

DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM: CONCEPTUAL AND IMPLEMENTATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

This study analyzes the conceptual foundations and implementation of curriculum development in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) within Indonesia's national education system. Using a descriptive qualitative approach through library research, this article explores the essence of curriculum, its dimensions, principles of development, and the dynamics of its implementation across various national curricula, including KBK, KTSP, Curriculum 2013, and the Independent Curriculum. Findings indicate that the curriculum plays a central role in guiding educational processes, shaping learner competencies in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, and ensuring the integration of Islamic values with 21st-century skills. The study emphasizes four curriculum dimensions ideas, written documents, learning processes, and outcomes which must operate coherently to achieve effective curriculum implementation. Furthermore, core principles such as relevance, flexibility, continuity, effectiveness, and efficiency are essential in designing responsive and sustainable Islamic education curricula. This research concludes that the development of the PAI curriculum demands both theoretical precision and practical adaptability to meet contemporary educational challenges while preserving Islamic moral values.

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education, Curriculum Development, Curriculum Dimensions, Implementation, Educational Principles

Introduction

Islamic Religious Education has a very strategic position in the national education system because it serves to shape students so that they have a strong foundation of faith, morals, and character. Through PAI, students not only learn the cognitive aspects of Islamic teachings, but are also guided to internalize Islamic values in their daily lives. It is in this context that the curriculum plays a central role as the foundation that guides the entire educational process. The curriculum is not merely a list of materials that teachers must deliver, but a structured and comprehensive set of plans regarding the objectives, content, methods, and evaluation of learning. A deep understanding of the nature of the curriculum is essential so that PAI can be implemented in accordance with the principles of Islamic education and is able to achieve the goal of shaping students with Islamic personalities.

In addition to understanding its essence, studying the dimensions of the curriculum is also an integral part of the educational process. Dimensions such as objectives, material, learning strategies, evaluation, and the educational environment are interrelated in shaping the quality of the PAI curriculum. Each dimension plays a strategic role in determining the direction and success of learning: objectives determine the competencies to be achieved, material reflects the substance of Islamic teachings that must be understood, methods become effective means of delivery, while evaluation serves to ensure the achievement of learning objectives objectively. An imbalance in one dimension

can hinder the effectiveness of education. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the dimensions of the curriculum is an urgent need, especially in efforts to develop the PAI curriculum in a systematic and sustainable manner.

In addition to the dimensions, the principles of curriculum development also determine the quality of an Islamic Education curriculum. The principles of relevance, flexibility, continuity, effectiveness, efficiency, and integration of Islamic values are important foundations in designing a curriculum that is not only suitable for the needs of students but also in line with the times. These principles ensure that the PAI curriculum is not static, but dynamic and responsive to social, cultural, and technological changes. By applying the appropriate curriculum design principles, the PAI learning process can be more adaptive, contextual, and integrated, thereby enabling it to respond to the challenges of 21st-century education without neglecting the fundamental values of Islamic teachings.

The PAI curriculum needs to consider the characteristics of the implementation of the national curriculum, which continues to evolve in Indonesia. The shift in curriculum from KBK 2004, KTSP 2006, Curriculum 2013, to the Merdeka Curriculum shows that there is a dynamic need to continuously update the learning approach so that it is relevant to global demands. Every curriculum change has an impact on the concepts, strategies, and practices of PAI learning. The implementation of PAI in the national curriculum must be able to integrate Islamic values with 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, digital literacy, and communication skills. Therefore, studies that describe the essence of the curriculum, the dimensions that build it, the principles of development, and its implementation in the context of the national curriculum are very important to ensure that PAI can be carried out effectively, relevantly, and sustainably.

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a library research method. This approach was chosen because the focus of the study lies on analyzing concepts, theories, and principles of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum sourced from scientific documents and academic literature. The research data was obtained through a review of various books and scientific journals. All of these sources were compiled to identify the essence of the curriculum, the dimensions of the curriculum, the principles of curriculum development, and the characteristics of the implementation of the PAI curriculum in Indonesia. The collected data were analyzed using content analysis techniques through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. With this method, the article provides a comprehensive overview of the theoretical construction and application of the PAI curriculum in the context of national education.

