

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM CONSIDERING ACADEMIC AND PRACTICAL BALANCE

Sarwo Edy<sup>1</sup>, Sumarta<sup>2</sup>, Bambang Samsul Arifin<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Pelita Bangsa, Jawa Barat, Indonesia,

<sup>2</sup>IAI Pangeran Dharma Kusuma Indramayu, Jawa Barat, Indonesia,

<sup>3</sup>UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung

[sarwoedy@pelitabangsa.ac.id](mailto:sarwoedy@pelitabangsa.ac.id)<sup>1</sup>, [martasumarta548@gmail.com](mailto:martasumarta548@gmail.com),

[bambangamsularifin@uinsgd.ac.id](mailto:bambangamsularifin@uinsgd.ac.id)<sup>3</sup>

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Received: 07-08-2024

Revised: 29-08-2024

Approved: 01-09-2024

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the development of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum with a focus on achieving a balance between academic and practical components. The primary objective is to create a curriculum model that integrates theoretical knowledge with practical applications, thereby fostering a comprehensive understanding and real-world skills among students. The research methodology includes qualitative analysis through interviews and observations, providing insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the current PAI curriculum. Key findings suggest that an effective implementation of a balanced curriculum requires meticulous planning, continuous professional development for educators, sufficient resources, and ongoing evaluation. The proposed curriculum model encompasses essential elements such as detailed theoretical instruction, interactive practical activities, and regular assessments to ensure both relevance and efficacy. Furthermore, strategies for successful implementation are highlighted, including stakeholder involvement, structured training programs, and systematic resource allocation. The study's contribution lies in its practical recommendations for educators and policymakers, aimed at enhancing the quality of Islamic Religious Education. By addressing the identified challenges and providing actionable strategies, this research supports the development of a more balanced and effective PAI curriculum, ultimately benefiting the holistic development of students and the educational system as a whole.

**Keywords:** Islamic Religious Education, curriculum development, academic-practical balance, implementation strategy, ongoing evaluation

### INTRODUCTION

Islamic religious education in Indonesia plays a crucial role in shaping the character and personality of the nation. As the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia has a significant responsibility to provide quality religious education. Islamic religious education not only serves as a means to convey religious knowledge but also as a foundation for building morals and ethics in accordance with Islamic teachings. The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in Indonesia must be carefully designed to meet the spiritual, moral, and social needs of students in an ever-evolving society (Nugroho, 2018).

In the context of education in Indonesia, PAI holds a strategic position. Besides imparting knowledge about Islamic teachings, PAI also plays a role in developing attitudes and behaviors aligned with religious values. Islamic religious education is expected to shape individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also possess high integrity and social responsibility (Rohmat, 2020). Therefore, the PAI curriculum needs to be designed to balance academic and practical aspects. On one hand, the curriculum must provide deep religious knowledge. On the other hand, it must facilitate the

application of religious teachings in daily life, enabling students to implement the knowledge they acquire in practical settings (Wahyudi, 2019).

However, facing the challenges of globalization and modernization, the PAI curriculum needs to adapt to changing times. Globalization has brought social, technological, and cultural changes that influence the mindset and lifestyle of the younger generation. In this context, the PAI curriculum must bridge the gap between religious knowledge and everyday practice, equipping students with relevant skills to face future challenges (Sari, 2022).

Developing a PAI curriculum that balances academic and practical aspects will provide significant benefits for individuals and society. Thus, efforts to design and implement an effective and responsive PAI curriculum are crucial and urgent (Hadi, 2021).

Challenges in achieving balance between academic and practical aspects in the PAI curriculum. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in Indonesia faces significant challenges in creating a balance between academic and practical aspects in its curriculum. As an integral part of the national education system, PAI must ensure that students not only acquire deep religious knowledge but also apply it in daily life. This challenge becomes increasingly complex with rapid social and technological changes and globalization influencing how students learn and interact (Hadi, 2021).

One of the main challenges is creating a curriculum that can integrate religious theory with real-life practice. On one hand, the PAI curriculum must provide an in-depth understanding of Islamic teachings, including the study of sacred texts, Islamic history, and principles of fiqh. On the other hand, the curriculum must ensure that students can apply this knowledge in daily life contexts, such as in social, economic, and personal aspects (Rohmat, 2020).

Balancing academic and practical aspects becomes increasingly important in the modern era, where students face various life challenges requiring practical skills. For instance, students must be able to apply Islamic principles in complex situations, such as dealing with social and ethical issues in a plural society (Nugroho, 2018). Therefore, the PAI curriculum needs to be designed considering the social context and practical needs of students while maintaining the necessary academic depth.

