
Foundations for the Development of Islamic Religious Education Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum has a vital role in shaping a generation of Muslims who have faith, knowledge, and noble character. However, curriculum development often faces challenges when it is not grounded in a solid foundation. This research aims to examine the foundations of the PAI curriculum, encompassing philosophical, psychological, sociological, historical, and theological perspectives. The research method employed is library research, involving the collection of data from relevant literature, books, journals, and prior research. The results of this study show that the philosophical foundation provides direction for educational goals based on society's values and ideals; the psychological foundation adapts the curriculum to students' development; the sociological foundation emphasizes relevance to social and cultural needs; and the historical foundation ensures the continuity of Islamic educational traditions. In contrast, the theological foundation emphasizes the Qur'an and Hadith as the primary sources. This research concludes that the development of the PAI curriculum must be grounded in these five foundations to ensure that Islamic religious education is more effective, more relevant to contemporary needs, and better able to cultivate kamil individuals. This study contributes to strengthening the theory of Islamic education by emphasizing the balance among its spiritual, intellectual, and social dimensions.

Keywords: Foundation, Development, Islamic Religious Education Curriculum

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INTRODUCTION

Among the most crucial components of curriculum development is the foundation. The foundation of the curriculum is the basis on which it is constructed or compiled. If it is associated with education, the foundation's function is to provide direction for achieving the goals and to serve as a foundation for establishing the educational curriculum. According to Law No. 20 of 2003, the curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements for the objectives, content, learning materials, and methods that serve as guidelines for implementing learning activities to achieve national education goals. (Azis & Raharjo, 2025)

The curriculum is one of the most essential parts of the educational process. With an established educational curriculum, the program will run regularly and systematically. The curriculum is a tool for achieving academic goals and a guideline for implementing the teaching

and learning process across various types and school levels. The curriculum is the foundation and reflection of the nation's philosophy of life, shaping the future of its civilization as articulated in its educational curriculum. The curriculum should be dynamic and continually evolve in response to emerging developments, with the needs of the community prioritized, because the purpose of education is to form human beings who can benefit the community's social life.

The curriculum, as both a design and a means of education, plays a vital role and occupies a leading position in all educational activities. Given the importance of the curriculum for education and human development, its preparation and development must be carried out appropriately and efficiently. (Bahri, 2017) Curriculum design must be grounded in a strong foundation, informed by research findings and rigorous analysis relevant to contemporary demands and needs. The curriculum can be likened to a building that requires a solid foundation to remain upright, resist collapse, and withstand various challenges. With the proper foundation, the educational process will be easier to implement for both educators and students. On the other hand, if the curriculum is prepared without a solid foundation, implementation will tend to be less effective and more inefficient. (Taseman et al., 2020)

Islamic religious education comprises two key terms: "education" and "Islamic religion". According to Al-Ghazali, education is an effort by educators to cleanse students of despicable behavior and instill noble morals, so that they can draw closer to Allah SWT. (Hamim, 2017) Islamic Religious Education is a pedagogical process conducted by educators for students, with the primary purpose of cultivating noble morals. In addition, Islamic Religious Education aims to foster students' broader understanding of religious teachings and practices in daily life, as well as to cultivate moral and ethical awareness consistent with Islamic values. (Aulia, Ritonga, et al., 2024)

The development of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum must be grounded in sound principles, as this is essential. With a curriculum grounded in a strong foundation, educational institutions can ensure that PAI learning not only emphasizes the religious dimension but also equips students with an understanding of moral values and practical skills relevant to daily life, in accordance with Islamic teachings. A curriculum grounded in a clear foundation will also support the development of high-quality learning materials, the use of objective evaluation, and learning strategies that are effective and aligned with students' needs and current conditions.

