

Strategies of Teachers in Developing an Islamic Religious Education Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

In the current era, the teacher's role in developing a learning curriculum that suits needs is urgent. Teachers are required to empower various digital platforms such as learning applications, websites, and other online resources to make learning more exciting and facilitate students' accessibility. This research aimed to investigate teachers' strategies for increasing the Islamic religious education (PAI in Indonesian) curriculum. This study used literature reviews from various sources related to this topic. The results show that the teacher's strategies in curriculum development may vary according to the centralized, decentralized, or central-decentralized management approach. Teachers were also essential as implementers, adapters, developers, and researchers. Besides, teachers were not only asked to transfer knowledge but also responsible for conducting other crucial values through reciprocal interaction, which was the primary key in the learning process. It means that teachers guided students to get what pupils needed. Thus, this article provides an alternative model for teachers in developing and implementing the PAI curriculum to achieve educational goals.

1. INTRODUCTION

A curriculum is a system that organizes and designs education to achieve the expected goals. In this era of globalization, the curriculum has a vital role in the learning process and in educating students (Cubukcu, 2012). Because it cannot be denied that developments over time will also shape students' attitudes and thinking patterns, it is essential to plan and design the systematic learning to make it easier to achieve the desired results (Marinda et al., 2024).

An inseparable part of the educational process is that teachers manage, run, and improve the educational curriculum (Wilkinson & Cave, 2018). In this context, a professional Islamic religion education (PAI) teacher/educator is someone who has mastered knowledge (Islamic religion) and can transfer knowledge (Islamic religion), internalization, and practice (implementation) (Dahri et al., 2023; Istiana et al., 2023); able to prepare students to grow and develop their intelligence and creative powers for the benefit of themselves and their community (Ratnawati, 2016); able to become a model or center for self-identification and consultant for students (Mansir & Musadad, 2023); have information, intellectual and moral-spiritual sensitivity and can

develop students' talents, interests and abilities (Naofa et al., 2023); and able to prepare students to be responsible in building a civilization that is approved by Allah SWT (The most glorified, the highest) (Muhaimin, 2012).

A PAI teacher is expected to have in-depth expertise in Islamic religious subjects and skills in transferring this knowledge to students through a practical and applicable approach (Hussin & Tamuri, 2019; Ishomuddin & Scanif Bin Mokhtar, 2017; Komariah & Nihayah, 2023; Sahin, 2018; Winarto et al., 2020). They have a responsibility not only to oversee the holistic growth of students but also to stimulate their creativity and intelligence so that this will, in turn, positively impact their development and the environment around them (Sternberg & Williams, 1996). As role models and consultants, it is hoped that they can be good examples for students, deeply understand informational, moral-spiritual, and intellectual aspects, and encourage the development of students' talents, interests, and potential (El-Moslimany, 2018). Their responsibility is not only limited to this but also to guide students to understand the significance of their contribution to building a civilization in accordance with Allah SWT's (The most glorified, the highest) pleasure (Nurhadi & Harahap, 2021).

On the other hand, development refers to a series of steps to create or produce a new tool or method continuously evaluated and improved throughout the process (Richey & Klein, 2014). If the tool or method is deemed to have reached adequate standards for continued use after the refinement stage, then the development process is considered complete. In curriculum development, this activity involves planning and implementing the curriculum in schools, complemented by careful evaluation (McCormick & James, 2018). Curriculum development is a planning step that focuses on preparing a holistic and specific curriculum (Utomo & Ifadah, 2020). In this process, there is a selection and arrangement of various elements related to learning situations, including curriculum scheduling, detailed explanation of desired objectives, lesson subjects, and activities, as well as the use of resources and evaluation tools in preparing the curriculum, including the development of teaching materials, learning planning, and frameworks (Kranthi, 2017). The additional curriculum is all aimed at facilitating the learning process.

