



## Article

# Curriculum as a Pillar of Education: A Comparison Between Secular and Islamic Concepts

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**Abstract:** The purpose of the study is to describe and compare the curriculum of secular education and Islamic education as pillars in building an effective education system. Secular education emphasizes rationality, development of worldly skills, and readiness to face global changes, but tends to ignore spiritual aspects. However, Islamic education integrates the values of faith, knowledge, and charity to form a person who is balanced between worldly and *ukhrawi*. However, it faces challenges to adjust to the changing times. This research was conducted with a qualitative descriptive approach. The results showed that each method has its advantages and disadvantages. Secular curriculum excels in flexibility and critical power development, while Islamic Curriculum is strong in building moral character and integrating spiritual values. These results emphasize how important it is to build a curriculum that can accommodate the development of science while maintaining moral and spiritual principles throughout the educational process.

**Keywords:** Curriculum; Education; Secular; Islamic

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## 1. Introduction

Education is all the effectiveness that an institution tries to the learners to given to him with the hope that they have good competence and a soul full awareness of a bond and its social problems, In the activities of teaching at school or formal institutions there is a limit to the end of the learning period or the travel time in following learning varies greatly, for example three years, six years and so on [1-2]. Education is a conscious and planned effort to create an environment and learning process where students actively develop their potential to have religious, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills needed for themselves and society. In the world of education, there are often two terms that have similar forms but different meanings, namely pedagogy and pedagogic. Although they are often used interchangeably, they have distinct meanings. Pedagogy generally means education while pedagogy refers to the science of education [3-4]. The term pedagogy comes from the Greek word *pedagogos* which originally meant servant. But over time, this meaning developed into a noble profession, because a *pedagogos* is tasked with guiding children towards independence and responsibility. In other words, education is not just a process of imparting knowledge, but also assistance in the growth and development of children as a whole. Education covers many aspects of human life. It is not limited to the cognitive domain, but also touches on physical

development, health, skills, emotions, willpower, social interaction, and spiritual aspects such as faith. Therefore, education is a complete and comprehensive process in shaping one's personality and character. In general, education can be understood as a conscious effort made by humans to develop innate potentials, both physical and spiritual. The purpose of this effort is so that individuals can live in accordance with the values that apply in the society and culture where they are. In this case, education and culture have a close relationship. Both go hand in hand, strengthen each other, and together form a better civilization [5-7].

The curriculum is a learning experience, the learning experience has a lot to do with carrying out various activities, social interactions in the school environment, the process of cooperation in groups, even interactions with the physical environment, such as school buildings, school layout, students gain various experiences. Thus, the experience is not just learning subjects, but the most important thing is life experience [8-10]. The curriculum can be defined broadly or narrowly. Narrowly, the curriculum includes all educational materials provided by schools to students during a certain level of education. Broadly, the curriculum includes a number of subjects that students must learn or take in order to complete their education at a particular institution. To provide learning experiences to students, both in the classroom and outside the classroom, everything must be done with the aim of producing quality graduates. The curriculum is a very important component that determines how education is carried out. The curriculum serves as a tool to achieve educational goals. Therefore, the curriculum must also be adjusted automatically if the educational objectives change. The curriculum serves as a guideline and reference for teachers to organize learning at school. In addition, the curriculum helps students fully develop their potential with the help of their teachers. The curriculum and the effectiveness of implementation determine the quality of the education process. The curriculum must be in accordance with the philosophy and values of the nation, the development of students, the progress of science and technology, and the progress and demands of society on the quality of its graduates. In other words, the curriculum is a set of materials for student learning experiences with all the guidelines for implementation that are systematically arranged and guided by schools in their learning activities [11-13].