However, the process of achieving this balance is not without difficulties. Implementing a curriculum that integrates these aspects often faces obstacles, including limited resources, resistance to change, and lack of support from stakeholders (Wahyudi, 2019). These challenges require a holistic and innovative approach in designing and implementing a PAI curriculum that effectively meets the academic and practical needs of students.

In facing these challenges, it is important to conduct continuous evaluation and revision of the PAI curriculum. Developing a curriculum responsive to changing times and student needs will significantly contribute to the quality of Islamic religious education in Indonesia (Sari, 2022).

Objectives and significance of the research. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a very important role in the education system in Indonesia. With the primary goal of shaping the character and personality of students according to Islamic teachings, PAI must be carefully designed to effectively integrate academic knowledge with practical application. In this context, research on the development of a PAI curriculum that balances academic and practical aspects is of great importance. The main objective of this research is to identify and analyze effective approaches in developing a PAI

curriculum that can create a balance between theory and practice. This research aims to: (i) Analyze the existing PAI curriculum. Examine the PAI curriculum currently implemented in various educational institutions to identify the strengths and weaknesses in achieving a balance between academic and practical aspects (Nugroho, 2021). (ii) Develop a balanced curriculum model. Design a PAI curriculum model that can effectively integrate academic knowledge with practical application, and provide guidelines for the implementation and evaluation of the model (Rohmat, 2020). (iii) Provide policy recommendations. Develop recommendations for the better and more responsive development of the PAI curriculum, considering the research findings (Hadi, 2021).

This research holds significant importance both for the development of the PAI curriculum and for the religious education system as a whole. The significance of this research includes: (i) Improving the quality of religious education. By producing a balanced curriculum model, this research can help enhance the quality of Islamic religious education in Indonesia, ensuring that students not only understand Islamic teachings academically but also are able to apply them in everyday life (Wahyudi, 2019). (ii) Adapting to changing times. This research contributes to the adaptation of the PAI curriculum to contemporary developments and the needs of students in the digital era, ensuring that the PAI curriculum remains relevant and effective in facing modern challenges (Sari, 2022). (iii) Policy and practice recommendations. The findings from this research will provide valuable insights and recommendations for policymakers, educators, and curriculum developers in designing and implementing a better and more adaptive PAI curriculum (Rohmat, 2020).

Analysis of effective approaches in developing an Islamic religious education curriculum (PAI) that balances academic and practical aspects in the learning process. Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia faces the challenge of integrating academic knowledge with practical applications relevant to everyday life. Therefore, this paper will examine how the PAI curriculum can be designed and developed to not only convey profound religious knowledge but also facilitate real-world practice in students' lives. This research will involve a literature review related to curriculum theory, principles of Islamic education, and learning models that can support this balance. Additionally, qualitative research methods will be used to analyze current curriculum practices and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches used in various educational institutions. The results of this paper are expected to provide practical recommendations for developing a more holistic PAI curriculum that can enhance the quality of religious education in a more balanced way between theory and practice. Thus, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of an effective PAI curriculum and support the improvement of the quality of Islamic religious education in Indonesia.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a Research and Development (R&D) approach to develop an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum model that balances academic and practical aspects (Sugiyono, 2016). The main steps in this research methodology include:

Exploration phase include: (i) Literature review. Conduct a literature review to identify key concepts, theories, and best practices in the development of the PAI curriculum (Yin, 2018). The literature reviewed includes theories on Islamic education,

teaching methodologies, and curriculum evaluation practices. (ii) Needs analysis. Conduct interviews and surveys with educators, students, and other stakeholders to understand the needs and expectations related to a balanced PAI curriculum (Creswell, 2014).

Development phase include: (i) Curriculum design. Based on the exploration phase results, a balanced PAI curriculum design is created. This curriculum model includes theoretical and practical components designed to complement each other. (ii) Development of materials and resources. Develop teaching materials, resources, and evaluation tools that support the implementation of a balanced PAI curriculum.

Pilot testing phase include: (i) Pilot implementation. Implement the developed curriculum on a small scale in selected schools. Testing is conducted to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the developed curriculum model. (ii) Pilot evaluation. Collect data through observation, interviews, and questionnaires to evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented curriculum (Creswell, 2014). The evaluation results are used to refine the curriculum.

