

Approaches to PAI Curriculum Development

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses various approaches used in the development of the Islamic Education Curriculum (PAI) and its urgency in improving the quality of learning. The purpose of this study is to identify the characteristics, advantages, and relevance of each approach to the needs of contemporary Islamic education. The research method used is a literature study with descriptive analysis of the literature related to the development of the PAI curriculum. The results of the study show that there are five main approaches in the development of the PAI curriculum, namely the academic subject approach, humanistic approach, technological approach, social reconstruction approach, and competency-based approach. These approaches are considered to be able to serve as a basis for educators in designing a more meaningful and contextual curriculum. The existence of the PAI curriculum plays a strategic role as a guideline for achieving the goals of Islamic education, namely exploring human potential in accordance with Islamic law. However, the PAI curriculum still faces various problems, such as monotonous learning models, overlapping material, and a lack of relevance to the social context of students. Therefore, the selection and combination of the right approaches is very important so that the PAI curriculum can be implemented effectively and adaptively in the teaching and learning process.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a crucial role in shaping the moral, spiritual, and social identity of students in Indonesia. PAI not only functions as a transfer of religious knowledge (cognitive), but also as the formation of behavior (affective and psychomotor) in accordance with Islamic values and the Indonesian context. Therefore, the PAI curriculum must be dynamic and adaptive to developments in science, technology, and the demands of the times (Wahyuni, 2024).

The curriculum, as an educational plan, requires a systematic and focused approach in its development so that educational goals can be achieved effectively. In the context of the PAI Curriculum, there are various approaches that have been adopted and implemented, each with a different philosophical basis and focus (Aulia Rahmah Puteri, 2025). These approaches include the academic subject approach, which emphasizes the systematization of each discipline; the humanistic approach, which is based on the idea of humanizing humans; the technological approach, which focuses on competency analysis; and the social reconstruction approach, which pays close attention to the reciprocal relationship between the curriculum and social activities (Muhaimin, 2018).

In the context of developing the PAI curriculum, it is important to understand the characteristics and advantages of each approach so that their selection and combination can effectively improve students' understanding and character, as well as meet the needs of the times. In addition, several studies also highlight the importance of approaches that are specifically character-based to ensure a better and more integrated PAI curriculum.

Although the classification of these approaches has become a fundamental study in curriculum science, determining the most appropriate approach for modern PAI remains a challenge. It is important to understand the characteristics and advantages of each approach so that their selection and combination can effectively improve students' understanding and character, as well as meet the needs of the times. In addition, several studies also highlight the importance of approaches that are specifically based on character to ensure a better and more integrated PAI curriculum (Muhaimin, 2018).

Based on this background, this study aims to conduct a comprehensive analysis of approaches to PAI curriculum development. Specifically, this study will examine the characteristics and implications of academic, humanistic, technological, and social reconstruction approaches to then formulate a synthesis of the most relevant approaches for the development of PAI Curriculum in universities and schools, particularly in addressing contemporary issues and shaping the transformative character of students.

This study is also important because the diversity of approaches in developing the PAI curriculum requires a deeper understanding of how each approach works and its impact on the learning process. The academic approach, for example, focuses on the systematic and structured mastery of Islamic scientific material. This approach emphasizes the importance of depth of concept, accuracy of knowledge, and the connection of material with other Islamic disciplines. However, this approach needs to be criticized because if applied rigidly, it tends to result in learning that is oriented towards memorization and does not touch on the aspects of developing the values, character, and social skills of students. Therefore, a critical review of the academic approach must be carried out to determine the extent to which it can be combined with other approaches in order to remain relevant in the context of modern education.

Meanwhile, the humanistic approach emphasizes the comprehensive development of students' potential, including emotional, spiritual, and personal aspects. This approach views students as unique individuals who have the ability to develop through a learning process that provides freedom, space for reflection, and character building. In the context of PAI, the humanistic approach is very important because it is in line with the main objectives of Islamic education, namely to shape individuals with noble character and high spiritual awareness. However, its implementation also requires educators to be prepared to create an empathetic, dialogical, and experience-based learning environment. Therefore, this study needs to evaluate how the humanistic approach can be realistically implemented in the classroom, taking into account teacher competence and the learning environment.

