisation strategies of Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) in Indonesia, offering a unique approach to integrating global standards while preserving cultural and religious identity. This article explores how Indonesian IHEIs leverage local values, traditions, and practices to design and implement effective internationalisation frameworks. Using a qualitative research approach, this study analyses case studies, interviews, and document analysis from selected IHEIs. The findings reveal that local wisdom fosters inclusivity, adaptability, and distinctive identity, contributing to Indonesia's sustainable internationalisation of Islamic

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higher education. It concludes that the strategic incorporation of local wisdom strengthens the institutional identities of IHEIs and contributes to a more diverse and inclusive global academic community.

Keywords: Local Wisdom, Internationalisation, Islamic Higher Education Institutions, Cultural Identity

Abstrak: Kearifan lokal memainkan peranan penting dalam strategi pengantarabangsaan Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam (PTKI) di Indonesia, menawarkan pendekatan unik untuk mengintegrasikan piawaian global sambil mempertahankan identiti budaya dan agama. Makalah ini meneroka bagaimana PTKI di Indonesia memanfaatkan nilai-nilai, tradisi, dan praktis lokal untuk merancang dan mengimplementasikan kerangka kerja pengantarabangsaan yang efektif. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan penelitian kualitatif, makalah ini menganalisis kajian kes, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen dari PTKI terpilih. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa kearifan lokal mendorong inklusiviti, adaptabiliti, dan identiti yang khas, menyumbang kepada pengantarabangsaan pendidikan tinggi Islam yang berkelanjutan di Indonesia. Kesimpulannya, penggabungan strategi kearifan lokal memperkuat identiti institusional PTKI dan menyumbang kepada komuniti akademik global yang lebih beragam dan inklusif.

Kata Kunci: Kearifan Lokal, Pengantarabangsaan, Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam, Identitas Budaya

Introduction

The phenomenon of internationalisation is characterised by the integration of global academic standards (Knight, 2004). However, this global tendency often encounters challenges. For Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) in Indonesia, internationalisation requires balancing the adherence to global academic standards with the preservation of their cultural and religious heritage (Abdullah, 2017). Indonesia consists of various cultures and traditions from about 1,300 ethnic groups and 700 languages (Eberhard et.al, 2025).

Indonesia, a Muslim-majority nation, offers a distinctive context for examining a unique framework for understanding local wisdom. This concept encompasses traditional customs, community values, and Islamic teachings, which collectively contribute to the identity formation of Islamic higher education institutions. Two key concepts that embody

this identity are *gotong royong*, which signifies cooperation, and *adat*, which refers to customary law (Geertz, 1960; Azra, 2006). Both concepts, along with the major religion in Indonesia – Islam – provide a diversity of cultures and perspectives.

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation, presents a unique tapestry where Islamic traditions harmoniously blend with diverse local cultures. This rich interplay has fostered a distinctive form of local wisdom, deeply rooted in community values, customs, and Islamic teachings (Rangkuti et al., 2021). Such wisdom not only enriches daily life but also serves as a foundational element in the philosophy and development of IHEIs across the country (Fauzi et al., 2023). These institutions embody the integration of spiritual and cultural heritage, ensuring that education remains deeply connected to the nation's multifaceted identity.

IHEIs in Indonesia have sought to integrate local wisdom into their internationalisation strategies to achieve a balance between global engagement and cultural preservation. For example, institutions have developed academic programmes that emphasise cultural immersion, established partnerships that respect local traditions, and encouraged community engagement rooted in Islamic and Indonesian values (Haryanto et al., 2020). These practices not only showcase Indonesia's cultural richness but also offer a model for culturally grounded internationalisation.

Despite these efforts, challenges remain. Western-centric academic paradigms often dominate international education, leading to the underrepresentation of non-Western perspectives, including those of Indonesia (Santoso et al., 2021). Additionally, misconceptions about the relevance of local wisdom in modern education persist, creating barriers to its broader integration in global academic frameworks (Abdullah, 2017).

Apart from that, the views or opinions of students in Indonesia regarding higher education internationalisation programmes cannot be ignored. They play a big role in planning and evaluating the programmes run by universities, apart from their role as actors in the programmes. From another perspective, local wisdom is seen as a key factor in cultural preservation, particularly within the context of the nation and region they inhabit. As the subsequent generation, their responsibility

is to perpetuate the existing traditions and cultural practices that have been handed down to them. Kayode (2024) stated that students can inspire community members to invest in educational resources, such as libraries, laboratories, and safe learning environments. Knowledge and implementation of local wisdom by students to internationalise universities influence the achievements of these universities in reaching the level of internationalised universities. With student thinking patterns that are reluctant to develop, it is impossible for university internationalisation programmes to be realised, which can be an obstacle in realising the internationalisation strategies.

Several studies have explored various strategies to internationalise universities, such as developing internationalised curricula and organising events that support foreign language use. However, there is still limited research connecting these strategies with the role of local wisdom.

This study aims to address these gaps by examining how local wisdom influences the internationalisation strategies of Indonesian IHEIs. It explores the ways institutions leverage local values to foster global collaborations, adapt global academic practices to local contexts, and create inclusive and culturally rich educational environments. Through this exploration, the study contributes to the understanding of local wisdom as a strategic asset in achieving sustainable and contextually relevant internationalisation.