Refinement phase include: (i) Curriculum revision. Based on the pilot test evaluation results, the curriculum is revised and refined to ensure optimal balance between academic and practical aspects. (ii) Implementation and dissemination. The refined curriculum is implemented on a broader scale, and the results are disseminated through academic publications, teacher training, and seminars (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009).

Evaluation and monitoring phase include: (i) Ongoing evaluation. Conduct ongoing evaluation of the curriculum implementation to ensure its long-term relevance and effectiveness. (ii) Monitoring. Regularly monitor the curriculum's implementation to make necessary adjustments based on changing needs and conditions in the field.

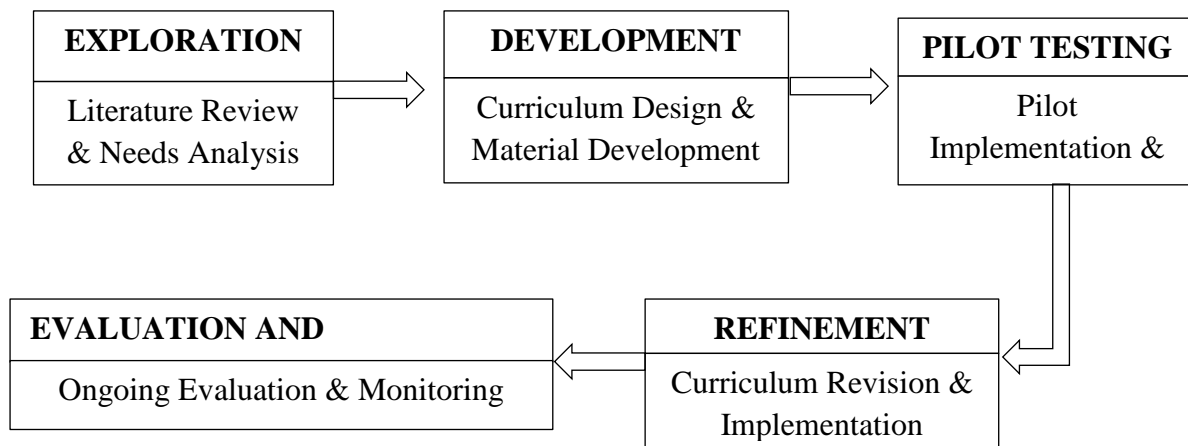


Figure1. Research Design

## **RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Fundamental Theories of Curriculum and Their Application in Religious Education**

#### **Traditional Curriculum Theory**

Traditional curriculum theory focuses on the delivery of proven knowledge deemed important for future generations. This approach emphasizes the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student and is often content-oriented and standardized (Tyler, 1949). In the context of religious education, this theory emphasizes the importance of teaching doctrines and religious teachings essential for the formation of

students' character and personality. This content-oriented curriculum is often used to ensure that students acquire deep and systematic religious knowledge.

### **Progressive Curriculum Theory**

Progressive curriculum theory, developed by John Dewey, emphasizes the importance of relevant and contextual learning experiences. Dewey argued that education should focus on students' experiences and the relevance of teaching materials in their daily lives (Dewey, 1938). In religious education, this approach teaches that curriculum materials should be adapted to the needs and experiences of students and applied in real contexts. This allows students to relate religious teachings to their personal experiences and situations in their surroundings.

### **Constructivist Curriculum Theory**

Constructivist curriculum theory, popularized by Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, focuses on learning as an active process where students construct their own understanding based on their experiences and interactions (Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of religious education, this approach emphasizes the importance of active learning where students not only receive knowledge but also construct their own meanings and understanding of religious teachings through discussion, reflection, and application in real life.

### **Contextual Curriculum Theory**

Contextual curriculum theory focuses on the relevance of teaching materials in the social and cultural context of students. This approach, promoted by Jerome Bruner and David Ausubel, emphasizes the importance of linking new knowledge with prior knowledge and experiences (Bruner, 1960; Ausubel, 1968). In religious education, this theory requires the curriculum to consider the cultural and social backgrounds of students and relevant contemporary situations, so that religious teachings can be understood and applied in a manner appropriate to the students' life context.

### **Humanistic Curriculum Theory**

Humanistic curriculum theory, developed by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, focuses on individual potential development and self-actualization. This approach emphasizes the importance of education that liberates students to explore their interests and talents personally (Rogers, 1969; Maslow, 1954). In religious education, this theory encourages a curriculum that supports students' personal development and helps them achieve deep spiritual understanding and experience.