This article aims to investigate the role of teachers in developing an Islamic education curriculum. It is intended to make the strategies that can be used by PAI teacher to achieve the learning goals. Moreover, The following qualities—creativity quotient (CQ), emotional quotient (EQ), intellectual quotient (IQ), and spiritual quotient (SQ)—are developed more quickly and fully thanks to the PAI (Basid, 2017; Erihadiana & Ridwan, 2021; Rahman & Shah, 2015; Usman & Zainuddin, 2021). Meanwhile, curriculum development often faces significant challenges, especially regarding the lack of teacher involvement (Geldenhuys & Oosthuizen, 2015). These obstacles can arise from several factors, including teachers' limited time, differences of opinion between fellow teachers or school principals and administrators, and also because of the level of knowledge and skills the teachers possess. Aside from obstacles within the education system, curriculum development also faces obstacles from community involvement. Financial support and feedback from the community are very crucial for the success of curriculum development

(Fauzi, 2017). Apart from that, another challenge is the very significant cost aspect in curriculum development, especially when it involves experimenting with methods, content, or overall structure, which requires a relatively large allocation of funds. Therefore, curriculum management is critical because it is a systematic, comprehensive, and cooperative curriculum management system in realizing the achievement of a curriculum. The axis is the role of teachers in developing the PAI curriculum (Salim, 2023).

There are several studies related to this topic. The first comes from Adila et al. (2023) who was investigating the role of teachers in the development of PAI curriculum in public junior high schools. The researcher used a qualitative approach with an interview as the method. The results show that the crucial role of PAI teachers lies in crafting a curriculum tailored to address students' needs while considering both religious principles and contemporary perspectives, all grounded in the latest research findings. Teachers must design a curriculum that aligns with national education standards while also addressing the unique needs of students. This underscores the significance of accommodating students' requirements within the PAI curriculum. Moreover, this article emphasizes the importance of balancing religious teachings and contemporary perspectives within the PAI curriculum. It underscores the necessity of integrating religious values with the realities of modern life in PAI education.

The second comes from Lutfia et al. (2023) who was describing the implementation of the Diniyah curriculum in developing student character. The researcher used a qualitative with a case study. The data collection was interview, observation, and documentation. This study pointed three findings that consist of (a) the execution of the Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliah (MDT) curriculum at SDIT Samawi Bantul involves comprehensive phases, including curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation, (b) Supporting factors for implementing the MDT curriculum include the school's aspirations for community recognition through outstanding Quranic studies and Madrasah Diniyah programs, well-equipped school facilities and infrastructure, students' enthusiastic engagement, and the exceptional quality of Madrasah Diniyah teachers, (c) Its implementation is highly significant in terms of the relevance of the MDT Curriculum to PAI.

The third comes from Nurlaelah et al. (2023), who was discussing the PAI from a multicultural perspective in Indonesia. The research method employed a literature review coupled with content analysis. The findings indicate that the diversity within the Indonesian nation, encompassing various ethnicities, religions, and races, constituted a valuable national asset. However, this diversity can also precipitate conflict if pluralism needs to be effectively managed. Pluralism carried out the risk of discord, particularly about religious matters, which often catalyze societal divisions. The article contributed by elucidating concepts and ideas pertinent to Islamic religious education from a multicultural perspective, aiming to foster the realization of an inclusive Islamic educational environment aligned with the principles of *Rahmatan Lil Alamin*.

The fourth comes from (Kambali et al. (2022), who was exploring the development of multicultural curriculum for PAI lesson. The findings show that (a) the curriculum should focus on establishing clear objectives that align with present circumstances, (b) the curriculum should consider pertinent developmental models, (c) it should be grounded in the principles of curriculum development in Indonesia, (d) the development of a multicultural-based curriculum should embody characteristics that promote multicultural values, fostering understanding and awareness.

The fifth comes from Hasriadi et.al (2023), who was investigating the PAI curriculum development model. The study results show how the curriculum serves several critical functions for educational activities, including a) the school in question, b) schools or madrasas above it, and c) the community that employs graduates. A PAI curriculum that suits its particulars can be created using an eclectic approach, choosing the best strategies mentioned below. Among these techniques are the following: subject-based methods, humanistic methods, technological methods, and social reconstruction methods are the four categories of methods. A competency-based and life skills-based curriculum development model and an Islamic Religious university competency-based curriculum development model are two possibilities offered by the Islamic education curriculum development model to madrasas in the interim.