Literature Review

Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs)

In the contemporary higher education landscape, there is a growing emphasis on academic excellence, the strengthening of research partnerships, and the promotion of cross-cultural understanding as international higher education continues to expand. The concept of internationalisation in Islamic higher education entails the integration of global academic standards while maintaining Islamic values and principles (Knight, 2004; De Wit & Hunter, 2015). IHEIs must meticulously adapt their curricula to align with global standards, adeptly manage significant cultural and religious variations, and surmount substantial limitations in resources and infrastructure (Hamid & Said, 2019). Noteworthy advancements have been witnessed in the realm of

international partnerships and study abroad programmes established by IHEIs. Furthermore, these institutions have fostered numerous research collaborations that are in alignment with their Islamic identity (Ziauddin, 2018).

IHEIs play a significant role in shaping a more comprehensive and equitable global education system by consistently demonstrating their commitment to academic excellence and fostering a profound cultural diversity (Abdullah, 2021). These institutions have been instrumental in developing diverse educational experiences that engage both local and international communities, integrating local knowledge into their global strategies (Rizvi, 2007).

This section highlights the crucial importance of balancing global assimilation with the preservation of local traditions. Key characteristics of local wisdom include mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), customary laws (*adat*), and consensus-building discussions (*musyawarah*), with Islamic teachings significantly influencing daily life (Geertz, 1973; Alwasilah, 2017).

Local Wisdom

Local wisdom nurtures a strong sense of community and belonging in education while also promoting various moral values. One of the distinctive local wisdoms in Indonesia is *gotong royong* which encourages collaboration among students, faculty, and community members, fostering an environment of mutual support and shared responsibility. This culture shapes communication pattern for Indonesia people to be polite, friendly, and helpful. Likewise, *adat* provides a meaningful framework for maintaining harmonious relationships and deep respect within many institutional policies and practices (Huda & Kartanegara, 2015). The diversity in Indonesia creates various *adat* which bears various symbols and traditions.

Furthermore, an exploration of Indonesian traditions can offer novel perspectives on pressing global issues, such as sustainability and equity. The effective execution of collaborative research initiatives, complemented by the adept management of conflict in multicultural contexts, underscores the efficacy of principles such as *gotong royong* and *musyawarah* (UNESCO, 2020).

Numerous studies have demonstrated the significant impact of local wisdom, particularly within the framework of *Islam Nusantara*, on Indonesian education. A seminal study by Azra (2006) underscored the pivotal role of Islamic moderation (*wasatiyyah*) in Indonesian Islamic education, emphasising its significant contribution to fostering tolerance, pluralism, and interfaith dialogue. These components are of increasing value in many internationalisation strategies, enabling IHEIs to project an original identity that represents global academic values while maintaining cultural authenticity.

Rahman's (2019) work underscores the necessity of incorporating local knowledge into courses designed for international students. Institutions of Higher Education (IHEIs) are vital in preserving cultural heritage by blending local traditions into their global curricula. This thoughtful integration not only honours the unique identity of the region but also creates a welcoming space for international students. In these vibrant learning environments, students not only gain knowledge but also form meaningful relationships, making their time at IHEIs truly memorable and enriching.

Research by Haryanto et al. (2020) examined the dual objectives of internationalisation and cultural preservation in Indonesian universities. The study found that IHEIs in Indonesia adopt internationalisation strategies that align with their cultural and religious missions, such as organising cultural immersion programmes for international students and fostering community-based collaborations.

Furthermore, Wekke (2015) investigated how *pesantren*-based IHEIs (Islamic boarding school-affiliated universities) incorporate traditional Islamic teachings into global academic exchanges. The findings revealed that these institutions leverage their culturally grounded educational models to contribute to global conversations on religious tolerance and education, positioning them as key players in international academic networks.

Studies also highlight the challenges faced by IHEIs in integrating local wisdom into internationalisation strategies. For instance, Abdullah (2017) discussed the misalignment between Western academic paradigms and Indonesian cultural contexts, which often leads to underestimation of local wisdom in global academic settings. However, the study noted that institutions embracing their unique cultural and

religious identities have successfully navigated these challenges by emphasising the universal values of Islam Nusantara, such as peace, compassion, and social justice.

On the opportunities side, Santoso et al. (2021) explored how Indonesian universities' distinct cultural identity could be a competitive advantage in attracting international collaborations and students. The study suggested that programmes showcasing local traditions and Islamic teachings not only enhance institutional reputation but also contribute to global cultural understanding.

The reviewed studies collectively underscore the importance of integrating local wisdom into the internationalisation strategies of IHEIs in Indonesia. They highlight the value of Islamic moderation, cultural preservation, and community engagement as key elements that distinguish Indonesian Islamic universities in the global academic landscape. These findings provide a foundation for the current study, which aims to explore how local wisdom can be further leveraged to shape internationalisation strategies, address challenges, and seize opportunities.

Theoretical Framework

This article proposes a theoretical connection between IHEIs and local wisdom in Indonesia. It explores how universities navigate the interplay between global engagement and local identity, highlighting the necessity for strategic and nuanced approaches to harmonise international aspirations with community responsibilities. The Indonesian landscape, characterised by its rich multiculturalism, serves as a backdrop for this discussion.