Fundamental curriculum theories provide various useful perspectives for designing and developing an effective Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum. By understanding these theories, educators can create a curriculum that not only focuses on delivering academic knowledge but also considers the practical relevance and social context of students, while supporting their personal and spiritual development.

## **Relevant Curriculum Approaches for Islamic Religious Education**

### **Integrative Curriculum Approach**

The integrative curriculum approach combines various disciplines into a holistic curriculum. In the context of Islamic religious education, this approach aims to connect religious teachings with other areas of knowledge, such as social sciences, science, and

language (Beane, 1997). This integration helps students understand the relevance of Islamic teachings in a broader context and facilitates the application of religious principles in various aspects of their lives.

### **Contextual Curriculum Approach**

The contextual curriculum approach focuses on the relevance of teaching materials to the social and cultural context of students. In Islamic religious education, this approach emphasizes the importance of adapting curriculum materials to the real needs and experiences of students, as well as their social and cultural context (Bruns, 2005). This ensures that religious teachings are not only taught theoretically but also applied in the students' daily lives, making them more meaningful and relevant.

### **Constructivist Curriculum Approach**

The constructivist curriculum approach, influenced by the theories of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, emphasizes learning as an active process where students construct their own knowledge through experience and interaction (Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978). In Islamic religious education, this approach encourages students to be actively involved in the learning process, questioning and discussing religious teachings, and constructing their own understanding of Islamic principles in the context of their lives.

### **Humanistic Curriculum Approach**

The humanistic curriculum approach focuses on the development of individual potential and self-actualization. In Islamic religious education, this approach supports a curriculum that considers the individual needs and interests of students and develops their spiritual and moral aspects holistically (Rogers, 1969; Maslow, 1954). This approach emphasizes the importance of providing space for students to explore and understand religious teachings according to their personal experiences and development.

### **Practical and Applicative Curriculum Approach**

The practical and applicative curriculum approach emphasizes the direct application of teachings in real situations. In Islamic religious education, this approach focuses on how Islamic principles can be applied in the students' daily lives, including their social, economic, and personal aspects (Wahyudi, 2019). This approach helps students not only understand theory but also apply it in practical contexts.

Relevant curriculum approaches to Islamic religious education offer various perspectives for designing an effective curriculum responsive to students' needs. By understanding and integrating these approaches, educators can develop an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum that not only provides deep religious knowledge but also important practical relevance for students' lives.

## **Goals and Principles of Islamic Religious Education**

### **Goals of Islamic Religious Education**

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) aims to shape students' character and personality in accordance with Islamic teachings, ensuring that students have a deep understanding of religious teachings that can be applied in daily life. The main goals of PAI include: (i) Formation of Morals and Character. One of the main goals of PAI is to shape students' morals and character according to Islamic teachings. This education aims to instill Islamic moral and ethical values, such as honesty, politeness, and

responsibility (Husain, 2015). (ii) Theological Understanding. PAI aims to provide a deep understanding of Islamic teachings, including *aqidah* (creed), *ibadah* (worship), and *sharia* (law). This education aims for students to understand and practice Islamic teachings correctly and consistently (Arifin, 2019). (iii) Integration with Daily Life. PAI also aims to integrate Islamic teachings into students' daily lives, so they can apply religious principles in various aspects of their lives, including social, economic, and personal contexts (Kamal, 2016).

### **Principles of Islamic Religious Education**

Islamic Religious Education is based on principles that underlie the effective delivery and application of Islamic teachings. These principles include: (i) Principle of Balance. Islamic Religious Education must balance theoretical and practical aspects. This means that Islamic teachings are not only taught theoretically but also applied in students' daily lives, allowing them to understand and experience religious values directly (Mujiburrahman, 2020). (ii) Principle of Relevance. This principle emphasizes the importance of linking religious teachings with students' social and cultural context. Islamic Religious Education must be relevant to students' daily lives and consider their cultural backgrounds (Sulaiman, 2018). (iii) Principle of Contextualization. Islamic Religious Education must be adapted to students' needs and conditions. This involves adjusting teaching materials to the times and contemporary situations, as well as adapting teaching methods to be more effective in modern contexts (Zainuddin, 2021). (iv) Holistic Principle. Islamic Religious Education must be holistic, encompassing the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of students. This education aims to develop all dimensions of students' personalities so that they can grow into well-rounded individuals (Rosyid, 2017).