Results

The Nature of Curriculum in Education

The term curriculum was originally used in sports and comes from the Latin word curriculum, which means track or racecourse. It then developed into a term for a number of courses that must be taken in order to obtain a diploma. In education, this term became known more than a century ago and first appeared in Webster's dictionary in 1856. In general, a curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements regarding the objectives, content, teaching materials, and learning methods that serve as guidelines in the educational process. The curriculum also includes learning objectives, materials, procedures, and learning experiences designed to enable students to achieve the specified competencies. In addition, the curriculum is understood as an operational plan developed in accordance with national standards, taking into account the characteristics of the students, the school, and the environment (Indriyani et al., 2023).

In Arabic, the term curriculum is often translated as manhaj, which means a clear path for humans to follow in various aspects of life. In the context of education (manhaj al-dirasah), according to the Tarbiyah Dictionary, curriculum is defined as a set of plans and tools used as guidelines by educational institutions to achieve learning objectives (Alhaddad, 2018).

Hamdani Ihsan explains that a number of education experts have provided various definitions of curriculum.

1. Saylor and Alexander define curriculum as the total effort of the school, namely all efforts made by educational institutions to achieve their stated objectives. This definition emphasizes that curriculum does not only include subjects, but also the entire learning process and various educational activities, both inside and outside the classroom. Thus, the curriculum is closely related to educational methodology and practice as a whole.
2. Smith defines the curriculum as a sequence of potential experiences that shape the way students think and act in group life. In this view, the curriculum aims to develop students' social skills so that they are able to adapt and play a role as members of society.

In addition, several other experts also offer different perspectives on the curriculum:

1. Bobbitt views the curriculum as a series of experiences and activities that students must undergo in order to develop the competencies necessary for daily life and their roles as adults.
2. Tyler emphasizes that the curriculum is a set of educational goals that represent behavioral changes in accordance with the vision and mission of educational institutions.
3. Taba describes the curriculum as a learning plan that includes goals, achievements, content selection, learning organization approaches, and assessment methods to ensure the achievement of goals.
4. Gagné defines curriculum as the arrangement of material, formulation of objectives, sequencing of content, and initial assessment of student abilities before beginning the learning process.
5. Richards et al. define curriculum as an educational program that contains learning objectives, content, teaching procedures, learning experiences necessary to achieve objectives, and evaluation mechanisms to assess learning outcomes (Wahyudi et al., 2025)

The curriculum plays a central role in the implementation of the educational process. The curriculum directs all forms of educational activities towards the achievement of educational goals. The curriculum is also an educational plan, providing guidelines and guidance on the type, scope, sequence, content, and process of education. In addition to these two functions, the curriculum is also a field of study pursued by curriculum experts or specialists, who serve as a source, concept, or theoretical basis for curriculum development in various educational institutions.

According to Teddy Priatna (2004:27), the position of the curriculum is the same as the essential meaning of education, namely the effort to mature humans as a whole, whether carried out by others or by themselves, as a requirement for students to have freedom of thought, feeling, speech, and action with confidence, and to have a sense of responsibility in their actions and behavior in daily life. The curriculum is where efforts to develop the quality of human beings in all aspects are located. There are deliberate activities to achieve certain goals and involve various factors that are interrelated, thus forming a system that influences one another.

From the above opinions, it can be concluded that the position of the curriculum in education is very important and must be possessed by education itself. In other words, without a curriculum, education will not run properly and the objectives of education itself will not be achieved. By referring to the curriculum, interaction between teachers and students will take place.

A. The Dimensions of Curriculum Essence in Education

The dimensions of curriculum can be understood as a conceptual map that describes the nature and position of a curriculum in the context of its existence, where each location is interconnected and forms an inseparable unity of ideas. Hasan (1988) explains that there are four dimensions in the curriculum, namely:

1. Curriculum as an idea or concept,
2. Curriculum as a written document,
3. Curriculum as a series of activities or processes, and
4. Curriculum as the final result. Each dimension is interconnected with the others.