The Cultural Adaptation Model by Cheng (2004) can be applied to the integration of local wisdom in internationalisation strategies. The author of the model argues that internationalisation strategies should not be perceived as a way of transferring global practices to the local level but as a process of interaction between the two levels in which the local culture informs the global strategies of the organisations.

Several Indonesian Islamic higher education institutions have skilfully woven indigenous wisdom into their international outreach efforts. A prominent illustration is Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, which has established itself as a trailblazer

in this initiative by advocating for the concept of *Islam Nusantara*—Islam from the Indonesian Archipelago. This term captures a significant idea that nurtures a harmonious relationship between Islamic teachings and the diverse cultural practices found throughout Indonesia (Schaefer, 2021). The vision, as articulated by Azra (2006), is to cultivate a vibrant and inclusive form of Islam shaped by local traditions. What makes UIN Sunan Kalijaga particularly fascinating is how this concept is intricately integrated across various levels, including the curriculum, scholar exchanges, and partnerships with foreign educational institutions.

UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta resonates with a series of distinctive initiatives that reflect its commitment to *wasatiyyah*, a strategy rooted in Islamic neutrality, serving as a cornerstone for their global interactions approached with seriousness and purpose (Latifa et al., 2022). Islam and moderation are intricately linked, enveloped in a tapestry of concepts that include pluralism, social justice, and practices of tolerance. By adopting these principles, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah fosters collaboration that transcends national boundaries, primarily building research partnerships with academic institutions across Southeast Asia and the Middle East. This dynamic promotion of Islamic values and regional ideologies raises the question of whether it truly represents integration. Within this context, a global approach takes shape, led by academic endeavours that celebrate cultural uniqueness, reflecting a deep-rooted commitment to both tradition and innovation.

These cases show how local wisdom can be incorporated into the internationalisation strategies of Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia. By valuing local cultural traditions and aligning them with global academic practices, these institutions have established unique educational environments that appeal to international students, encourage global research partnerships, and strengthen their relationships with local communities.

This study investigated the strategies taken by the Islamic higher education institutions to promote university internationalisation. However, it focused on the actions involving local wisdom or traditions in the programmes, and correlated the strategies with the relevant previous researches and theories. The theoretical frameworks and examples presented in this section highlight the importance of integrating local wisdom into the internationalisation strategies of IHEIs in Indonesia. By

adapting global academic practices to local contexts, these institutions can enhance their global engagement while preserving their cultural and religious identities. This balance of local and global values not only strengthens the international standing of Indonesian Islamic higher education but also contributes to the diversity and richness of global academic discourse.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, aligning with Creswell and Poth's (2018) framework for exploring and understanding the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems. Given the focus on the integration of local wisdom in the internationalisation strategies of IHEIs, a qualitative approach is appropriate for capturing the nuanced perspectives and experiences of stakeholders within their specific cultural and institutional contexts.

This study adopts a case study design. The case study approach (Creswell and Poth, 2018) facilitates an in-depth exploration of the complex interplay between local wisdom and internationalisation efforts within IHEIs, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of how cultural values and traditions influence institutional strategies. The selection of three IHEs as the primary cases in this article is based on a purposive sampling strategy that aims to capture a diverse and representative spectrum of approaches to internationalisation integrated with local wisdom within the broader landscape of Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia. The study complied with ethical standards for qualitative research, which involved obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring confidentiality, and respecting participants' rights to withdraw at any time. Approval from the relevant institutional review board was also secured.

The methods used to collect the data include interviews and document analysis. Interviews were used to gain the data of students' opinion regarding the international programmes conducted by the universities, while documentation was useful for gathering data of policies and programmes issued by the leaders. To gain specific insights into the university's internationalisation programmes, the researcher also interviewed the Head of the International Office in one of the IHEIs. Additionally, document analysis of institutional policies, strategic

plans, and programme descriptions were conducted to contextualise and corroborate interview findings.

The study employed thematic analysis to identify and interpret patterns and themes emerging from the data. This process involves coding the data, categorising codes into themes, and interpreting the significance of these themes in relation to the research questions. The analysis aims to elucidate how local wisdom is operationalised within internationalisation strategies and its impact on institutional practices.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness, this study employed triangulation as a key validation strategy. By comparing and contrasting the interview data and document analysis, the study identified common themes and discrepancies, thereby strengthening the validity of the findings.

Findings and Discussion

This section reveals the findings and examines the impact of local wisdom on the internationalisation strategies of Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) in Indonesia. Specifically, it highlights how local values inform institutional goals and policies and explores examples of locally inspired programmes designed to integrate local wisdom into internationalisation efforts.

Local Values Informing Institutional Goals and Policies

At the core of goal and policy formulation in Indonesia's Islamic higher education institutions lies the concept of local wisdom, a role that becomes especially prominent in the realm of internationalisation. These institutions are increasingly aware of the critical importance of maintaining their cultural identity and sacred beliefs while participating in the global educational community. By weaving local wisdom—shaped by Islamic teachings and Indonesia's rich cultural heritage—into their frameworks, these institutions can achieve a harmonious balance between meeting global standards and honouring indigenous customs. This delicate equilibrium is essential, as it defines the unique value they contribute to the educational landscape. The following table shows the university's vision and realisation regarding local values and international programmes.