Based on the description above, the curriculum plays a vital role as a systematic procedure for the implementation of education. Curriculum development must also be grounded in a strong foundation to ensure that the curriculum functions as intended. Therefore, a study is needed that examines in depth the foundations of the development of the Islamic religious education curriculum. Thus, this study will comprehensively examine the basis of curriculum development

in Islamic religious education. The discussion focuses on the PAI curriculum's philosophical, psychological, sociological, historical, and theological foundations.

METHOD

The research method used in this study uses the literature research method (*library research*), what is meant by literature research is a method of collecting data by understanding and studying theories from various literature related to the research, which is carried out by collecting multiple literature in the form of books, journals and the results of previous study or research related to the object of this research.(Adlini et al., 2022)

In this study, data are obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary data are data obtained directly from the source. In this case, the primary source of research is books on the Foundations of PAI Curriculum Development. Meanwhile, secondary data are not derived from primary sources; supporting data include journals related to the foundation of PAI curriculum development.(Jonathan, 2006)

The data collection technique in this study involves reviewing books, journal articles, notes, and reports related to the problem under study. The data analysis technique employed is content analysis. Authors repeatedly conduct interlibrary checks to ensure the accuracy of the research results and minimize errors arising from researcher shortcomings (e.g., errors in information delivery). This research is presented by synthesizing the results of the discovery, guided by the principles of ease and simplicity. This is because researchers with limited expertise have not been able to conduct an in-depth literature review. In addition, simplicity and ease of delivery are designed to facilitate readers' understanding of the core content of the PAI Curriculum Development Foundation.(Latifah N, Marini A, 2021)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Philosophical

Philosophy comes from two Greek words: *Philia*, meaning love, and *Sophia*, meaning wisdom. Etymologically, the meaning of philosophy is "love of wisdom."(Made et al., 2022) In an operational sense, philosophy has two meanings: as a process of thought and as a product of thought. Operationally, philosophy has two meanings: as a mode of thought and as the product of thought. Of the five definitions of philosophy proposed by Titus, two of them show the following understanding: "*Philosophy is a method of reflective thinking and reasoned inquiry; ... Philosophy is a collection of theories or systems of thought*".(Muslim, 2023) In the context of philosophy as a process, Socrates stated that philosophy is a way of thinking radically, comprehensively, and profoundly, or as a way to dig something to its roots.

The philosophical foundation of curriculum development underpins institutional goals, which in turn inform educational institutions' curriculum objectives. At the same time, the philosophy of education provides a foundation for the community's values and ideals. The philosophy of education provides a foundation for designing academic goals; two main factors shape it: first, the needs of students in the community, and second, the community's ideals. The values of educational philosophy must be embodied in daily practice; this underscores the importance of academic philosophy as a foundation for curriculum development. (Ma'arif, 2018)

The philosophical foundations of Islamic education are necessary because they encompass ontology, epistemology, and axiology, which are central to Islamic philosophy.

1. Ontology

Ontology deals with the nature of reality and the objects studied in education. The ontological concept of character education seeks to address the question of the existence of ethics education. Ontology in the study of character education emphasizes the essence of existence; by "existence," we mean the existence of character education. In this context, the ontology of character education seeks to identify the essence of ethical education and human nature. From this understanding, the essence of education, or educational ontology, is rooted in the needs of human life related to thought. (Kafi & Rosadi, 2024)

In Islamic religious education, the foundational question of ontology asks: "What is taught?" "What is the nature of man?", and "what is the essence of religious knowledge itself?". The ontology in the Islamic religious education curriculum is based on the belief that humans are creatures created by Allah who have a body, intellect, and spirituality, and are given responsibilities as caliphs on earth. Therefore, the curriculum of Islamic religious education is not limited to the cognitive dimension of knowledge; it also encompasses the affective and psychomotor dimensions that cultivate noble morals. Based on this ontology, the Islamic religious education curriculum must include instruction in aqidah, sharia, morals, Islamic history, and other Islamic insights that enable humans to live in harmony with their nature and the purpose of their creation. (Nugraha et al., 2024)