The technological approach is also an important focus in this study because the development of the digital era has changed the way students access information and interact with religious knowledge. The integration of technology in the PAI curriculum is not only related to the use of digital learning media or e-learning platforms, but also includes the development of religious digital literacy, critical thinking skills regarding religious information on the internet, and the formation of digital ethics based on Islamic values. This approach requires the curriculum to be adaptive, flexible, and responsive to technological developments so that students not only become users of technology but are also able to assess and utilize technology wisely in accordance with the principles of *akhlakul karimah* (good character). Thus, an analysis of the technological approach will provide an overview of the readiness of the PAI curriculum in facing the era of information disruption.

In addition, the social reconstruction approach in the development of the PAI curriculum has a strategic role in shaping students to be able to read social realities and contribute to social transformation. This approach views education as a means to create social change through the strengthening of the values of justice, care, tolerance, and community empowerment. In the context of PAI, this approach requires the curriculum to not only teach religious knowledge but also stimulate students to understand contemporary issues such as radicalism, poverty, gender inequality, moral crisis, and global humanitarian problems. Thus, the implementation of this approach can help shape students who have a transformative social attitude in accordance with Islamic teachings.

By comprehensively examining these four approaches, this study aims to formulate a synthesis of the most relevant and effective approaches in designing an Islamic Education curriculum that can address current challenges. This synthesis is important because no single approach can independently resolve the complexities of educational issues. The combination of academic, humanistic, technological, and social reconstruction approaches is expected to produce an Islamic Education curriculum that simultaneously strengthens knowledge, shapes character, develops 21st-century skills, and fosters social awareness in students. Thus, the results of this study can be a reference for educational institutions in designing a more adaptive, relevant, and visionary Islamic Education curriculum.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research type of study. A qualitative approach was chosen because the researcher focused on understanding and interpreting the meaning of concepts and statements contained in the literature. The Library Research method specifically refers to the process of searching for and conducting an in-depth review of various relevant scientific works, whether in the form of books, journals, papers, or other media that comprehensively discuss the research topic.

The data sources in this study consisted of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources were the main references obtained directly from the authors, in the form of books discussing curriculum concepts and their development models. Secondary sources included journals, research articles, and papers related to the research focus.

In collecting data, the researcher identified, selected, and grouped sources relevant to the research problem. Books and journals related to curriculum development were analyzed to obtain a comprehensive overview of the theories and approaches used.

Next, data analysis was carried out by examining, understanding, and interpreting the contents of each source in accordance with the research context. The data obtained was then processed to find meanings, patterns, and important information that supported the research discussion. The results of this analysis formed the basis for drawing conclusions that described the main findings of the research.

RESULTS

The Philosophical Nature and Holistic Orientation of the PAI Curriculum

The approach to developing the PAI curriculum is a fundamental principle that determines the direction, strategy, and success of religious education as a whole. This approach is a perspective or basis of thinking that serves as the main foundation for designing, compiling, and implementing a systematic learning process to instill Islamic values that are effective and relevant to the contemporary social context (Kunandar, 2013; Mulyasa, 2014). According to curriculum experts, the approach serves as a philosophical perspective that becomes the starting point in the learning process and ultimately determines the strategies and methods to be applied in PAI (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018; Sukmadinata, 2017).

The essence of the PAI curriculum approach must be oriented towards achieving holistic educational goals, which specifically include a balance between cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitudes and values), and psychomotor (skills) aspects (Aulia Rahmah Puteri, 2025). This trinity balance is crucial because PAI has the fundamental task of not only transferring knowledge, but also instilling noble character and shaping character that can be applied in real life, as emphasized in character education design studies (Muhaimin, 2017; Zubaedi, 2011). Therefore, curriculum development must always be based on a systematic study of the actual demands and needs of society, given that the curriculum is the main guideline that ensures the relevance of PAI education in this era of disruption.

The development of the PAI curriculum must also take into account philosophical, psychological, sociological, and pedagogical foundations as factors that determine the quality of the learning design. The philosophical foundation emphasizes the importance of basic Islamic values as a reference in formulating learning objectives, content, and evaluation. Meanwhile, the psychological foundation considers the developmental characteristics of students, both intellectually, morally, emotionally, and spiritually, so that the learning presented can truly touch the internal needs of students. The sociological foundation serves to ensure that the curriculum is in line with the dynamics of modern society, including changes in digital interaction patterns, the challenges of globalization, and increasingly complex cultural diversity. Thus, the PAI curriculum is not only normatively relevant but also adaptive to the changing times.