Table 1: Visions and realisation of international programmes of three Islamic universities

Institution	Vision	Realisation
UIN Sunan Kalijaga	Being superior and Leading in Integrating and Developing Islam and Science for Civilisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- International student mobility- International conference- International community service- International guest lecture- International class
UIN Syarif Hidayatullah	Realising UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta as a Globally Reputable University with Excellence in Integrating Islamic, Indonesian, and Scientific Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- International student mobility- International conference- International research- International community service- International guest lecture- International class
UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid pekalongan	Becoming an Islamic University that excels in developing knowledge for humanity based on national culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- International student mobility- International conference- International community service- International guest lecture

The table above shows the differences of vision along with the similarity in the concept of bringing Islam as the local values. The term *Islam Nusantara* introduced by Azra in 2006, translates to “Islam from the Indonesian Archipelago,” and its impact is evident in the international strategies of several Indonesian Islamic universities. The practice of Islam in Indonesia is uniquely characterised by a blend of Islamic beliefs and local cultural norms, which many educational institutions, including UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, embrace as a core principle. Local wisdom in education is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and it has potentials to improve culture-based learning (Arjaya et al, 2024). While the connection may seem tenuous, it highlights a deeper narrative where the essence of Islam subtly shifts, making the idea of “going global” more complex. This fusion of universal ideals with local elements creates a distinctive flavour that invites reflection and challenges conventional thinking (Azra, 2006).

Similarly, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta has embedded the value of Islamic moderation (*wasatīyyah*) in its internationalisation strategies. By promoting the principles of tolerance, pluralism, and social justice, the university ensures that its global partnerships are rooted in Indonesia's distinctive approach to Islam. These local values inform institutional policies, including those related to international collaborations, student exchanges, and curricula, enabling the university to create an international presence that is culturally sensitive and aligned with its educational philosophy.

Besides the two institutions, UIN K. H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan also provides local wisdom for international students by introducing moderate Islam for foreigners in various activities. According to an interview with the Head of the International Office at UIN K. H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, the university has established prominent international programmes, notably the Cultural Camp 2024 and Edutourism 2025. These initiatives are designed to provide participants from European and Southeast Asian countries with immersive experiences in the cultural and religious life of the Linggoasri community in Kajen, Pekalongan Regency. The programmes encompass a range of activities, including traditional arts workshops—such as *gamelan* and *rebana* music, Javanese traditional dance, *batik*-making, and *wayang*-making. Additionally, they feature dialogues on interfaith economic cooperation with the Linggo community and discussions on the importance of promoting religious moderation in a diverse society.

Pekalongan, renowned as the “World City of Batik,” serves as a compelling destination for international visitors interested in exploring the intricate processes of batik production. As the first Southeast Asian city to join UNESCO's Creative Cities Network in 2014, Pekalongan has seamlessly integrated batik into its creative economy and educational initiatives, thereby enhancing its global appeal (Andjanie, & Putro, 2023). The integration of local wisdom values in learning practice can also instil nationalism into students, and they must keep the values in their community where they come from (Darmayenti, et al, 2021).

Students from one of the Islamic Higher Educations argued that local wisdom can provide more opportunities to collaborate with other institution from other countries, because it attracts people from other countries to know more about local traditions. As one of them said,

“When we show the uniqueness of our culture it can attract world or international attention. It can also be a source of new ideas, support international cooperation, and introduce local culture to the global level.” (Rini, 2025).

Another student also even said that local wisdom can be one of foundation in designing curriculum to be internationalised,

“By integrating local values and culture into the curriculum, universities can offer a unique and engaging educational experience for international students.” (Ardi, 2025)

These perspectives showed that the goal of educational system can be achieved by introducing local wisdom to the world, which can attract people from other countries to know more about it. In addition, local wisdom can promote students’ thinking skills, especially for problem-solving (Kristanto, Suharno & Gunarhadi, 2019). By having this attraction, collaboration with other institutions from different countries is easy to achieve. Albantani and Madkur (2018) said that local wisdom functioning as cultural identity is one of the factors causing cross-cultural interaction in foreign language teaching; it can be harmoniously implemented academically.

Related to the goal of educational institutions, it is undeniable that students need triggers to improve their skills and develop their competence for any programme. Having collaboration and values to introduce to other countries helps the students to be more motivated and ready to compete. Some of the students believe that the international programme conducted by the university strongly motivates them to be able to practice foreign languages, especially English. Surely, this is beneficial for the students and institutions, which indirectly forces them to prepare themselves for global competition. The use of local wisdom-related material in education can raise students’ awareness of socio-cultural conditions which provokes them to provide a broad view of uniqueness and variety of cultures in their community (Prayudha S, 2023).

The implementation of local wisdom in internationalisation strategies is evident in the development of specific programmes designed for international students and faculty. These programmes are often designed to provide cultural immersion experiences, with the objective of exposing international participants to the unique traditions and values

of Indonesia. Initiatives such as these are essential for fostering cross-cultural understanding and ensuring that international students receive a comprehensive and holistic education that extends beyond academic learning.