Unlike from previous research, this study the teacher's strategies in curriculum development may vary according to the centralized, decentralized, or central-decentralized management approach. Teachers were also essential as implementers, adapters, developers, and researchers. Hence, this research provides an alternative source to develop the PAI curriculum.

2. METHODS

This research used qualitative research with a literature review method (Ramanda et al., 2019). The research method was carried out by searching and collecting data relevant to the discussion regarding the role of teachers in the development of the PAI curriculum. Data collection techniques were collected from various sources, especially books and scientific journal articles, regarding the role of teachers in the subject curriculum of Islamic religious education. Using this research method required good literacy in observing and analyzing several studies conducted by previous researchers (Beaudry & Miller, 2016).

The literature study regarding the development of the PAI curriculum was also explored. The results of this investigation served as reference data for further research in discussing the role of teachers in developing the PAI curriculum.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Education is not just a foundation but is the central pillar that can expand individual skills, inspire ambition, and motivate generations to explore their interests, ultimately advancing society's comprehensive growth without being hampered by obstacles that stand in the way. Education is a foundation that broadens horizons, awakens creative spirits, and opens up

opportunities for society to develop inclusively and sustainably (Mulyasa, 2020). Education plays a vital role in the curriculum development process (Dillard & Siktberg, 2013; Hussain et al., 2011; Primrose & Alexander, 2013; Sahika, 2018; Soto, 2015; Supriani et al., 2022). Hence, a good and well-planned curriculum will produce a good education (Stabback et al., 2011). Education is like a pillar in educating a person, so it needs to be reviewed and organized in a structured manner using directed and systematic curriculum development. In the realm of PAI, the existence of skilled teachers, a continuously updated curriculum, and adequate facilities are not only a reference but also a hope and goal in order to create individuals who graduate by the wishes and aspirations of society while acting as a means for explore and develop the potential of human resources (Helmi, 2015).

On the other hand, the word "curriculum" came from Greek (Pai, 1997), and was initially used in a sporting context to describe the distance a runner must cover from the start to the end of a race. This concept was then adopted and applied in the educational context (Muhaimin, 2019).

The curriculum in PAI acts as a guide that regulates learning material and content, forms the structure of activities in the formal learning process to achieve the desired goals of PAI (Muhtadi et al., 2023), and has a significant role in forming the character of students in Islamic educational institutions (Hamalik, 2010). The curriculum becomes a guiding framework that covers all subject matter related to the Islamic religion, accompanied by supporting tools related to the teaching and learning process (Ayuningsih et al., 2020). This curriculum acts as a guide for learning activities in the field of PAI.

The importance of considering the principles that form the basis and guidance in curriculum development was put forward by Prasetyo & Hamami (2020) in their research as follows:

a. The principle of relevance

In line with this principle, PAI curriculum developers are expected to pay attention to the relationship between the curriculum and the reality of the surrounding environment. It aims to ensure that the curriculum created is relevant to the needs and context of students so that its application provides appropriate benefits for their future development (Harden et al., 1984).

b. The principle of flexibility

In the context of this principle, compilers of PAI curricula need to pay attention to and adapt learning approaches to students' individual needs. In this way, implementing the curriculum can more effectively direct students towards increasing their abilities and knowledge by their respective potential..

c. The principle of continuity

In this perspective, PAI curriculum developers deeply understand that the learning process is a series of continuous activities. The PAI curriculum must continue to develop in line with social changes, educational levels, and the evolution of the growing needs of students.

d. The principle of efficiency

In developing the PAI in Islamic educational institutions, the curriculum aims to achieve success in the specified PAI. The active role of educators and student participation is very crucial in achieving the objectives of developing the Islamic religious education curriculum.

e. The principle of practical

The development of the PAI curriculum does not only pay attention to aspects of perfection. However, it must also consider aspects of practicality and adaptation to future advances in science and technology. The curriculum development process must be based on scientific and technological developments to ensure its future relevance (Putra, 2004).