The literature review on the goals and principles of Islamic religious education shows that PAI (*Pendidikan Agama Islam*) aims not only to provide a deep understanding of religion but also to apply principles that ensure this education is relevant and effective in shaping the character and personality of students. These principles include balancing theory and practice, linking with social contexts, contextualizing with student needs, and taking a holistic approach to personality development.

### **Analysis of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Curriculum in Indonesia**

The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in Indonesia has undergone various changes in line with educational policy developments and societal needs. This curriculum aims to ensure that the religious education received by students aligns with Islamic teachings and can be applied in daily life. The PAI curriculum in Indonesia typically includes material on *aqidah* (creed), *ibadah* (worship), *akhlak* (morals), and Islamic history, with an emphasis on character and moral development (Yusri, 2017).

### **Analysis of the Structure and Content of the PAI Curriculum**

An analysis of the structure and content of the PAI curriculum shows that it often refers to national standards set by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. The curriculum structure usually includes several components, such as learning objectives, teaching materials, teaching methods, and evaluation. However, there are variations in the implementation of the curriculum across different

educational institutions, which may be influenced by factors such as local policies and institutional capacity (Nugroho, 2018).

### **Challenges in the Implementation of the PAI Curriculum**

The implementation of the PAI curriculum in Indonesia faces various challenges, such as the gap between theory and practice, lack of resources, and differing understandings between curriculum developers and field implementers. Some studies indicate that the PAI curriculum often struggles to balance academic and practical aspects and align teaching materials with students' local needs and contexts (Haris, 2019).

### **Efforts to Improve and Revise the PAI Curriculum**

To address these challenges, various efforts have been made to improve and revise the PAI curriculum. Some of these efforts include developing teaching materials that are more relevant to students' social and cultural contexts, providing training for educators, and enhancing the quality of evaluation. These programs aim to ensure that the PAI curriculum can more effectively achieve the goals of religious education and meet students' needs (Aziz, 2020).

### **The Role of Stakeholders in PAI Curriculum Development**

The role of various stakeholders, including the government, educational institutions, and the community, is crucial in the development and implementation of the PAI curriculum. Collaboration between stakeholders can help ensure that the PAI curriculum meets national standards and is relevant to local needs, facilitating effective implementation in the field (Sutrisno, 2021).

The literature review on the analysis of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum in Indonesia shows that while this curriculum is designed to meet national standards and religious education goals, there are still challenges in its implementation. Efforts to improve and revise the curriculum, along with the active role of stakeholders, are essential to ensure that the PAI curriculum can be effectively implemented and meet the needs of students.

## **The Concept of Balance Between Theory and Practice in Education**

### **Definition of Balance Between Theory and Practice**

The balance between theory and practice in education refers to the effective integration of academic knowledge and its practical application. This concept emphasizes the importance of connecting classroom-taught theory with real-world experiences that students encounter in the field. It is essential to ensure that students not only understand theoretical concepts but can also apply them in practical situations (Schön, 1983).

### **Theories and Approaches in Balancing Theory and Practice**

Various theories and approaches have been developed to achieve a balance between theory and practice in education. One of these is the constructivist approach, which emphasizes that knowledge is built through practical experiences. This theory suggests that students should engage in activities that allow them to apply the knowledge they have learned, enabling them to build a deeper and more relevant understanding (Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978).

### **Implementation of Theory-Practice Balance in the Curriculum**

Implementing the balance between theory and practice in the curriculum involves designing instructional materials that combine conceptual learning with practical activities. This approach can include the use of case studies, simulations, and problem-based projects that enable students to apply theory in real-world contexts (Kolb, 1984). Additionally, project-based learning (PBL) is an effective method that emphasizes the application of theory in real projects relevant to students' fields of study.

### **Evaluation and Feedback in Theory-Practice Balance**

Evaluation and feedback play a key role in achieving a balance between theory and practice. The evaluation process should assess not only students' theoretical understanding but also their practical skills. Constructive feedback from practical experiences can help students understand and integrate theory more effectively (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

### **Challenges in Achieving Theory-Practice Balance**

Some challenges in achieving a balance between theory and practice include limited resources, a lack of practical skills among educators, and difficulties in integrating theory into relevant practice. Research shows that to overcome these challenges, it is important to provide training for educators and develop a curriculum that supports the application of theory in practical contexts (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

A review of the literature on the concept of balancing theory and practice in education indicates that effective integration of these two aspects is crucial to ensuring that students can apply their knowledge in practical situations. Various theories, approaches, and methods can be used to achieve this balance, and effective evaluation and feedback can aid the learning process. Overcoming existing challenges and providing adequate support for educators are also important steps in achieving this balance.