The Cultural Immersion Programme at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta invites international scholars to truly connect with Indonesian culture in a meaningful way. Through hands-on experiences, students have the chance to wander through traditional villages, join in local ceremonies, and contribute to community service projects. This programme not only enriches their understanding of Indonesia but also fosters lasting memories and friendships along the way. These enriching activities foster a genuine appreciation for the intricate connections among cultural customs, religious practices, and social values that define Indonesia. Moreover, the programme encourages international students to reflect on the shared values that link Islamic teachings with Indonesian culture, enhancing their understanding of the global relevance of these teachings. This exploration of shared values not only broadens their perspective but also highlights the rich tapestry of multiculturalism interwoven with Islamic elements, even if the connections may not always be immediately apparent (Azra, 2006).

At UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, the essence of moderation shines brightly, illuminating the practical aspects of Islam in a way that resonates deeply with students from diverse backgrounds. Their thoughts on faith are ignited as they navigate a space where academic boundaries blur, allowing for rich interactions with communities that shape contemporary interpretations of Islam. This dynamic exchange fosters a commitment to peace and social coexistence, transforming theoretical concepts into tangible realities. Meanwhile, global discussions about the relationship between faith and social rights continue to unfold, leaving some questions unanswered and highlighting the need for further exploration in this vital area (Al-Attas, 1980). Through these locally inspired initiatives, the university aids international students in understanding how local wisdom can address broader global challenges, thus contributing to a more inclusive and diverse international academic community.

In summary, the incorporation of local wisdom into internationalisation strategies is crucial for the success of Islamic higher

education institutions in Indonesia. Local values guide institutional goals and policies, ensuring that internationalisation efforts are culturally sensitive and aligned with each institution's unique identity. Programmes like cultural immersion and Islamic moderation initiatives further underscore the significance of local wisdom in fostering meaningful international collaborations and enriching educational experiences.

Strategies for Integrating Local Wisdom into Internationalisation

Integrating local wisdom into internationalisation strategies is essential for creating a distinctive educational experience that respects local traditions while engaging with global academic standards. One of the most effective ways to incorporate local wisdom into internationalisation efforts is through curriculum design. By embedding Indonesian culture and Islamic teachings into globally oriented programmes, Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) in Indonesia can ensure that international students not only receive high-quality education but also gain an appreciation of the local context, which is crucial for their overall learning experience.

Curriculum Design: Incorporating Indonesian Culture and Islamic Teachings in Globally Oriented Programmes

A key factor to consider is the development of curricula that effectively incorporates local wisdom into global strategies. Such curricula equip students to engage with a global community while remaining firmly grounded in their cultural traditions and values of faith. This balance creates a distinctive educational experience that honours both global viewpoints and local identities.

A prime example of productivity is the incorporation of *Islam Nusantara* (Islam of Indonesia's Archipelago) into the curricula of various Indonesian Islamic universities. This syncretism, which interacts with local cultures such as Javanese, Sundanese, and Balinese traditions, embodies the essence of *Islam Nusantara*, offering a distinct perspective on Islam in Indonesia. As noted by Azra (2006), integrating this viewpoint into the curriculum helps international scholars understand how Islam has evolved within an Indonesian context, where religion intertwines with local traditions. This fusion of indigenous wisdom, when combined with the experiences of global students, fosters

a deeper understanding of Islam. In today's interconnected world, this understanding is crucial, as it often necessitates dialogue between different faiths and an appreciation of diverse cultures.

Based on the curriculum developed in the three universities, there are similarities in blending Indonesian culture and Islamic teaching. Those universities listed compulsory courses as their identity, which consist of several courses including Islamic studies, Indonesian language, and citizenship. By teaching citizenship and Indonesian language, students also learn about Indonesian culture. Knight (2007) stated that loss of cultural identity is the number-one risk attached to the process of internationalisation.

At UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, the educational approach is a dynamic blend that incorporates cultural elements from around the globe, historical insights, and Indonesia's diverse religious traditions. Many academic programmes are specifically tailored for international students, giving them a distinctive perspective on Islamic thought. Students engage deeply with the intriguing history of Islam in Indonesia, exploring its crucial contributions to promoting social justice and peace, all while gaining new viewpoints that enhance their global understanding. By integrating these topics into globally recognised subjects, such as Islamic studies, social sciences, and political science, the university ensures that international students are exposed to local wisdom in a way that enriches their academic experience (Azra, 2006).

Beyond incorporating local religious teachings, Indonesian culture is intricately woven into the curriculum through engaging courses on local languages, arts, literature, and traditions. UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta provides programmes that immerse international students in the vibrant cultural tapestry of Indonesia, featuring modules on traditional arts, the Indonesian language, and the rich history of cultural exchange between Islam and indigenous traditions. These courses not only cultivate a deep appreciation for Indonesian culture but also empower students with the intercultural skills essential for success in our increasingly interconnected world.

The curriculum design approach prioritises service learning and community-based projects, inviting students to work closely with local communities and learn from their experiences. According to Deardorff

(2009), such experiential learning opportunities enhance cross-cultural understanding and promote meaningful interactions between international students and the communities they engage with.