The concept of curriculum dimensions is useful for explaining at least two aspects, namely: first, the grouping of various definitions of curriculum. This means that various definitions of curriculum can be organized into four categories, namely definitions that prioritize the idea or concept of curriculum, definitions that focus on curriculum as a plan, definitions that view curriculum as a student learning process, and definitions that view curriculum as the result of learning. This is related to the previous explanation. Second, it explains the curriculum cycle. This model describes the attributes and dynamics of the conceptual movement of the curriculum's existence. In this discussion, the focus will be on the second aspect. The following is an explanation of each dimension of the curriculum.

1. Idea Dimension

The curriculum in the ideological dimension emphasizes that its development must be based on the establishment of a relevant curriculum model, learning theory and appropriate learning approaches, and a valid learning outcome evaluation model for future improvements. This stage is a fundamental element in formulating the characteristics of the future curriculum. This process shows the direction of curriculum development, whether it is towards a multicultural, monocultural, or general curriculum that does not specifically consider cultural diversity. Therefore, determining and discussing the ideological dimension of the curriculum is very important in its implementation.

The task of curriculum developers must also be based on basic principles that enable the growth of racial and cultural diversity as the main reference, which cannot be measured simply through cultural expansion. From the perspective of the curriculum as an idea, the development process specifically describes the conditions that are then incorporated into the educational curriculum document (Limbong et al., 2021).

2. Plan Dimension

The plan dimension refers to the process of compiling ideas or concepts about the curriculum that have been discussed previously, which are then translated into a written plan. In practice, this plan dimension often takes the form of a curriculum document, which includes plans for implementing learning activities that can be observed and studied by relevant parties. In reality, the curriculum included in the plan dimension category is the Syllabus and Lesson Plan (RPP). These two documents are written plans that serve as guidelines in implementing the teaching and learning process.

3. Process Dimension

The process or implementation dimension refers to the understanding that the curriculum is not just a written document, but a series of real activities in the implementation of learning. In this dimension, the curriculum is realized through interactions between educators, students, supporting facilities, teaching materials, and various learning media used. In other words, the process aspect describes the form of the curriculum that actually takes place in the field, because all of these components play a role in realizing the planned learning experience.

From this perspective, the quality of the curriculum can be identified and assessed based on how it is implemented in learning practices. Curriculum implementation is an important indicator for determining whether learning objectives have been achieved, whether teaching strategies are contextually appropriate, and whether learning activities have had a real impact on student development. Therefore, the process dimension can be used as the main basis for evaluating the curriculum, particularly in assessing the professional competence of educators, the effectiveness of their performance, and the alignment between curriculum planning and its implementation in the classroom (Abdullah, 2022).

4. Outcome Dimension

The outcome dimension of the curriculum refers to changes in students' abilities after participating in the learning process, as planned. This dimension includes changes in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, or in other words, the formation of new competencies in students after completing the education program (curriculum). The developed abilities should be in line with what has been thought out and planned in the previous curriculum dimension. In this case, the idea dimension and the plan dimension are referred to as the "ideal curriculum," while the process dimension is referred to as the "actual curriculum" or "the curriculum that actually takes place." Ideally, the idea, plan, process, and outcome dimensions should be aligned. However, there are often differences between the idea, plan, process, and outcome, and they are not always completely consistent or identical.

5. Hidden Curriculum

The hidden curriculum is another dimension of the curriculum that is not explicitly stated in the plan document, but is present in the idea and process dimensions. The hidden curriculum is closely related to values or ideas that are not explicitly written down but are internalized through habits, interactions, and the selection of methods in the learning process. This is then reflected in the learning outcomes of students. The hidden curriculum includes values, norms, and attitudes that students learn indirectly through experiences and dynamics in the educational environment.

B. Curriculum Principles in Education

Etymologically, the term principle has various meanings, such as basis, foundation, rule, guideline, and footing. In the KBBI (Big Indonesian Dictionary), principle is understood as a truth or basis that serves as a reference in thinking and acting.

A principle is also seen as a rule or basic fact that can be relied upon to guide actions and reasoning processes. In curriculum development, these principles serve as guidelines that must be followed so that the entire process, from planning to implementation, runs as expected. These principles are not rigid and can be adjusted, modified, or replaced according to the latest needs and developments, allowing for differences in principles between curricula in different institutions.