Curriculum development applies various approaches aimed at creating a superior and efficient curriculum. Based on research conducted by Jauhari (2020) in PAI, these various approaches can be applied in compiling curriculum materials:

a. Faith approach

Providing opportunities for students to develop a deep understanding of the existence of God as the universal source of life.

b. Experience approach

Allowing students to apply and experience the results of religious and moral experiences in facing the challenges of everyday life.

c. Habituation approach

Encouraging students to instill attitudes and behavior through Islamic teachings and national culture in responding to life's problems.

d. Rational approach

Encouraging students to use reason and logic in understanding Islamic religious teaching materials and their relationship to good and bad behavior in world life.

e. Emotional approach

Striving to stimulate students' emotions so that they can understand and internalize behavior that aligns with religious teachings and national culture.

f. Functional approach

Presents material on the Koran, faith, morals, jurisprudence, worship, and history in the context of its benefits for students' daily lives.

g. Exemplary approach

Using religious teacher figures, school figures, and parents of students as role models in showing good character.

By applying these various approaches, the PAI curriculum can be designed more effectively to achieve the expected learning objectives and shape students into spiritually and morally stronger individuals.

3.1 Teacher activities in planning the curriculum

Structured and comprehensive planning is needed to implement the curriculum effectively (Alnaji, 2022). Through this planning stage, the teacher can anticipate the desired results during the teaching and learning process. This planning process involves essential aspects, such as formulating detailed teaching objectives, selecting teaching materials, choosing appropriate learning methods and media, and designing efficient learning evaluation strategies (Sudjana, 2017).

3.2 Implementing the curriculum

After preparing a teaching plan, the next step for a teacher is to implement the plan in practice. This stage is generally called the implementation of the teaching and learning process. The teacher's active role in the teaching process will impact each phase that forms the teaching and learning process. According to Sudjana's explanation, teaching steps refer to how teachers carry out the teaching and learning process and how they develop students' learning activities about the material that must be studied (Sudjana, 2017).

3.3 Teacher activities in assessing the curriculum

As curriculum developers in schools, teachers should be actively involved in the ongoing evaluation of the curriculum being implemented (Ramparsad, 2001). One of the critical roles that teachers can play in curriculum development is carrying out comprehensive and detailed evaluations. This evaluation does not only limit itself to conceptual aspects or curriculum ideas, the plans that have been prepared, the implementation process, and the achievement of learning outcomes. However, the evaluation also includes an assessment of teaching objectives, the content of lesson material, the quality of teaching delivered by the teacher, student abilities, availability of educational facilities and equipment, and various other relevant aspects (Sukmadinata, 1988). Curriculum development management has three patterns that can be identified, as mentioned by Nana Syaodih Sukmadinata (1988), namely centralization, decentralization, and central-decentral as explained by Achruh & Pasinringi (2016) in his research; the following is the explanation.

3.3.1 The role of teachers in centralized curriculum development

Centralized curriculum development is a curriculum prepared by a special team at the central level consisting of experts. Teachers do not have a role in designing and evaluating the macro curriculum; they play more of a role in the micro curriculum (Shawer, 2010). The preparation of the micro curriculum is explained from the macro curriculum. Teachers in this micro curriculum prepare the curriculum for one year, one semester, one quarter, several weeks, or several days (lesson units). Annual, semester, quarterly, and lesson unit programs have the same components: objectives, learning materials, methods, learning media, and evaluation; only the breadth and depth are different.

Thus, it is explained that the role of teachers in curriculum development in a centralized context is more prominent in direct implementation in the local environment. Even though they are not involved in designing or evaluating the overall curriculum prepared by the central expert team, their role appears at the micro stage in preparing a more detailed curriculum. This micro curriculum is based on the framework established by the macro curriculum. Teachers adapt the curriculum for shorter periods, such as one year, one semester, one quarter, several weeks, or even several days (called a lesson unit). Although components such as objectives, learning materials, teaching methods, media, and evaluation remain, the emphasis and depth of the material can differ according to a more specific period (Rohman, 2009).