By designing curricula that incorporate local culture and Islamic teachings, IHEIs in Indonesia not only attract international students but also provide them with a learning experience that is both globally competitive and locally enriching. The integration of Islamic teachings and elements of local culture into the curricula of Indonesia's Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) serves as a compelling strategy to attract students from around the globe. This approach not only fosters a competitive and enriching academic experience but also immerses students in the vibrant local context. Understanding is nurtured through the celebration of differences, and while the journey may not always be seamless, the pursuit of knowledge and understanding ultimately deepens students' connections with one another.

Integrating values of local wisdom-based subjects into the curriculum enables students to have opportunity to understand and analyse the steps to solve problems based on the situation faced. Thus, learners will master a foreign language in a comprehensive manner, not only able to communicate with a foreign language as well, but also understand the culture of the speakers of the language (Albantani and Madkur, 2018). Similarly, Eliza et al. (2024) stated that integrating local wisdom into curriculum are very helpful for the teachers and students because it provides affordable and context-specific way of teaching sustainability.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is an essential strategy for integrating local wisdom into the internationalisation efforts of Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) in Indonesia. By leveraging community-based traditions, universities can foster meaningful global collaborations that enhance both local and international students' understanding of cultural diversity and create opportunities for cross-cultural exchange. Community engagement not only enriches the internationalisation process but also strengthens the relationship between universities and their local communities, creating a mutually beneficial environment for knowledge exchange (Sinaga & Syarief, 2024).

Community-based traditions, especially those that are deeply rooted in local beliefs and customs, have a significant impact on the integration of international perspectives into higher education. When international higher education institutions engage with local communities, they create a unique opportunity for students. This engagement allows international students to experience diverse learning environments enriched by the local culture, thereby enhancing their understanding of the values and customs of their host country.

In Indonesia's Islamic educational institutions, the preservation of *Islam Nusantara* is essential for weaving a strong connection between the university and the local community, much like a thread intricately stitched into a vibrant tapestry. The cultural practice of *gotong royong* resonates deeply within society and is actively embraced within university frameworks, encouraging students to immerse themselves in local customs and realities. Programmes that facilitate this engagement, especially those involving international scholars, become invaluable resources for fostering understanding. As Azra noted back in 2006, these initiatives offer crucial insights into the principles of respect, cooperation, and social justice that are deeply rooted in Indonesian culture.

Community engagement serves as a fundamental aspect of development at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, illustrating how local customs and Islamic principles can foster significant global partnerships. This distinguished institution is recognised for its vibrant initiatives that actively involve students in community service activities. A particularly remarkable feature is the participation of international students. These projects also emphasise local heritage and community practices, offering invaluable insights into the rich complexities of Indonesian traditional life for students who often find themselves limited to classroom learning in their home countries (Azra, 2006). Ultimately, the pursuit of local harmony, guided by such wisdom, stands out as a commendable and inspiring path for development.

At UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, community engagement is more than just executing service projects; it's an exciting journey into collaboration and connection. The university embraces the rich diversity of religion and culture as a catalyst for conversation, organising a wide array of events that bring together local religious and

cultural institutions. It encourages vibrant discussions where Islamic moderation (*wasatīyyah*) intersects with local traditions, fostering dynamic dialogues. The university's academic environment serves as a guide for building partnerships that extend beyond traditional learning, venturing into the areas of social impact and cultural interaction.

Additionally, community engagement initiatives centred around local customs play a vital role in enhancing international students' sense of belonging. Through their involvement in community activities, these students experience a sense of home in their new environment. Such practices facilitate their integration into the host society, fostering strong connections with local residents. The relationships they cultivate not only deepen their engagement with the community but also enrich their overall experience abroad. As noted by Deardorff (2009), these community engagement efforts are essential for promoting global cooperation, trust, and respect, which are critical for developing cultural competence across various intercultural contexts.

In conclusion, community engagement programmes that leverage community-based traditions offer significant opportunities for internationalisation, enabling universities to provide students with an immersive experience that reflects both local wisdom and global perspectives. By engaging in projects that combine local practices with global goals, IHEIs in Indonesia not only enhance the international experience of their students but also contribute to building global collaborations that are deeply rooted in local cultural values and traditions.

Partnership Development

Partnerships are essential in the internationalisation efforts of Indonesia's Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs), acting as a vital link to the global academic landscape (Munadi, 2020). By establishing connections with foreign organisations, these collaborations not only reflect a deep respect for local customs but also showcase the distinctive character of Indonesian culture. These alliances serve various functions: they align global educational standards with the richness of local wisdom, providing universities with effective means to exchange valuable knowledge, resources, and best practices. Additionally, these partnerships play a crucial role in preserving and promoting local culture and religious beliefs, ensuring they are celebrated on the international

stage and remain dynamic in an increasingly interconnected world (Kasdi et al., 2020).

In the context of internationalisation, one of the most important considerations for IHEIs in Indonesia is finding partners that not only align with global academic goals but also appreciate and incorporate local cultural and religious traditions. Cultural diplomacy plays a significant role in these alliances, which not only enhances the educational experience for international students but also strengthens the global standing of IHEIs by showcasing their unique contributions to global knowledge.