2. Epistemologists

Epistemology, as a major branch of philosophy, concerns the nature of knowledge. The primary focus is on knowledge itself. In its etymological sense, epistemology derives from Greek: "episteme," meaning proper or scientific expertise, and "logos," meaning theory or study. In simple terms, epistemology can be interpreted as a theory of knowledge. (Tarigan et al., 2022)

In the context of developing the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum, epistemology provides an essential basis for structuring knowledge. The PAI curriculum should be designed based on a deep understanding of the origins, essence, and limits of human

knowledge. Islamic religious education is based on the primary sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Hadith. It is further supported by secondary sources such as *ijma'*, *qiyas*, and the scholars' *ijtihad*. The methods of acquiring knowledge in PAI are also diverse, including textual (directly from the *nash*), rational (through reasoning), empirical (through experience), and intuitive (through the heart and spiritual knowledge). Thus, the PAI curriculum must be designed to foster critical, reflective, and applicative thinking skills, enabling students to understand religion deeply, contextualize it within modern life, and present a comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings, including their spiritual and intellectual dimensions. (Ishak, 2024)

3. Axiology

Axiology concerns the value, benefits, and purpose of knowledge or education. In the development of the Islamic religious education curriculum, the axiological foundation addresses the questions: "What is PAI taught for?" and "What values are to be realized?" The Islamic religious education curriculum is designed to ensure that students not only acquire knowledge of religion but also internalize Islamic values in daily life. The ultimate goal is the formation of the *Kamil* people, namely, complete human beings who possess faith, piety, noble character, knowledge, and the capacity to practice religious teachings in society. In terms of axiology, PAI is not only worldly but also *ukhrawi*, so that Islamic religious education serves to guide humans to live meaningfully, benefit others, and achieve happiness in this world and salvation in the hereafter.

Psychology

Psychology in education is closely related to human behavior. In each process, there is interaction between students and both physical and social environments. Through education, students are expected to experience behavioral changes toward adulthood across the mental, emotional, moral, intellectual, and social domains. However, not all changes in student behavior are directly attributable to the educational program; they are also influenced by developmental and environmental factors outside the educational context. As the primary means of achieving academic goals, the curriculum plays a vital role in changing students' behavior. Through the curriculum, it is hoped that students' potential can be realized as real abilities and that new skills can emerge over a sustained period. Mizar Aulia, Fauzi Ahmad Syarif, and Siti Halimah, *Foundations for the Development of the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum*, no. 2 (2024): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12513426>.

The foundation of psychology in the development of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum provides an essential basis for understanding how students learn, grow, and develop across developmental stages. Psychology guides the educational process, particularly

through the PAI, to ensure alignment with students' needs, potential, and individual characteristics. In other words, the development of the PAI curriculum is grounded not only in religious normative values but also in students' psychological Wellbeing, so that Islamic religious learning can be more effective, meaningful, and sustainable. Two branches of psychology play a vital role in curriculum development, which are as follows:

1. Developmental psychology, students have certain stages ranging from childhood, adolescence, to adulthood. Each stage has its own characteristics with respect to thinking, behaving, and acting. Therefore, the PAI material developed in the curriculum must be adapted to these stages. For example, at the elementary school level, PAI learning emphasizes the introduction of basic concepts of faith, simple worship, and moral values through concrete methods such as stories, examples, and habituation. Meanwhile, at the intermediate level, students have begun to think critically. Therefore, PAI learning not only introduces Islamic teachings at a basic level but also aims to understand the Qur'an and Hadith, the wisdom of worship, and their relationship to real life.
2. Learning psychology also plays a significant role in this foundation. Various learning theories, such as behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism, inform the design of PAI learning strategies. For example, behaviorist theory emphasizes the importance of habituation in shaping worship behavior; cognitive theory emphasizes the internalization of religious teachings; and constructivist theory emphasizes learners' active involvement in constructing religious knowledge through lived experience. With this approach, PAI teachers can select appropriate methods, media, and evaluation strategies based on students' psychological needs.(Falasifa & Umdaturrosyidah, 2021)

Thus, the foundation of psychology in the development of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum ensures that learning not only conveys religious knowledge but also shapes Islamic attitudes, behaviors, and personalities in accordance with students' developmental stages and psychological needs. This means that the PAI curriculum, grounded in psychology, will be more humanistic, realistic, and practical in achieving the goals of Islamic education, namely, to form individuals who possess faith, knowledge, and noble character.