In addition, the PAI curriculum approach needs to be developed through a student-centered learning paradigm. This paradigm encourages teachers to act as facilitators, mediators, and motivators in the learning process so that students have more space to explore, discuss, and develop their religious understanding critically and contextually. This approach also allows PAI learning to be more meaningful because students do not only receive material passively, but are also invited to analyze social phenomena, moral issues, and contemporary issues through an Islamic perspective. Thus, PAI learning becomes a means of forming deep religious literacy and reflective thinking skills.

Furthermore, the development of the PAI curriculum needs to emphasize the integration of Islamic values with 21st-century competencies, such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. This integration is important so that PAI graduates not only have a strong spiritual foundation but are also able to compete and contribute to global life. For example, learning about morals can be combined with the development of problem-solving skills through case studies, while fiqh material can be linked to digital literacy through the use of technology in searching for reliable religious references. Thus, the PAI curriculum becomes

more inclusive and relevant to the needs of the modern generation living in the midst of a very fast flow of information.

In addition, the success of the PAI curriculum is largely determined by the effectiveness of its implementation in the field. Therefore, teachers must have adequate pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies to be able to apply the curriculum approach properly. Teacher competency improvement can be achieved through continuous training, teacher community activities, school coaching, and the use of various digital learning resources. Curriculum evaluation must also be carried out periodically to ensure its suitability with developments in educational science, community demands, and government policies in the field of Islamic education. With a systematic evaluation process, the PAI curriculum will continue to undergo improvements towards better quality.

Finally, the PAI curriculum development approach must be directed at shaping Muslim individuals who have character, broad knowledge, and are able to make positive contributions to society. Through a comprehensive and relevant curriculum, PAI not only functions as a formal subject in schools but also as a strategic effort in building a generation that is virtuous, tolerant, adaptive, and capable of facing the challenges of modern civilization. Thus, the development of the PAI curriculum plays an important role in shaping a harmonious, religious, and civilized national life.

Comparative Analysis of Five Main Approaches: Characteristics, Advantages, and Challenges

This study found that the five main approaches identified in the development of PAI curriculum are the Academic Subject Approach, Humanistic Approach, Technological Approach, Social Reconstruction Approach, and Competency-Based Approach. Each of these approaches has distinctive characteristics that define different objectives, methods, material organization, and evaluation (Aulia Rahmah Puteri, 2025). Methodologically, curriculum developers are advised to apply appropriate strategies and methods, which include the use of Academic Subject, Humanistic, Technological, and Social Reconstruction approaches within a systematic and character-oriented development framework. (Wahyuni et al., n.d.). Here is the explanation:

1. Academic Subject Approach

The Academic Subject Approach is characterized by the systematization of disciplines, which in the implementation of PAI means a strong emphasis on mastery of core subjects such as Fiqh, Tafsir, Hadith, and Islamic Cultural History as pure sciences. This approach has a strong historical foundation, in line with classical curriculum principles that focus on content and logical delivery of material. However, its weakness lies in its tendency to produce graduates who are proficient in theory but rigid, lacking in innovation, and insensitive to social contexts, an issue that often hinders efforts to innovate the PAI curriculum to make it relevant to contemporary issues.

2. Technological Approach

The technological approach is a curriculum development approach that emphasizes a systematic, measurable, and efficient process in achieving learning objectives. This approach is rooted in the system approach, which views learning as a series of interconnected components, from the formulation of objectives, the selection of learning strategies, the selection of media, to the evaluation of learning outcomes (Nasution, 2021).

In the context of Islamic Religious Education (IRE), the technological approach places learning objectives at the center of curriculum development. All learning activities are designed based on an analysis of the needs and competencies that students must achieve. The instructional process uses systematic learning tools, such as goal analysis, selection of effective methods, use of technological media, and data-based evaluation.

This approach is considered relevant to modern educational needs, particularly because it can improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and consistency of learning objective achievement. In addition, the technological approach also makes it easier for IRE teachers to plan structured learning and ensure the measurable achievement of spiritual and moral objectives.

3. Competency-Based

The competency-based approach (Competency-Based Curriculum) is an approach that focuses on the actual abilities (competencies) that students must possess after undergoing the learning process. This approach is outcome-oriented and emphasizes the integrated mastery of skills, knowledge, and attitudes.

In the PAI curriculum, the competency-based approach requires learning that not only emphasizes memorization of religious concepts but also the ability to apply Islamic values in real life. The learning process is designed to shape spiritual, social, and worship competencies that can be observed and measured.