Internationalisation casts a broad net, bringing a wealth of ideas to the forefront and connecting partners who share similar aspirations—an essential pursuit for IHEIs. This effort transcends the mere achievement of academic goals; it is crucial to weave in local cultural and religious traditions. Institutions that celebrate cultural diversity and cultivate unexpected partnerships through cultural diplomacy truly stand out. Eager to collaborate, these institutions demonstrate a genuine respect for local values, making inclusivity a fundamental part of their mission. However, it is essential to recognise that this process may not always be clear-cut or easily grasped; it often requires a more nuanced understanding, which is a key element of these partnerships.

UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta has actively developed partnerships with universities in countries such as Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. These collaborations are framed within the context of Islamic moderation (*wasatiyyah*). By promoting this value in international partnerships, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah creates an environment where local wisdom is respected and highlighted in academic and research collaborations. The university's commitment to Islamic moderation resonates with international partners who value inclusive education and the promotion of peace, which has led to joint research initiatives, faculty exchanges, and academic conferences focused on interfaith dialogue and conflict resolution (Al-Attas, 1980).

Building relationship with international parties do not only covers educational institutions, but also other institutions or foundations that actually support Islamic higher education institutions in achieving the goal. It has been conducted by UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. The results of the partnerships are various and embracing,

such as international guest lecture, foreign volunteers, student mobility, collaborative research, and others.

Universal dialogues form the foundation of global Islamic academies as they engage in impactful initiatives. Topics such as social justice, sustainable environmental practices, and peace are not only central to Islamic teachings but also resonate with the values of local traditions, as noted in Deardorff's research (2009). These partnerships provide a dynamic space for cultivating respect and understanding among diverse viewpoints, influenced by the different interpretations of Islamic principles in a global setting. However, it is worth mentioning that not every connection is straightforward; some examples within this context may lack clarity and coherence, creating a complex interplay of ideas and practices.

The link between IHEIs and their global counterparts acts as a crucial thread that binds successful partnerships together, creating a cohesive network of collaboration. This is far from a simple task; it necessitates the exchange of complex, in-depth scholarly discussions. Establishing partnerships with institutions that share a similar worldview is essential, as it enables IHEIs to foster an environment of collaboration. In the long run, this could enhance the visibility and impact of Indonesia's cultural and educational contributions on the global stage.

In conclusion, international connections are essential and should be established thoughtfully to honour and uplift local traditions. Islamic higher education institutions serve as the cornerstone of Indonesia's academic framework, highlighting the significance of outreach and global engagement. They aim for growth and resilience in their relationships with international organisations, fostering a commitment to inclusivity and embracing a diverse array of perspectives, often Eurocentric. These connections are not merely temporary; they pave the way for enduring contributions that benefit both local communities and international interactions. Although the process may appear chaotic and intricate, it ultimately clarifies the narrative, revealing the richness and depth of this vibrant engagement.

Challenges and Opportunities

In Indonesia, IHEIs face significant challenges in their pursuit of internationalisation. As they aim to engage with the global academic

community, these institutions must navigate a complex duality: balancing the need for modernisation with the preservation of their rich cultural heritage.

The challenges confronting IHEIs are among the most significant in the realm of internationalisation. These institutions must skilfully balance the imperatives of modernisation and the influences of globalisation while also safeguarding and promoting their rich local cultural traditions and core Islamic teachings. As they traverse this intricate landscape, universities are integrating international standards and enhancing their global reputation into the essence of their mission. Compromise is not an option; local wisdom must serve as the colourful decorative thread that enhances this tapestry, ensuring that their distinct identity is highlighted in an ever-more interconnected world.

Embracing Western-style educational practices can create significant pressures during the modernisation process, often clashing with the rich tapestry of indigenous Indonesian values, both cultural and religious. Islamic universities in Indonesia find themselves at the forefront of this delicate balancing act (Azra, 2006), navigating the demands of international academic standards while remaining deeply rooted in local culture and Islamic traditions. While modernisation offers the exciting prospect of accessing cutting-edge knowledge and fostering global collaborative partnerships, it poses a critical risk: the potential dilution of the uniqueness that defines Indonesian Islamic universities. This tension between global aspirations and local identity is a challenge that cannot be overlooked.

To address this challenge, IHEIs must find innovative ways to integrate local values into their modernisation efforts. As Al-Attas (1980) highlighted, the concept of Islamic moderation (*wasatiyyah*) is an important framework for balancing tradition and progress. By embracing this balanced approach, universities can foster an environment where modern academic practices are blended with locally rooted values, allowing students to benefit from both global knowledge and local wisdom. The opportunity here lies in the ability of IHEIs to showcase how cultural preservation and modernisation can complement one another.

Another significant challenge is the misconception that local wisdom, particularly in the context of Islamic teachings and cultural

practices in Indonesia, is outdated or irrelevant in global academic settings (Dinar, 2021). In many international academic environments, there is often a bias towards Western academic models, which may fail to fully appreciate the value of local knowledge systems and traditional practices. As IHEIs in Indonesia work to engage more actively with the global academic community, they must address these misconceptions and demonstrate the relevance of local wisdom in addressing global challenges.