According to Soetopo and Soemanto, the three main principles that must be considered in curriculum development are relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency, which are then reinforced by two additional principles, namely continuity and flexibility (Ummami, 2019). In its development and implementation, the curriculum must take into account the following principles:

a. Principle of Relevance

The curriculum is required to have two forms of relevance, namely external relevance and internal relevance. External relevance refers to the extent to which the objectives, content, and learning processes in the curriculum are able to respond to the demands, needs, and dynamics of society. In this context, the curriculum serves as an instrument to prepare students to be able to adapt and play an effective role in social life and the world of work. Thus, the curriculum design is not only aimed at responding to current learning needs, but also at anticipating future challenges and developments.

In addition, the curriculum must also have internal relevance, namely consistency and harmony among all its components, which include learning objectives, content or material, learning processes, delivery methods, and evaluation systems. This internal relevance reflects the level of integration of the curriculum in directing the educational process in a systematic and comprehensive manner.

b. The Principle of Flexibility

An ideal curriculum needs to be flexible. This flexibility allows the curriculum to facilitate the needs of students to live their present and future lives in various social, cultural, and geographical contexts. Given that students have diverse backgrounds and abilities, the curriculum must have a solid structure but still allow room for adjustments according to regional conditions, developments over time, and student characteristics. Thus, a good curriculum is not only strong in substance, but also adaptive in its implementation.

c. Principle of Effectiveness

Effectiveness relates to the extent to which the curriculum achieves the learning objectives and competencies that have been set. Understanding the nature of competencies is very important for the optimal implementation of the curriculum. The effectiveness of education is also greatly influenced by the quality of interaction between teachers and students; imbalances in this process can hinder the achievement of learning objectives.

d. Principle of Efficiency

Efficiency means achieving optimal results through the rational use of resources, such as costs, energy, time, and facilities. In practice, the curriculum must be adapted to the conditions of the school and the availability of resources in each region. The principle of efficiency helps curriculum developers tailor the curriculum design to the abilities of students and the local educational environment.

e. Principle of Continuity

The principle of continuity requires continuity between subjects, between levels of education, and between programs, so that the student learning process is orderly and gradual. Continuity also prevents unnecessary repetition of material. Coordination between curriculum developers at each

level is important to ensure the relevance and continuity of the learning process (Marzuqi & Ahid, 2023).

According to Sukmadinata, specific principles cover five main aspects, namely the formulation of educational objectives, the selection of curriculum content, the determination of learning processes, the selection of learning media and tools, and assessment.

1. Principles for determining educational objectives: Educational objectives consist of general and specific objectives. They are formulated based on various sources, such as government policies, community needs, expert opinions, the quality of human resources, and the experiences of other countries in dealing with similar issues.
2. The principle of selecting curriculum content: The determination of curriculum content is based on the elaboration of educational objectives into clear learning objectives, covering knowledge, attitudes, and skills. In addition, the material is organized logically and systematically so that the three areas of learning can be studied in an integrated manner.
3. Principles of selecting learning processes: The selection of learning processes considers the suitability of methods to the material, the use of a variety of methods to accommodate individual differences among learners, and the effectiveness of methods in activating students and facilitating the development of new competencies.
4. Principles of selecting learning media and tools: The selection of learning media and tools includes planning and inventorying available media, as well as organizing these tools into teaching materials such as modules or textbooks.
5. Principles of assessment: Assessment as the final stage of learning covers three aspects: Planning assessment tools that take into account learner characteristics, test formats, and the number of questions; Developing assessment tools by formulating objectives in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, describing indicators in the form of observable behaviors, and compiling test items according to the material; Managing assessment results with an emphasis on the use of assessment norms and standard scores (Prasetyo & Hamami, 2020).

According to Kunandar, the implementation of the curriculum in each educational unit must be based on the following principles:

- a. Curriculum implementation must take into account the potential, stage of development, and conditions of students to ensure the mastery of competencies that are beneficial to them.