Sociological

The sociological foundation of curriculum development underpins the development of learning designs that examine the social dimensions of society. Wiji Hidayati added that education is part of culture. Education is a cultural process. It emerged from culture and was carried out within the artistic process. Education is a socialization process through human interaction with culturally formed individuals. In that context, students are confronted with human culture, shaped

by their cultural values, and nurtured in their ability to become cultured human beings. (Latifa & Arifmiboy, 2023)

The sociological foundation underpins the development of the curriculum as an educational tool, comprising objectives, materials, learning activities, and a positive learning environment, to support learners' experiences relevant to their personal and social development. The curriculum must be able to transmit culture from one generation to the next amid globalization, which continues to erode local culture.(Wafa et al., 2023)

The basis of sociology provides an overview of the Islamic education curriculum, which encompasses the characteristics of Islamic society and culture, including knowledge, ideal values, modes of thinking, customs, and art. No society is culturally homogeneous, and no culture exists in isolation. The sociological foundation of the development of the Islamic religious education curriculum means that the content, objectives, and methods of learning the Islamic religion must be oriented toward societal needs, socio-cultural developments, and contemporary challenges. In this way, Islamic religious education not only instills religious knowledge but also shapes students to become members of society who are spiritually mature, possess noble character, and benefit their environment.(Widodo, 2023)

Historical

In accordance with the history of national development, historical factors exert a significant influence on the development of the curriculum, including Islamic Religious Education (PAI). In Indonesia, the long history of Islamic education cannot be separated from the nation's history. In the early days, Islamic education was organized through Islamic boarding schools, suraus, and madrasas, which served as centers for cultivating faith, worship, and morals. This tradition subsequently served as an essential foundation for the formulation of the PAI curriculum. Following Indonesia's independence, religious education was accorded an official status within the national education system. This is a form of appreciation for the long history of religion's role in shaping the nation's identity. The development of the PAI curriculum has undergone adjustments in accordance with historical dynamics, including the colonial period, the old order, the new order, and the reform era. The change reflects the need to maintain the continuity of Islamic teachings while adapting to the ever-evolving social, political, and cultural demands.

Thus, the historical foundations of the PAI curriculum indicate that Islamic religious education in Indonesia is not a sudden development but the result of a long historical process. The Islamic religious education curriculum is always built by respecting past experiences, maintaining the noble values of the Islamic education tradition, and adapting it to contemporary contexts to

form a generation of Muslims who have faith, knowledge, and noble character. (Falasifa & Umdaturrosyidah, 2021)

The historical foundations of Islamic religious education curriculum development mean that the experience of Islamic education, from time to time, serves as an important reference point for curriculum development. By attending to history, the Islamic religious education curriculum can maintain the continuity of Islamic traditions, appreciate the struggles of earlier educators, and remain relevant to contemporary developments and societal needs.

Theological

Theological foundation refers to the foundation derived from the divine values contained in the Qur'an and As-Sunnah, which are considered to have absolute and universal truth. The principles of Islamic education emphasize that curriculum planning must be closely aligned with the religion's core sources, namely the Qur'an and Hadith. The principles set by Allah SWT and the orders of the Prophet can serve as the basis for compiling a curriculum. The Qur'an serves as the primary source of Islamic teachings, providing a comprehensive guide to Muslim life. The teachings of the Qur'an encompass moral, ethical, legal, and social dimensions, all of which must be integrated into the PAI curriculum to shape students' character and behavior in accordance with Islamic values. (Meylina Astuti et al., 2023) How is it stated in the Qur'an Surah Al-Qasas, verse 77

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنَ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفُسَادَ فِي

الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

Meaning: "And seek what Allah has bestowed upon you (the reward) of the Hereafter, but do not forget your part in the world. Do good as Allah has done good to you, and do not do any harm to the earth. Indeed, Allah does not like those who do evil." (Q.S Al-Qasas: 77).