### **Learning Models that Support the Balance Between Theory and Practice** **Project-Based Learning (PBL) Model**

The Project-Based Learning (PBL) model is a highly effective approach to integrating theory with practice. PBL involves students in complex and real-world projects that require the application of their knowledge and skills to complete tasks. This model allows students to learn through hands-on experience, making theory more relevant and practical (Thomas, 2000). PBL also encourages students to conduct research, solve problems, and collaborate, helping them understand and apply theoretical concepts in real-world contexts.

### **Constructivist Learning Model**

The constructivist learning model, influenced by the theories of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through direct experience and social interaction. In this model, students not only learn theory but also actively engage in the learning process through experimentation, discussion, and reflection. This approach helps students connect theory with their practical experiences, building a deeper understanding of the concepts being studied (Bruson, 2005; Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978).

### **Inquiry-Based Learning Model**

The inquiry-based learning model involves students in active investigation processes that require them to ask questions, conduct investigations, and conclude their findings. This model focuses on developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as the application of theory in practical situations. With this model, students learn to connect theory with direct experience and gain deeper understanding through experimentation and analysis (Harpaz, 2005).

### **Experiential Learning Model**

The experiential learning model, developed by David Kolb, emphasizes learning through direct experience. This model involves a cycle of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and application. Using this approach, students can connect theory with practice through direct experience and reflection on those experiences. This model is very useful for creating a balance between theory and practice in the learning process (Kolb, 1984).

### **Problem-Based Learning (PBL) Model**

The Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model involves students in solving complex and authentic problems that require the application of theoretical knowledge in real contexts. PBL encourages students to work in groups, conduct research, and produce practical solutions. This approach integrates theory and practice in a way that allows students to learn through real-world challenges and develop relevant skills (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980).

Learning models that support the balance between theory and practice play a crucial role in education by integrating direct experiences and practical applications of acquired knowledge. Approaches such as Project-Based Learning, Constructivist Learning, Inquiry-Based Learning, Experiential Learning, and Problem-Based Learning help students connect theory with practice and develop a deeper and more relevant understanding.

## **Implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Curriculum and the Balance Between Theory and Practice**

Interviews with educators, students, and school administrators provided in-depth insights into the implementation of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum and the balance between theory and practice. Key findings from the interviews include: (i) Constraints in implementation. Most educators reported constraints in implementing an effective PAI curriculum, particularly related to a lack of resources and training. They noted that the curriculum material often tends to be too theoretical and lacks practical application opportunities (Haris, 2019). (ii) Perceptions of theory-practice balance. Students expressed that they feel they have limited opportunities to apply the theory they learn in real situations. Many students desire more interactive and experience-based teaching methods that connect the material to their daily lives (Yusri, 2017). (iii) Need for educator training. School administrators identified the need for additional training for educators to enhance their skills in integrating theory with practice. They also emphasized the importance of greater support from schools for better curriculum implementation (Sutrisno, 2021).

Direct observations of the PAI learning process in several schools provided insights into current practices and how theory is applied in the classroom. Key findings from the observations are: (i) Teaching methods used. Observations showed that many educators still use lecture-based methods as the primary approach for teaching PAI

theory. Although some educators have attempted active learning methods such as group discussions and case studies, their implementation remains limited (Nugroho, 2018). (ii) Integration of theory with practice. The integration of theory and practice in PAI lessons often appears suboptimal. Practical activities such as worship simulations and problem-based projects are still rare, meaning students do not gain deep hands-on experiences (Harpaz, 2005). (iii) Student engagement in learning. Observations also indicated that the level of student engagement in the learning process varies. In some cases, students appeared less actively involved and preferred more interactive and relevant approaches to their lives (Bruson, 2005).

From the findings of the interviews and observations, it is evident that there are several issues that need to be addressed to improve the balance between theory and practice in the PAI curriculum. Major constraints include a lack of resources, limited interactive teaching methods, and the need for educator training. To improve the situation, it is important to enhance educator training, adopt more active and experience-based teaching methods, and provide adequate support from schools.

Better integration of theory and practice can be achieved through the application of learning models such as Project-Based Learning, Inquiry-Based Learning, and Constructivist Approaches, which allow students to be more actively involved in the learning process and apply the knowledge they have learned in practical situations. This way, students can gain a deeper and more relevant understanding of PAI content.