The secular curriculum concept is a curriculum that separates education and religion, this curriculum does not include religious material as an integral part of learning, and tends to emphasize a scientific and rational approach, this curriculum essentially focuses on developing worldly knowledge and skills with a scientific and rational approach [14-16]. The concept of curriculum develops along with the development of educational theory and practice. One concept that needs to be explained in curriculum theory is the concept of curriculum. Three concepts about curriculum: curriculum as a substance, curriculum as a system, and curriculum as a field of study. The first concept is curriculum as substance. Curriculum is defined as a set of goals to be achieved or a plan of learning activities that students will do at school. The curriculum can also be defined as a document written by curriculum developers and educational policy holders with the community and contains formulations of objectives, teaching materials, learning activities, schedules, and evaluations. In addition, a curriculum can cover a school, district, province or country as a whole. The second concept is that a curriculum is a system, or curriculum system. The curriculum system is part of the school system, education, and even society, and includes the personnel structure and work procedures for developing, implementing, evaluating, and improving the curriculum. The curriculum structure is the result of the curriculum system, and its function is to provide better education to students. The third concept, curriculum as a research field, is the field of curriculum research. It is a field that researches curriculum experts, education experts and teachers. The purpose of curriculum as a research field is to develop curriculum science and curriculum systems. Those who look at the curriculum will look at the basic concepts of the curriculum. Through literary research and various research and experimental activities, new things can be discovered that can enrich and strengthen the field of curriculum research. Curriculum, according to

the old view, is a collection of subjects that must be taught or learned by students. This concept dates back to Ancient Greece. Until now, this perspective is still used in certain environments or relationships, describing curriculum as "a racecourse of subject matters to be mastered". There are also those who say that curriculum is "a course, as a specific fixed course of study, as in school or college, as one leading to a degree." If asked about a program of study, many parents, even teachers, would answer about fields of study or subjects. More specifically, curriculum can be defined simply as subject matter. Curriculum is a collection of educational, cultural, social, sports, and artistic experiences provided by schools to students both inside and outside school with the aim of helping them to develop thoroughly in all aspects and change their behavior in accordance with educational goals [17-18]. Mauritz Johnson opposed the concept of a broad curriculum. Johnson argues that experience can only arise in the interaction between students and their environment. Such interaction is teaching, not curriculum. The curriculum only describes or expects the results of teaching. Johnson strictly distinguishes curriculum from instruction. everything related to planning and implementation, including content planning, teaching and learning activities, evaluation, and teaching [19-21].

The concept of Islamic education. In Islamic education, the term 'curriculum' is replaced by "*manhaj*", which means the outline pursued by teachers and students to improve knowledge, skills and attitudes. Although Imam Al-Ghazali did not explicitly define the curriculum of Islamic education, his views indicate that it is based on two main tendencies: the religious and Sufi tendency, which places religious knowledge as the main means of protecting oneself from worldly influences; the pragmatic tendency, which emphasizes that knowledge should be beneficial to human life, both in this world and in the hereafter. Therefore, the curriculum must be delivered systematically, contain useful knowledge, and be easy to understand [19], [22]. It is impossible to understand the concept of al-Ghazali's Islamic education curriculum thoroughly and clearly because, when put into the classification and form of science that he made, the concept has not been formed in one complete and clear thought. Due to the vagueness and differences in understanding of al-Ghazali's concept of Islamic education curriculum, he is also considered to be the culprit that caused the bottleneck of the intellectual movement and the decline of Muslims. On the other hand, people consider it a savior from the destruction of Muslims. The most urgent study of al-Ghazali's curriculum concept is an effort to construct the concept of his Islamic education curriculum thought which is scattered in some of his books. In this regard, what is needed is an assessment of the ideas and rationale for the Islamic education curriculum that he put forward in his various books. Furthermore, it is tried to be analyzed by linking it with the principles of modern curriculum development, in order to see how the capacity of al-Ghazali's Islamic education curriculum concept in the context of the demands of the modern education curriculum concept [3], [23].

## 2. Materials and Methods

The purpose of this study is to analyze the comparison of curriculum from secular and Islamic perspectives, with an emphasis on the relevance and application of curriculum in education. Based on the literature research conducted, the author found that there is a different understanding of how secular curriculum and Islamic values-based curriculum are implemented. To achieve this goal, the theory used in the analysis refers to research that has been done before, both those that criticize the secular curriculum and those that present the principles of the curriculum in an Islamic perspective. This analysis not only collects data but also organizes relevant information based on the selected sources. This enables a better understanding of how the curriculum can be applied in the respective social and cultural contexts. In addition, the author wants to determine the role and function of the curriculum in shaping the character and mindset of students, both in secular and Islamic-based education, using descriptive analysis techniques. The literature selected was based on academic quality and topic relevance. The aim is to provide a thorough understanding of the role of curriculum in building an

education system that is fair, equitable and in line with the values of each society. An in-depth understanding of the differences and similarities between these two approaches will enrich our view of education and the educational programs best suited for human development [24].