The opportunity presented by overcoming misconceptions lies in the potential for cross-cultural knowledge exchange. By reframing local wisdom as a valuable and innovative perspective, IHEIs in Indonesia can foster global collaborations that respect cultural diversity and promote inclusive solutions to global challenges.

While the challenges of balancing modernisation with cultural preservation and overcoming misconceptions about local wisdom are significant, they also present valuable opportunities for Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia. By addressing these challenges thoughtfully, IHEIs can create educational environments that honour local traditions while embracing global knowledge, thus offering unique contributions to the international academic community.

To further enhance the internationalisation efforts of IHEIs in Indonesia, it is crucial to implement strategic recommendations that foster the integration of local wisdom with global academic standards. These recommendations focus on policy development that actively promote the inclusion of local cultural values, religious teachings, and traditional knowledge in internationalisation initiatives; capacity-building programmes and administrative practices; promoting local wisdom on global platforms, and strengthening research and documentation.

Implementing these recommendations can significantly transform the internationalisation strategies of IHEIs. These strategies serve a dual purpose: first, to establish a prominent presence on the global academic stage for universities that embody Indonesian identity, and second, to contribute meaningfully to international intellectual discourse. Additionally, fostering cultural understanding intertwined with religious tolerance enriches the landscape for global knowledge exchange. However, the phrasing may come across as somewhat vague,

lacking the precision needed to convey the core message effectively. Unfortunately, this is often the challenge we face when grappling with abstract concepts and ambiguous examples.

Indonesian Higher Education Institutions should actively develop programmes that celebrate this rich cultural heritage, allowing for the sharing of Islamic teachings and local values in an inclusive manner. This not only broadens the understanding of Islam for global audiences but also highlights the resilience and richness of Indonesia's cultural-religious heritage. By fostering environments for knowledge sharing, IHEIs can influence the global conversation surrounding Islam and culture, as highlighted by Azra (2006), ensuring that Indonesia's unique contributions are acknowledged and valued on the world stage.

Strengthening Research and Documentation

The impact of indigenous understanding on internationalisation outcomes is profound yet complex to articulate. Delving into this exploration reveals how local wisdom, in its vibrant essence, plays a crucial role in enhancing student success. It may sound almost too good to be true, but the cultivation of intercultural skills and the creation of global academic networks are indeed fruits of this local wisdom. A bold perspective shows how local traditions are closely connected to Islamic education in students' curricula. This is still an important topic to explore further. By looking at the results so far, we can find useful ideas to help develop future internationalisation strategies.

Moreover, publishing case studies to share best practices globally can contribute to the wider academic community's understanding of how local wisdom can be integrated into internationalisation strategies. Case studies from Indonesian IHEIs that showcase successful models of cultural integration can serve as examples for other institutions around the world. By documenting and disseminating these practices, IHEIs in Indonesia can position themselves as leaders in blending local cultural values with global academic standards, contributing to the ongoing dialogue on education in the 21st century (Deardorff, 2009).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the integration of local wisdom into the internationalisation strategies of IHEIs represents a multifaceted approach to balancing global academic standards with the preservation of cultural and religious

identity. This integration is evident in the ways IHEIs strategically incorporate local values into their institutional goals, policies, and programmes. By doing so, these institutions not only enhance their global engagement but also ensure that their unique cultural and religious perspectives are valued and understood within the international academic community.

The incorporation of local wisdom serves to enrich the educational experiences of both local and international students, foster cross-cultural understanding, and promote global collaborations that are deeply rooted in local traditions. As IHEIs in Indonesia continue to navigate the complexities of internationalisation, their commitment to these strategies not only strengthens their institutional identities but also contributes to the diversification of global academic discourse, offering valuable models for other institutions seeking to achieve culturally relevant and sustainable internationalisation. Future research should explore the long-term impact of these strategies on institutional and student success.

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Book

In-text citations:

Al-Faruqi & al-Faruqi (1986)

Reference:

Al-Faruqi, I. R., & al-Faruqi, L. L. (1986). *The cultural atlas of Islam*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Chapter in a Book

In-text:

Alias (2009)

Reference:

Alias, A. (2009). Human nature. In N. M. Noor (Ed.), *Human nature from an Islamic perspective: A guide to teaching and learning* (pp.79-117). Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press.

Journal Article

In-text:

Chapra (2002)

Reference:

Chapra, M. U. (2002). Islam and the international debt problem. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 10, 214-232.

The Qur'ān

In-text:

(i) direct quotation, write as 30:36

(ii) indirect quotation, write as Qur'ān, 30:36

Reference:

The glorious Qur'ān. Translation and commentary by A. Yusuf Ali (1977). US: American Trust Publications.

Ḥadīth

In-text:

(i) Al-Bukhārī, 88:204 (where 88 is the book number, 204 is the ḥadīth number)

(ii) Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, p. 1

Reference:

(i) Al-Bukhārī, M. (1981). *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.

(ii) Ibn Ḥanbal, A. (1982). *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*. Istanbul: Cagri Yayinlari.

The Bible

In-text:

Matthew 12:31-32

Reference:

The new Oxford annotated Bible. (2007). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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