The competency-based curriculum also requires a variety of learning methods such as problem solving, project-based learning, and reflective activities to develop students' religious competence holistically. The findings of Puteri et al. (2025) show that the competency-based approach in PAI has been proven to increase

the effectiveness of learning and the relevance of the competencies acquired by students to the needs of the 21st century.

Thus, this approach places a strong emphasis on the ability of students to understand, appreciate, and practice Islamic teachings comprehensively in their daily lives.

4. Humanism and Character Building

The humanistic approach stems from the idea of humanizing the curriculum, which emphasizes the experiences, interests, and potential of students, with the main objective of self-actualization and personal maturity. In the context of PAI, this approach is very important because it is in line with the main objective of religious education, which is to shape noble morals and strong character. Character education experts fully support the idea that the PAI curriculum design must be integrated with this approach to optimally achieve the affective dimension. Although strong in character building, the humanistic approach faces significant challenges related to the difficulty of standardizing materials and evaluations, as well as the risk of subjectivity in measuring students' spiritual and moral achievements.

In a humanistic approach to the curriculum, teachers play an important role in creating positive emotional relationships with students. To ensure that the learning process is effective, teachers need to provide optimal service so that students feel safe and comfortable during the learning process. Discomfort caused by coercion from teachers should be avoided, because a sense of security is a prerequisite that allows students to develop to their full potential in the learning process.

The development of the Islamic Education (PAI) curriculum encourages the active involvement of students, for example in formulating objectives and choosing learning themes. In addition, the learning materials and processes are flexible and tailored to the interests and talents of students in a relevant context. Based on this description, the development of the PAI curriculum focuses on the needs, interests, and potential of students. This curriculum also serves to motivate students to develop their natural abilities and carry out their roles as *abdullah* (servants of Allah) and *khalifatullah* (representatives of Allah) on earth.

5. The Urgency of the Transformative Approach (Social Reconstruction) as the Ideal Synthesis of PAI

The limitations of traditional and technological approaches in responding to pressing social issues make the Social Reconstruction Approach (Transformative Approach) the most promising framework for modern PAI. This approach is a proactive and strategic curriculum model, in which the curriculum is used as a vital instrument for social change and improving the quality of life of the community. The Transformative Approach pays close attention to the reciprocal relationship between the curriculum and social activities, requiring the curriculum to consciously train students' critical consciousness on issues of justice and humanity.

Educational philosophers have long emphasized the importance of transformative pedagogy as a foundation for addressing social problems, a view reinforced in PAI studies that the curriculum must be designed to train students to be able to use Islamic values as solutions to injustice, poverty, and intolerance. Nata specifically emphasizes that a strong philosophical approach will guide PAI to always be socially relevant. The ideal synthesis for the future development of the PAI curriculum is a combination of the Competency-Based Approach (for efficiency and practice) with the Transformative Approach (for critical awareness and social relevance), and bound together by the Humanistic Approach (for character building) (Abudin Nata, 2020). This implementation requires curriculum developers and Islamic Education teachers, especially in educational institutions such as UIN KH. Achmad Siddiq Jember, are advised to explicitly integrate Islamic values in an applicable manner, develop comprehensive evaluations, and adopt learning models that encourage social problem solving, reflecting the need for multicultural, ecological, and locally-based Islamic education for comprehensive and transformative learning success.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the development of the Islamic Education Curriculum (PAI) requires the selection of an appropriate approach based on the real needs of students and the demands of the times. An in-depth study shows that there are five main approaches that have an important contribution to curriculum development, namely: the academic subject approach, the humanistic approach, the technological approach, the social reconstruction approach, and the competency-based approach. Each approach has different characteristics, strengths, and limitations, so they cannot be used alone.

The academic subject approach provides an intellectual foundation for Islamic scholarship, while the humanistic approach maximizes the potential and experience of students. The technological approach plays a role in improving the efficiency and systematization of learning, while the social reconstruction approach emphasizes the relevance of the curriculum to social problems and the needs of modern society. The

competency-based approach has proven effective in formulating measurable, applicable learning outcomes that are relevant to 21st-century skills.

However, the results of the study also show that the practice of developing the PAI curriculum in the field still faces various obstacles, such as monotonous learning models, overlapping material, and a lack of integration with the social context of the students. Therefore, a comprehensive synthesis of approaches is needed that combines the strengths of each model to develop a holistic, contextual, adaptive, and transformative character-building PAI curriculum. A curriculum development model that integrates humanistic, competency-based, and social reconstruction approaches is considered an ideal strategy to address the challenges of modern Islamic education while strengthening the meaningfulness of learning for students.

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