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Curriculum in Secular Education

In the context of secular education, the curriculum is designed as a structured system that aims to develop students' potential in a rational and scientific manner. In contrast to the approach based on religious values, secular education emphasizes universal values that can be accepted by all groups regardless of background beliefs. According to Ralph W. Tyler in his book *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*, curriculum preparation must begin with the determination of clear and measurable educational objectives. The goal is adapted to the needs of society and the demands of the times, such as the development of science, technology, as well as social and economic changes and global challenges that continue to change. In secular education, curriculum objectives are directed at developing students' intellectual abilities, improving practical skills relevant to the world of work, encouraging scientific attitudes and critical thinking, forming independent, responsible and tolerant individuals. The secular curriculum is not only concerned with cognitive aspects, but also affective and psychomotor aspects, so that learning becomes more holistic and contextual. Some of the main characteristics of the curriculum in secular education include Oriented to rationality and scientific logic Each subject is designed to strengthen the logical and scientific thinking skills of learners, Neutral to religion The curriculum does not teach certain religious doctrines, but opens space for discussion of universal human values, Based on the needs of society and the world of work [25-27].

The content of the curriculum is adjusted to the times and the real needs in the professional world, focusing on the development of individual potential Education is directed to help learners find the best interests, talents and potential in themselves. Flexible and adaptive to change, the curriculum can be updated according to the dynamics of science, technology, as well as social challenges and the global environment. Secular curriculum models have several curriculum models that are often used in secular education including, Tyler Model (Objective Model) Focus on specific and measurable instructional objectives, Taba Model (Grassroots Approach) Encourages teacher and community involvement in developing the curriculum, Hilda Taba Model Emphasizes sequential learning from simple to complex concepts, Humanistic Model Prioritizes the development of human potential as a whole. Each of these models has its own characteristics, but they all stem from the principle that education should be tailored to the needs of learners and society [25].

Tyler also states that the curriculum needs to provide learning experiences that enable students to achieve these goals effectively. This includes the acquisition of knowledge, technical skills and the formation of constructive attitudes towards social life. Therefore, the main focus of the secular curriculum is to prepare students to compete in the world of work, think critically, and play an active role as citizens in political and economic life. It is also designed to encourage freedom of thought, creativity and reflective ability in dealing with the complexities of modern life [25].

#### 3.2. Curriculum in Islamic Education

This section may be divided by subheadings. It should provide a concise and precise description of the experimental results, their interpretation, as well as the experimental conclusions that can be drawn. The curriculum in Islamic education has a different philosophical foundation from secular education. In Islam, the curriculum is known as *manhaj*, which means the way of life or a clear method in achieving educational goals

based on the revelation of Allah SWT. The main objective of the Islamic curriculum is the formation of *insan kamil*, an individual who is not only intellectually intelligent, but also superior in spiritual, moral and social aspects. The Islamic curriculum does not only emphasize cognitive aspects, but also on moral development, instilling the values of tawhid, and awareness of social responsibility as servants and caliphs on earth. Therefore, each teaching material is arranged to be in harmony with Islamic values and support the formation of a complete and balanced character [28].

In addition, the curriculum in Islamic education is organized in an integrative manner, combining religious and general sciences as an inseparable unit. With this approach, the Islamic curriculum serves as a tool to direct the educational process towards achieving *maqashid al-syari'ah*, namely protecting religion, soul, mind, offspring, and property. The curriculum is also designed to be able to foster an Islamic personality in students through habituation of worship, appreciation of values, and application of teachings in everyday life. This concept makes the Islamic curriculum not only academic, but also transformative and holistic, covering all aspects of human life [29].