## **Strengths and Weaknesses of the Current Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Curriculum**

### **Strengths of the Current PAI Curriculum**

Based on the analysis of interviews, observations, and documentation studies, several strengths of the current PAI curriculum include: (i) Holistic approach to character education. The current PAI curriculum has integrated character education aspects comprehensively, emphasizing moral and ethical values in every subject. This helps students develop good character and understand the importance of ethics in daily life (Yusri, 2017). (ii) Relevance of material to student needs. The PAI curriculum also strives to tailor instructional materials to student needs and local contexts. This includes adjusting materials to reflect local social and cultural conditions, making lessons more relevant and applicable (Nugroho, 2018). (iii) Development of educator pedagogical competence. In some cases, the PAI curriculum has considered the development of educators' pedagogical competencies through training and workshops aimed at improving their skills in delivering material effectively (Sutrisno, 2021).

### **Weaknesses of the Current PAI Curriculum**

However, there are significant weaknesses in the current PAI curriculum, including: (i) Lack of integration between theory and practice. A major shortcoming is the lack of effective integration between theory and practice in the instructional materials. Many educators and students complain that the curriculum material tends to be theoretical and does not provide opportunities for students to apply knowledge in real situations (Haris, 2019). (ii) Limited varied teaching methods. Observations indicate that teaching methods used are still dominated by lectures and traditional teaching. More interactive and experience-based methods, such as project-based or inquiry-based learning, are still rarely implemented (Bruson, 2005). (iii) Resource and infrastructure constraints. The PAI curriculum often faces constraints in terms of resources and infrastructure. The lack of adequate instructional materials and

supporting facilities for practical activities remains an issue, hindering optimal curriculum implementation (Aziz, 2020).

The findings of this research show that although the PAI curriculum has some significant strengths, such as a holistic approach and relevant material organization, there are also weaknesses that need to be addressed. The lack of integration between theory and practice, limited varied teaching methods, and resource constraints are major issues that need attention.

To enhance the effectiveness of the PAI curriculum, efforts are needed to address these shortcomings by introducing more innovative and experience-based teaching methods and improving the support and facilities required for curriculum implementation. These measures are expected to make the PAI curriculum more effective in achieving religious education goals and meeting student needs.

## **Interpretation of Findings in the Context of Theory and Practice**

### **Integration of Theory and Practice in the PAI Curriculum**

The current Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum faces challenges in integrating theory and practice. Many educators report that the instructional material tends to be theoretical, with practical implementation often limited (Haris, 2019).

These findings align with constructivist theory, which emphasizes the importance of practical experience in the learning process. Knowledge is built through active interaction with the environment and direct experience (Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of PAI, integrating theory with practice is crucial for helping students understand and apply religious values in daily life. The lack of application of experience-based learning methods, such as Project-Based Learning (Thomas, 2000) and Inquiry-Based Learning (Harpaz, 2005), may explain why theory often fails to connect with practice in the current curriculum.

### **Teaching Methods and Student Engagement**

The dominant teaching method is lectures and traditional instruction, with minimal application of interactive or experience-based methods. Student engagement in the learning process also varies (Bruns, 2005). Active learning theories, as proposed by Kolb (1984), emphasize the importance of direct experience in the learning process. Models like Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Problem-Based Learning can provide more applicable contexts and increase student engagement (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980). Limitations in applying interactive methods may be due to a lack of training and resources for educators. Therefore, to enhance student engagement, it is important to introduce and train educators in more varied and experience-based teaching methods.

### **Resource and Infrastructure Constraints**

The PAI curriculum often faces constraints related to adequate resources and infrastructure for effective practical implementation (Aziz, 2020). These findings can be understood through the lens of educational management theory, which emphasizes the importance of resource support in curriculum implementation. According to Darling-Hammond (2006), the success of curriculum implementation heavily depends on the availability of resources, educator training, and institutional support. Existing resource constraints, such as instructional materials and facilities, can hinder curriculum effectiveness and the application of relevant practices. Therefore, it is crucial to allocate sufficient resources and support the development of adequate infrastructure to support PAI curriculum implementation.

This discussion indicates that the findings from the research on the PAI curriculum can be connected with key educational theories. Integration of theory and practice, teaching methods, and resource constraints are key factors affecting curriculum effectiveness. Applying constructivist theory, active learning, and effective educational management can help address existing shortcomings and improve the quality of the PAI curriculum.

### **Comparison of the PAI Curriculum with Existing Curriculum Models**

The current Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum tends to rely on traditional lecture-based teaching methods, with minimal application of project-based methods. This contrasts with the Project-Based Learning (PBL) model, which emphasizes student involvement in real projects that require applying theory in practice (Thomas, 2000).