Centralized curriculum development has several advantages and disadvantages that need to be considered. The advantages include supporting unity and harmony in society, achieving minimum standards in children's development and mastery, and efficiency in management, monitoring, evaluation, and savings in costs, time, and facilities. However, the weakness lies first in the complexity of overcoming differences in conditions and various stages of development in various fields such as intellectual, natural environment, and socio-cultural diversity. Second, using a uniform curriculum has implications that need to be considered. This approach may limit creativity, hinder the progress of schools that have stabilized, and impede the development of schools that are in progress. Third, there is a tendency for assessments in a uniform curriculum to be less objective because assessments are often carried out with a similar approach. This includes uniformity in assessed aspects, procedures, assessment tools, and assessment standards. Fourth, implementing this approach can create extreme differences in outcomes, showing significant gaps between superior and less successful schools. This can give rise to an arrogant attitude among successful schools while giving rise to feelings of inferiority in less successful schools and even receiving criticism from various parties. This situation might trigger problems such as cheating in assessments, dishonesty, and even leakage of exam questions (Sukmadinata, 1988).

3.3.2 The role of teachers in decentralized curriculum development

The decentralized curriculum is prepared by certain schools or groups of schools in a region or region. According to Fatmawati (2021), this curriculum development is intended for a particular school or regional environment. This kind of curriculum development is based on the school's or schools' characteristics, needs, regional developments, and capabilities.

The advantages of a decentralized curriculum approach include:

- a. The curriculum can be adapted more accurately to the specific needs and dynamics that exist in society.
- b. Suitability of the curriculum to the capabilities and capacities of each school, including professional, financial, and managerial aspects.

- c. The curriculum development process is carried out by educators who have a deep understanding of the characteristics and development of students so that implementation can be carried out more smoothly.
- d. Encouraging increased motivation for educators to continue to develop themselves, search for and create a better curriculum, creating a positive competitive environment in curriculum development.

Meanwhile, disadvantages of a decentralized curriculum approach include:

- a. The lack of uniformity in the curriculum, which is essential for maintaining national cohesion and cohesion in some situations, makes this approach less suitable.
- b. The absence of uniform assessment standards results in difficulties in comparing one school or region with another.
- c. Difficulties arise when students move to another school or area with a different curriculum.
- d. Limitations in carrying out management and assessment nationally.
- e. Not all schools or regions are ready to develop curricula independently.

3.3.3 The teacher's role in curriculum development is central-decentral

Current curriculum development aims to balance these two curriculum forms through an approach combining central and decentralized elements (Thijs & Van Den Akker, 2009). Previously, some universities in Indonesia implemented a more decentralized approach to curriculum development. In the past, each higher education institution had the freedom to design and develop its curriculum, which differed from each other. However, this decentralization level is currently starting to decrease due to efforts to achieve standardization. Several similar institutions have developed uniform curriculum frameworks and core subject groups to achieve curriculum uniformity (Fatmawati, 2021).

In the context of a curriculum based on decentralization or a central-decentral approach, the role of teachers in curriculum development becomes increasingly crucial compared to a more centralized model. Teachers implement the established curriculum and are actively involved in the curriculum planning process at the school level. They play a role in breaking down the primary curriculum into annual and semester programs, scheduling material over a specific period, and compiling an extensive picture curriculum that suits the specific needs of their school. Teachers' involvement in managing each element of the curriculum strengthens their sense of ownership, encouraging enthusiasm to improve their skills and knowledge in developing the curriculum more efficiently (Rohman, 2009).

Therefore, since the beginning of the curriculum development process, the active participation of teachers has given them a deep understanding and firm mastery of the curriculum used. This involvement ensures that the curriculum implementation in the classroom is more precise and runs smoothly. Teachers are not only curriculum users but also act as planners, thinkers, compilers, developers, implementers, and curriculum evaluators. Meanwhile,

according to Murray Printr in Bahri (2011), the role of teachers in curriculum development in the classroom setting is as follows:

a. The role of the teacher as implementer of the curriculum

As implementers, teachers are responsible for implementing the established curriculum. The teacher's authority to determine the content and objectives of the curriculum is limited. Teachers receive guidance from the curriculum policy developed centrally by the Outline Teaching Program (GBPP). In the structured GBPP framework, all aspects ranging from achievement goals, learning materials, teaching methods, media used, and reference materials to evaluation techniques, as well as scheduling of material delivery times have been determined by the central government as a policy formulator (Triwiyanto, 2022).

b. The role of the teacher as a curriculum adapter.