### 3.3. Curriculum as a Pillar of Education

The curriculum acts as the main pillar in the education system, not only as a collection of subject matter, but also as a foundation that determines the direction, purpose and quality of a nation's education. In the general dictionary, a pillar is defined as a pole made of concrete for the purpose of reinforcement or support. The Pillars of Education is a concept that describes the foundations or important basics in an education system. This pillar is a reference in designing curriculum, learning methods, and overall educational goals. The Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) contributes to the world of education based on four pillars, namely, learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together. Basically, the four pillars emphasize learning that will lead students to actively learn. Susetyo revealed that the four pillars of Education are tools to improve students' habits through the development of innovative learning models. Students also responded very well to the application of this learning tool [30], [31].

#### 3.3.1. Learning To Know

"Learning to know" is a stage of learning that aims to help students understand how to acquire and process knowledge in depth. In this case, the teacher acts as a companion who supports the development of students' knowledge and skills. Teachers are also expected to be able to generate motivation and provide inspiration in the process of planning and implementing learning [32].

The ability to access information and combine it with existing knowledge is an important aspect of education, which requires perseverance, concentration, memory and thinking skills. The utilization of memory is one approach to overcome the rapid flow of information from various media. The utilization of memory as a cognitive approach can also help students in dealing with the rapid flow of information. Learning strategies that involve concept mapping, meaningful repetition, and the use of interactive media can be a solution to improve the ability to understand and remember information effectively. Thus, "learning to know" is not only the initial stage in the educational process, but also an important foundation for the development of other competencies such as learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be. However, learning does not only focus on collecting, storing and conveying information appropriately, but also emphasizes a deep understanding of the meaning of the material learned. The application of the concept of learning to know in general education is an important strategy so that students are not just memorizing facts, but also able to relate the knowledge to real life and use it critically [33-34].

### 3.3.2. Learning To Do

Emphasizes how to teach students to apply what they have learned in their future work. Learning to apply what is already known and must be done consistently [35], [36]. This is the application of learning to know where learners are asked to apply their knowledge in the real world after they have acquired basic knowledge. The development of critical and creative thinking is encouraged by the application of this pillar. They are also equipped with skills relevant to the world of work. Mastery of the arts with science is the ultimate goal of education. To produce smart, talented and innovative young people, learning to do is essential [37-38].

Learning to do is more emphasized on how to teach children to practice everything they have learned and be able to adapt the knowledge they have gained to future jobs. Considering carefully the advances and changes that have occurred, education should not only be seen as a transfer of information or the performance of ordinary tasks, but needs to be directed at developing the ability to meet the changing demands of the future. This is because the jobs of the future rely heavily on skills to adapt advances in knowledge that create new initiatives or professions. This will be an important factor in building skills, motivation and awareness of the new knowledge-based economy. As with the first pillar, the process of learning and applying existing knowledge must also be done on an ongoing basis, as change will occur continuously. With a strong desire to learn new things, each individual can avoid actions that do not provide positive benefits for their lives, and this has a deep meaning in maintaining the process and environment of life that provides peace for others [39].

### 3.3.3. Learning to be

It means that learning becomes meaningful to shape one's own identity. Educators try to help students find themselves according to their potential, both in terms of technical skills/hard skills and interpersonal skills/soft skills [40].

Learning to be, as expressly stated by the education commission, is the basic principle that education should help everyone develop, including intelligence, sensitivity, sense of ethics, personal responsibility, spiritual values, and body and soul. Everyone should have the opportunity to learn to think critically and independently. This is important to help them make wise decisions in their daily lives. Thus, they can take responsibility for their decisions and are not easily swayed by the opinions of others. Teachers play an active role in helping students discover their talents and potential in this third pillar. Teachers help them discover technical hard skills and non-technical soft skills [41].

Therefore, every student should be continuously encouraged to learn to solve their own problems through learning activities. Education and learning should be able to help people in this kind of situation by giving strength and letting them develop their ability to survive amidst the various dynamics and changes that exist in people's lives [39].

### 3.3.4. Learning live together

Learning to live together is where a person is taught to live together and become an educated human being who is beneficial to himself, his community, and all humanity [42-44]. Learning to live together teaches that students should learn to live together so that they can become individuals who are able to interact with society and provide benefits to their environment, country and religion both now and in the future. Nowadays, it is very important to build and establish a community living environment in educational settings. This includes learning to tolerate and respect each other, which is the foundation for survival together. They must also learn to be open and independent people [45-46].