The meaning of the Qur'anic verse above is that Islamic religious education must guide students to strike a balance between orientation toward the hereafter and worldly responsibilities. The knowledge and curriculum developed not only emphasize the spiritual and worship aspects, but also teach how to utilize God's gifts for the good of life in the world. Thus, the PAI curriculum is a means of cultivating individuals who have faith, noble character, manage social life well, and make all their activities worthy of worship, thereby contributing to happiness in this world and the hereafter.

Hadith, as the second source of Islamic teachings after the Qur'an, plays a significant role in shaping the Islamic education curriculum. Hadith includes various words, deeds, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, which are concrete examples in the application of the teachings

of the Qur'an in daily life. Therefore, Hadith should be an integral part of the Islamic religious education curriculum, providing practical guidance to students in performing worship, engaging in social interaction, and developing good character. In developing the Islamic religious education curriculum, Hadith must be taught in context so that students understand its relevance to modern life and can apply it in various situations. (Firmansyah & Khozin, 2022) The Prophet PBUH said: *"Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim."* (HR. Ibn Majah no. 224) This hadith emphasizes that the Islamic religious education curriculum must ensure that every Muslim receives instruction, as knowledge is the foundation of faith and charity.

The development of the PAI curriculum is based not only on the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith but also on Pancasila, particularly the first precept, "The One Godhead". In Indonesia, Pancasila serves as the basis of the state and guides various aspects of life, including education. The first precept of Pancasila recognizes and respects belief in and piety toward God Almighty, in accordance with each individual's religion and beliefs (Ma'arif, 2016). Therefore, in developing the PAI curriculum, Pancasila values must be integrated to cultivate students who are not only faithful and devout but also tolerant, respectful of diversity, and able to live harmoniously in society.

With this religious basis, the development of the Islamic religious education curriculum can be carried out more systematically, in accordance with the purpose and role of Islamic religious education, namely to form individuals who possess strong faith, piety, high morality, and reliable expertise and knowledge. Islamic religious education aims to cultivate students who not only excel academically but also possess good character and can serve as role models in society. Therefore, the PAI curriculum should be designed to develop a broad range of competencies, including spiritual, moral, social, and intellectual. In this way, a generation of qualified students (*insan kamil*) will be formed. In this situation, students can be guided to strengthen their faith, practice piety toward God, remain firm in religious teachings, behave well, develop proficiency in science and technology, and instill and practice religious values as the basis of their daily lives. (Bhima, 2024)

CONCLUSION

The development of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum must be grounded in philosophical, psychological, sociological, historical, and theological foundations. Each of these foundations has a complementary role: philosophical provides the direction and purpose of education, psychology ensures conformity with the development of students, sociology emphasizes relevance to culture and the needs of society, historical/historical provides continuity with the tradition of Islamic education, while theological affirms that the Qur'an and Hadith are the primary sources of the Islamic religious education curriculum. With a solid foundation, the

Islamic religious education curriculum can cultivate students who possess faith, knowledge, and noble character, and who can face the challenges of modern life without losing their Islamic identity.

The theoretical implication of these findings is that the study of the foundations of curriculum development reinforces Islamic education theory, which emphasizes a balance among the spiritual, intellectual, and social dimensions. Its contribution to educational theory is to provide an integral, contextual model for curriculum development, so that PAI is not only a normative subject but also a strategic instrument for building the character of a religious, tolerant, and competitive nation. Thus, the results of this study confirm that the foundation of the development of the PAI curriculum is a key factor in achieving the goals of national education and Islamic ideals in the formation of kamil people.

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