As an adjustment, teachers play a role in adapting the curriculum to the unique needs of students and local conditions (Barab & Luehmann, 2003). In the development stage, teachers are given the authority to align the existing curriculum by considering the specific needs of the school and its surrounding environment. For example, in the Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP) format, curriculum designers set content standards as minimum guidelines that must be met, while how the curriculum is implemented, the timing of its implementation, and all other technical aspects are the teacher's exclusive responsibility. This makes the teacher's role in the adjustment aspect have a wider reach compared to the role as the curriculum implementer.

c. The role of the teacher as a curriculum developer

As designers, teachers have a crucial role in curriculum development with the authority to compile it. Teachers are responsible for setting the goals and content of the material taught to students and have control over teaching methods, strategies applied, and how to assess the achievement of these goals. As curriculum designers, teachers have complete freedom to design the curriculum according to the school's unique characteristics, vision, and mission, as well as to consider students' learning needs. The implementation of this role is reflected in the development of the local content curriculum, which is an integral part of the KTSP structure. Developing a local content curriculum is wholly left to each educational institution because each school has a different local content curriculum. Thus, the curriculum is explicitly prepared according to the unique needs and context of each school (Saraswati et al., 2020).

3.3.4 The role of teachers as curriculum researchers

As curriculum researchers, teachers play an essential role in deepening understanding of various aspects of the curriculum (Trouche et al., 2019). Their primary responsibility is to conduct trials of various curriculum components, including testing material content, assessing the success of learning programs, evaluating learning strategies and models, and collecting data

related to student achievement of curriculum targets. One method often recommended in this research process is classroom action research (PTK), where teachers identify problems that arise during curriculum implementation to find appropriate solutions. By involving themselves in PTK, teachers can overcome their challenges, increase their academic knowledge, and improve classroom teaching and learning quality (Bahri, 2011).

The essence of these two views shows that, according to the author, the role of teachers in curriculum development has a similar essence. Murray Print put forward the idea of the role of teachers as curriculum implementers, which is similar to Nana Syaodih Sukmadinata's perspective regarding the role of teachers in curriculum-centered development. In this framework, teachers are considered implementers or transmitters of the curriculum formulated by a special team at the central level. Teachers do not have the authority to determine the substance or targets of the curriculum itself (Sumadinata, 1988).

Meanwhile, the teacher's role as an adapter aligns with the teacher's role in decentralization-based curriculum development. In this decentralized context, teachers are given the freedom and authority to develop and adapt the existing curriculum to suit the school's characteristics, needs, and local developments or capabilities. The role of teachers as developers and researchers is considered to have the same essence as the role of teachers in curriculum development, which combines both centralization and decentralization. In this framework, the role of teachers has more significant influence than those managed centrally or decentralized. Teachers not only determine the goals and substance of learning material for students but also have the power to determine teaching methods, learning strategies, and ways to evaluate their success.

In efforts to develop an Islamic religious education curriculum, teachers are responsible for emphasizing the importance of instilling divine values that align with Islamic teachings into students' thinking. These values are closely related to the concept of God and everything that comes from Him, including the values of Imaniyah, Ubudiyah, and Muamalah. Therefore, teachers need to make maximum efforts to form students' understanding of these principles and values as an integral part of the learning process (Fatmawati, 2021)

Teachers play a crucial role in implicating divine values by combining a variety of changes, deep appreciation, and the use of strategies appropriate to students' spiritual evolution. The PAI teachers are expected to carry out an inclusive, adaptive, creative, and innovative approach in developing the PAI curriculum to provide the most effective response to each student's unique needs and growth.

4. CONCLUSION

The role of teachers as developers and researchers are similar to that of teachers in curriculum design, including central and decentralized aspects. The teacher's role in curriculum development has a more significant impact than control from central or decentralized arrangements. Teachers are not only responsible for setting learning goals and content for students but also have the authority to design various methods, strategies, and assessment instruments to evaluate the

success of the learning process. The teacher's curricular development tactics may change depending on whether the management strategy is decentralized, centralized, or centrally decentralized. In addition, teachers were crucial as researchers, innovators, implementers, and adapters. Additionally, teachers were expected to conduct other vital values through reciprocal interaction and imparting knowledge, which was the primary key in the learning process. It indicates that educators helped students acquire the resources pupils required.

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