Teaching students to live together is essentially teaching them to create relationships through good communication, avoid prejudice against others, and avoid disputes and conflicts. In this mission, competition should be seen as a healthy endeavor to achieve success, not the other way around, where competition defeats the principle of togetherness and even destroys others for its own sake. Therefore, peace and harmony in life can truly be achieved. Education should teach students about human diversity and

give them an awareness of everyone's equality and interdependence. The final task is to teach them how they can live with others well and pleasantly. The process and substance of learning should utilize every opportunity to pursue the various branches of knowledge that lead to this goal, starting from early childhood [47-48].

These four pillars are the mission and responsibility that education must carry out. Through learning to know, learning to do something, learning to live together and learning to be something based on a real desire, one's horizons will broaden about knowledge, about positive values, about other people and about the various dynamics of change that occur. All of this is expected to be a fundamental capital for a person to be able to direct himself in positive behavior based on the values he believes to be true, and in turn will be more open-minded to see the true and false facts, an action that is actually detrimental or brings progress to himself and others [49].

### 3.4. Comparison of Secular and Islamic Curriculum

A comparison between the secular and Islamic curricula shows fundamental differences in terms of philosophical foundations, educational goals, values, the role of the teacher, and the approach used. The main focus is on producing people who have high skills and competitiveness and are able to adapt to the dynamics of the virtual world. As a result, the approaches used are usually competency and project-based, emphasizing the achievement of measurable and practical learning outcomes.

**Table 1.** Comparison of Secular and Islamic Curriculum.

Aspects	Seculer Education	Islamic Education
Basic curriculum	Rationally, science, and societal needs	Qur'an, hadits, and Islamic intellectual heritage
Destination	Produce competent and independent individuals	Forming <i>insan kamil</i> (complete human being)
Preferred values	Neutral to religion, focus on logic and applied science	Integration of <i>iman, ilmu, &amp; amal</i>
Teacher role	Facilitator and motivator	Murabbi (spiritual and intellectual educator)
Approach	Competency and project-based	Tawhid and <i>adab</i> -based

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In contrast, the Islamic curriculum is based on the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as the intellectual works of scholars. The aim of this curriculum is to make students not only intellectually intelligent, but also moral and religiously responsible. The ultimate goal is the formation of *insan kamil*, a complete human being who is balanced between worldly and *ukhrawi* needs. The values promoted include the integration of faith, knowledge and charity, reflecting the holistic approach in Islamic education.

The Islamic curriculum has an approach that emphasizes *tawhid* and *adab*, which means that every educational process must be aligned with divine values and character building. As a result, the Islamic curriculum has significant power in building students' moral and spiritual foundations.

While each method has its advantages, both have their drawbacks. Islamic curricula must be constantly adapted to the times and science, but secular curricula are often considered too technocratic and neglect spiritual aspects. Therefore, in order to produce a comprehensive curriculum system that aids in the formation of the whole person, the two must be carefully integrated.

#### 4. Discussion

The results of this study focus on the comparison and differences between two main approaches to education: the secular curriculum and the Islamic curriculum. The main purpose of this discussion is to explore how these two curriculum systems affect the purpose of education, character building, and students' readiness to face the challenges of the modern world.

Secular curricula often neglect the moral and spiritual aspects of education and focus on developing scientific and rational knowledge. On the other hand, the Islamic curriculum combines knowledge of the world and the hereafter, aiming to make students not only intellectually intelligent but also have good morals and spiritual awareness.

In addition, it discusses educational goals, knowledge approaches, integration of religion in education, and the role of moral and ethical values in both educational programs. The purpose of this comparison is to show the advantages and disadvantages of each system in creating a moral and responsible generation.

The author discusses the issues that may arise when combining the two curriculum systems in the context of an increasingly multicultural and evolving global education. It is hoped that this discourse will provide an understanding of how these two curricula can work together to produce a more well-rounded, relevant and responsible education.