The curriculum must be implemented by upholding the five pillars of learning, namely:

- 1) learning to have faith and be devoted to God Almighty;
- 2) learning to understand and appreciate;
- 3) learning to be able to carry out and act effectively;
- 4) learning to live together and benefit others;

- b. learning to build and discover one's identity through an effective, creative, active, and enjoyable learning process.

- 1) The implementation of the curriculum must enable students to obtain optimal educational services.
- 2) The curriculum must be carried out in an educational interaction atmosphere characterized by acceptance, mutual respect, familiarity, openness, warmth, and constructive relationships between students and educators.
- 3) Curriculum implementation must utilize a multi-strategy and multimedia approach, with various technology-based learning resources.

- 4) Curriculum implementation needs to optimize the use of natural conditions, socio-cultural aspects, and local resources to support educational success through the maximum utilization of all study materials.
- 5) The curriculum must be implemented in accordance with all of its constituent components.

C. The Nature of Curriculum in Indonesian Education

According to Daniel and Laurel, curriculum is understood as a structured plan that contains a series of learning experiences and a set of objectives that are systematically arranged based on the knowledge and experience provided by schools, so that students are able to develop the competencies necessary for their lives. Meanwhile, the National Education System Law (Sisdiknas) No. 20 of 2013 defines curriculum as a set of plans and arrangements that include objectives, content, subject matter, and methods used as guidelines in conducting learning activities to achieve specific educational goals.

Based on these two views, it can be concluded that the curriculum is a series of plans and arrangements regarding the objectives, materials, and content of learning, as well as various aspects related to intracurricular and extracurricular activities. The curriculum serves as a reference in managing the learning process to provide relevant learning experiences for students so that they are able to live their lives optimally and achieve the predetermined educational objectives. This understanding is in line with the provisions of Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System and Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 19 of 2005 concerning National Education Standards (Abdullah & Yana, 2024).

1. Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) is a learning design and guideline that specifies the competencies and learning outcomes that must be achieved by students, including learning methods, assessment, and optimization of capabilities in the development of educational programs and syllabi. This approach emphasizes two main things: (1) the achievement of meaningful learning outcomes for students, and (2) the empowerment of strategies that are tailored to individual needs.

Terminologically, KBK is understood as a curriculum that places mastery of competencies as the main goal of learning. The Ministry of Education and Culture emphasizes that competencies cover the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains that must be achieved through the learning process.

Sanjaya adds that KBK focuses on learning outcomes that can be measured and observed, so that attention is not only given to the material, but also to the ability of students to apply their knowledge in real situations.

Mulyasa states that KBK is designed to ensure that students have the basic competencies needed in their personal, social, and working lives. This approach also provides flexibility for teachers in designing learning strategies according to the needs and characteristics of students.

Wiggins and McTighe view KBK as being in line with the backward design approach, which is the determination of the final learning objectives before designing learning strategies and activities. This approach is expected to produce a deeper understanding and relevant skills for students in various contexts of life.

The implementation of KBK focuses on comprehensive understanding by establishing competency measures as a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and the level of mastery of each field of study. The scope of these measures includes content standards and performance standards. Competency foundations describe the minimum abilities that must be achieved and demonstrated by students.

KBK covers six main aspects, namely learning materials, methods, skills, scientific frameworks, and success indicators designed to assess the level of mastery of students. This approach

emphasizes the optimal development of skills, conceptual understanding, and the application of knowledge in everyday life. Therefore, the implementation of KBK must be contextual, taking into account the individual abilities, environment, values, and moral aspects of students, as well as utilizing various learning methods.

In principle, KBK adopts a constructivist approach with the following characteristics: it is oriented towards the competencies of individual learners and groups, emphasizes achievement, uses various learning strategies, involves various learning resources, and assesses the process and results to determine competency mastery.

Thus, competency-based curriculum is designed to produce graduates who are skilled, have good character, and possess a foundation of knowledge and skills that support community development and strengthen national identity. KBK also facilitates educators in organizing learning that is in line with the principles of lifelong education (Magdalena et al., 2024).

The Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP) is an operational curriculum designed and implemented independently by each education unit. It is developed by schools or madrasahs together with school committees under the coordination and supervision of the Education Office or the District/City Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for primary, secondary, and special education levels.

2. Based on this definition, there is essentially no fundamental difference between the KBK and the KTSP. Both are oriented towards the competencies and learning outcomes of students. The difference between the two lies in the technical aspects of their formulation: the KBK is formulated by the central government (Ministry of Education), while the KTSP is formulated by each educational unit with reference to national guidelines formulated by the National Education Standards Agency (BSNP).

The KTSP is an improvement on the 2004 Curriculum (KBK), which is also competency-based. Thus, KTSP has the following main characteristics:

- a) It is oriented towards basic competencies, not just subject matter.
- b) It emphasizes the development of student abilities in accordance with their stage of development, not just the delivery of content.
- c) It is centered on the learning process (learner-centered), not teaching.
- d) It is diverse, pluralistic, and multicultural.
- e) It includes the four pillars of global education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together.
- f) It is oriented towards the principles of school-based management.

According to Mulyono, the 2013 Curriculum faces a number of problems, especially related to its learning approach. In the previous curriculum, the learning approach emphasized the delivery of material. The 2013 Curriculum was then designed to develop innovative, creative, and productive students as a form of development from the Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP). The 2013 Curriculum was developed to address the weaknesses of the previous curriculum and to improve students' attitudes, knowledge, and skills in a more comprehensive manner. By integrating knowledge and skills to foster spiritual and social attitudes, this curriculum is expected to strengthen religious culture in schools. The characteristics of the 2013 Curriculum are as follows:

- a. Graduate Competency Standards
 - 1) Tiered Graduate Competency Standards (SKL)

The SKL in the 2013 Curriculum is structured in tiers, whereby the competency standards for elementary school/MI graduates are further developed at the junior high school/MTs level and then deepened at the senior high school/MA level. Although the 2006 Curriculum also had a tiered

structure, the pattern of interrelationships was considered unclear and difficult to identify due to the excessive number of competencies and insufficient attention.

2) Integrated character education

The 2013 Curriculum integrates character education comprehensively without changing the basic orientation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK) that has been implemented since 2004. The KBK was then decentralized through the 2006 KTSP, but it retained the same philosophical approach.

3) Accommodating various philosophical approaches

The development of the 2013 Curriculum is not based on a particular philosophical approach, but rather adopts various approaches such as essentialism, perennialism, social reconstruction, progressivism, and humanism. This diversity of philosophical foundations makes the 2013 Curriculum more ideal and comprehensive, and it is hoped that it will be able to support the achievement of national education goals in stages.

4) Developing reasoning, communication, and creative abilities

The 2013 Curriculum is considered successful if graduates are able to reason or analyze, communicate ideas, and create works independently.

b. Curriculum Content and Structure

The 2013 Curriculum stipulates a reduction in the number of subjects, but increases the allocation of learning time for each subject so that competency attainment can be optimized.

1) Proportion of competencies at each level

The guidelines for competency achievement, which include spiritual attitudes, social attitudes, knowledge, and skills, are still limited in their explanation in the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum.

2) Basic framework and structure of the 2013 Curriculum

The 2013 Curriculum was developed based on Indonesia's cultural diversity and is aimed at creating a better society. The learning process provides space for students to develop their full potential. Theoretically, the 2013 Curriculum refers to the concept of standard-based education, which sets national standards as the minimum quality for citizens, as well as a competency-based curriculum that emphasizes the development of attitudes, knowledge, and skills as a whole.

3) Increase in the number of teaching hours

To improve the quality of education, the 2013 Curriculum increases the number of class hours because the learning time available in the previous curriculum was deemed insufficient to achieve competency. This policy does not conflict with the rights of students and is in line with educational practices in various developed countries that also increase learning hours. The addition of learning time is intended to catch up with other nations and prepare students to face increasingly competitive global competition.

c) The Merdeka Curriculum is an idea that aims to realize meaningful and effective learning, as well as encourage the development of students' creativity, taste, and will as lifelong learners with Pancasila character. This curriculum is designed based on philosophical, sociological, and psychopedagogical principles, and contains learning characteristics that support the achievement of these objectives.