Secular and Islamic curricula have significant advantages and disadvantages in preparing students to face the challenges of today's times. The school curriculum has the advantage of emphasizing science and technology as it relates to the developing world, enabling students to acquire the necessary skills in the world of work [3], [50]. The secular curriculum also prioritizes honesty and universality, which makes it easily applicable in various social and cultural contexts without relying on specific religious beliefs. Its flexibility allows students to try new things in various disciplines without being limited to religion or ideology. As it is more inclusive, students from different religious and cultural backgrounds have equal access to education. However, the secular curriculum also has various shortcomings. One of them is the lack of attention to moral and spiritual values, which are very important in building students' character. Education that only focuses on technical skills can result in fragmented learning, where knowledge and values are not well connected. In addition, the reliance on the advancement of modernization and globalization often overrides the local cultural context or traditional values that should be considered in the education system. Without an emphasis on the spiritual purpose of life, students may feel confused and only pursue material achievements without understanding the deeper meaning of life.

On the other hand, the hallmark of the Islamic curriculum lies in the amalgamation of the worldly and the spiritual taught, creating a balance between intellectual development and moral and spiritual character building. It also emphasizes the importance of building a strong character, teaching religious values that help students grow into responsible, well-behaved and morally upright individuals. With a holistic approach, the Islamic curriculum combines knowledge with ethical and moral principles, offering a way of learning that is more thorough and relevant to everyday experience.

However, one of the biggest challenges of an Islamic curriculum is the possibility of clashes with modern science, especially on issues that conflict with religious beliefs, such as in some areas of science or technology. Its implementation can also face obstacles in a global scenario, especially in countries that are more secular or multi-religious. In addition, these curricula are sometimes seen as rigid and inflexible, leading to a more restricted understanding of religious teachings, potentially reducing diversity in the education system. In the context of culturally diverse societies, the implementation of Islamic curricula can pose challenges related to pluralism and religious rights.

Overall, both secular and Islamic curricula provide approaches that have advantages in different contexts. Secular curricula tend to be more adaptive and focus on developing practical skills that match the needs of today's world, while Islamic curricula offer a more well-rounded education with an emphasis on incorporating moral and spiritual values.

While each curriculum has its shortcomings, they can support each other if efforts are made to combine the strengths of both to create a more comprehensive and meaningful education system.

It is important to realize that in designing an ideal education system, an integrative approach between the secular curriculum and the Islamic curriculum is actually not impossible. In fact, in the current era of globalization and information openness an educational approach that is able to combine spiritual values and academic competencies is becoming increasingly relevant. Education is not only required to produce intelligent and productive human beings, but also ethical, wise, and have a strong moral compass.

In addition, many countries with Muslim-majority populations are beginning to adopt a hybrid approach, which incorporates Islamic elements into the modern education system without compromising academic quality. This approach allows students to remain competitive in the global arena, while growing into individuals rooted in religious and cultural values. In this context, teachers and educators play an important role as a bridge between the two approaches. They must be able to internalize religious values without being doctrinaire, and teach science without neglecting the moral dimension.

With this integration, the education system becomes not only a tool for professional achievement, but also a means of forming a complete personality. Students are educated to think critically, work together, respect differences, and be able to make decisions based on common sense and conscience. Therefore, it is important for policy makers and education practitioners to continuously evaluate and adjust the curriculum to keep it contextual and relevant to the dynamics of the times and the needs of students.

## 5. Conclusions

This study highlights the distinctive characteristics of secular and Islamic curricula as pillars in shaping the direction of education. The secular curriculum excels in its adaptability to scientific progress and global demands, prioritizing critical thinking, rationality, and the development of practical skills. Conversely, the Islamic curriculum emphasizes the integration of intellectual, moral, and spiritual development, aiming to produce well-rounded individuals (*insan kamil*) who balance worldly competencies with ethical and religious values. These findings illustrate that each curriculum carries unique strengths and weaknesses, emphasizing the need for an education system that not only prepares students for the complexities of modern life but also grounds them in moral and spiritual principles.

In light of these insights, it becomes evident that an integrative approach could provide a more holistic framework for education. By harmonizing the adaptability and scientific orientation of secular curricula with the moral and spiritual grounding of Islamic education, educators can cultivate students who are both competent in addressing contemporary challenges and anchored in ethical values. Such a blended curriculum fosters critical, creative, and conscientious individuals capable of contributing meaningfully to society. Therefore, continuous evaluation and collaborative efforts between educators, policymakers, and communities are essential to create a curriculum that is relevant, comprehensive, and transformative.

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