Conceptually, the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes that assessment is an integral part of the learning process. Assessment is carried out before learning begins, during the process, and at the end of the learning period. Based on the constructivist paradigm, learning is understood as a continuous process involving learning, relearning, and unlearning.

a. Utilization of Initial, Process, and Final Assessment

Assessment is used to determine students' ability to achieve learning competencies and outcomes. The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes not only final assessment, but also the importance of initial assessment to determine readiness to learn, as well as formative assessment to monitor learning progress. Final assessment is used to see the overall achievements of students.

Teachers are given the freedom to use various assessment techniques, as long as they are in line with the learning objectives. The backward design approach emphasizes that assessment must be formulated after learning objectives have been set. Therefore, authentic assessments such as products, projects, demonstrations, and portfolios are highly recommended.

Assessment results should provide relevant information for teachers in designing learning objectives, methods, media, and environments. Formative assessment also serves to provide feedback to students and improve learning strategies.

b. Adjusting Learning Based on Learner Needs

Learning must be adjusted to the abilities and learning speeds of learners. Initial and formative assessments form the basis for understanding learning needs that may change throughout the learning process. This principle underlies the concept of teaching at the right level, which provides different materials according to the level of understanding of each learner.

Thus, competency-oriented learning requires varied and continuous assessment. This approach is a key feature of the Merdeka Curriculum.

c. Prioritizing Learning Progress Over Material Coverage

The Merdeka Curriculum prioritizes student learning progress rather than simply pursuing material completion. Based on the philosophy of humanism and progressivism, this curriculum requires learning that serves the needs of students, rather than imposing time standards or topic completion.

Because each student has different speeds and abilities, learning needs to be differentiated. Uniform learning for all students risks neglecting those who need different support.

d. Collaborative Reflection on Learning Progress

Assessment data is only useful if it is processed through teacher reflection to improve the learning process. Reflection allows teachers to understand students' actual achievements and determine the necessary interventions. One recommended approach is the Classroom Action Research (CAR) cycle for continuous learning improvement.

Conclusion

Based on the overall discussion, this study confirms that the curriculum is a fundamental component in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) because it serves as a direction, guideline, and framework for all educational activities. The PAI curriculum cannot be understood merely as a list of materials to be taught, but rather as a conceptual construct that includes a set of basic ideas, structured written documents, implemented learning processes, and learning outcomes achieved by students. These four dimensions of the curriculum—ideas, plans, processes, and outcomes—are interrelated and must be comprehensively integrated to ensure the success of Islamic education objectives.

The results of the analysis show that the quality of the PAI curriculum is largely determined by the application of curriculum development principles, which include relevance, flexibility, continuity, effectiveness, and efficiency. The principle of relevance requires that the curriculum be in line with the needs of students and the demands of society; flexibility ensures that the curriculum is able to adapt to the diversity of student characteristics; continuity ensures continuity of learning between education levels; effectiveness ensures that the learning process runs optimally; and efficiency ensures

that resources are used appropriately. Without the application of these principles, the implementation of the curriculum will find it difficult to achieve its stated objectives.

In addition, this study also highlights the dynamics of changes in the national curriculum in Indonesia, starting from the KBK, KTSP, 2013 Curriculum, to the Merdeka Curriculum, which shows the continuous need to update the orientation and approach to learning. These changes have a significant impact on PAI, which requires the integration of Islamic values with 21st-century competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, communication skills, collaboration, and digital literacy. Thus, the PAI curriculum must be designed adaptively to be able to combine spiritual-theological aspects with the skills needed in the context of modern society and technology.

Overall, the development of the PAI curriculum must be carried out through a systematic and sustainable approach by considering the nature of the curriculum, its constituent dimensions, fundamental development principles, and the context of implementation in the field. The curriculum that is developed is expected to not only produce students who understand Islamic teachings cognitively, but also are able to internalize Islamic values in their attitudes and behavior, while also having the competence to face global challenges. Thus, the ideal PAI curriculum is one that is character-based, relevant, visionary, and oriented towards shaping individuals who are faithful, have noble character, and are ready to contribute to society and the state in the modern era.

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