### **Comparison with the Project-Based Learning (PBL) Model**

The PBL model offers a more contextual and applicable approach compared to the current PAI curriculum. PBL allows students to connect theoretical concepts with practical situations through challenging and relevant projects. In the context of PAI, implementing PBL can enhance student engagement and help them apply religious values in daily life. The main difference is that PBL provides students with opportunities to learn directly through real experiences, whereas traditional PAI curricula often focus on theoretical teaching with limited practical application (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980).

### **Comparison with the Constructivist Learning Model**

The current PAI curriculum focuses more on theoretical content delivery and less on active student involvement. In contrast, the constructivist learning model, influenced by Piaget and Vygotsky, emphasizes the importance of direct experience and social interaction in building knowledge (Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978).

The constructivist learning model can offer effective solutions to address deficiencies in the PAI curriculum. Constructivism emphasizes that knowledge is built through active experience and social interaction. In the PAI context, this approach can involve students in activities that allow them to explore and discuss religious values in more practical and relevant contexts. The main difference is that constructivist learning focuses on how students build their own understanding through experiences, while the current PAI curriculum often remains oriented toward content delivery by the teacher (Bruson, 2005).

### **Comparison with the Inquiry-Based Learning Model**

Observations show that the current PAI curriculum underutilizes inquiry-based approaches, which encourage students to conduct investigations and make their own discoveries. The Inquiry-Based Learning model emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills through active investigation (Harpaz, 2005).

The Inquiry-Based Learning model offers a more active and interactive approach compared to the current PAI curriculum. By encouraging students to ask questions, conduct research, and draw their own conclusions, this model can help students understand religious concepts more deeply and contextually. The advantage of this approach is its enhancement of critical thinking skills and student engagement, which are currently lacking in the existing PAI curriculum (Kolb, 1984).

### **Comparison with the Experiential Learning Model**

The current PAI curriculum shows a lack of application of direct experience principles characteristic of the Experiential Learning model developed by Kolb (1984). The Experiential Learning model emphasizes the cycle of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and application as part of the learning process. In the PAI curriculum, applying this model can enhance student engagement by providing opportunities to learn through direct experiences and reflection on those experiences. This contrasts with the current PAI approach, which prioritizes theoretical content delivery with limited practical application (Kolb, 1984). Applying this model in the PAI curriculum can help students better understand and apply religious values in relevant and real contexts.

The discussion of findings indicates that the current PAI curriculum significantly differs from experience-based, constructivist, inquiry-based, and project-based curriculum models. Implementing these models can help address deficiencies in the PAI curriculum and improve the integration of theory and practice. By adopting more active and experience-based approaches, the PAI curriculum can be more effective in achieving educational goals and meeting student needs.

### **Development of Curriculum Models**

#### **Concept of a Balanced Curriculum Model**

Research indicates the need for developing a balanced PAI curriculum model that integrates academic and practical aspects. An ideal curriculum should integrate theoretical knowledge with practical skills so that students can effectively understand and apply religious values in daily life (Yusri, 2017).

The concept of a balanced curriculum model requires an approach that accommodates both aspects. The proposed model in this research adopts principles from constructivist theory, Project-Based Learning (PBL), and Experiential Learning. This model integrates: (i) Theoretical Teaching: Providing a solid foundation of religious knowledge, including fundamental Islamic principles, history, and fiqh (Haris, 2019). (ii) Direct Practice: Applying knowledge through practical activities such as worship simulations, community-based projects, and case studies relevant to students' daily lives (Kolb, 1984). This model aims to create a holistic learning experience where students not only understand theoretical concepts but also apply them in practical contexts.

#### **Design of the Balanced PAI Curriculum Model**

Design of the model. The balanced PAI curriculum model, which integrates academic and practical aspects, is designed with the following key components: (a) Theoretical components, including: (i) Core curriculum. Includes studies on *aqidah* (faith), *ibadah* (worship), *akhlak* (morality), and Islamic history. This material is structured to provide a strong and in-depth theoretical foundation of Islamic teachings (Sutrisno, 2021). (ii) Teaching methods. Employs lecture, discussion, and text-based learning methods to effectively convey theoretical knowledge (Bruson, 2005). (b) Practical components, including: (i) Practical activities. Includes worship simulations, community projects, and the application of Islamic values in daily activities. These activities aim to provide students with direct experience and opportunities to apply the knowledge they have learned (Harpaz, 2005). (ii) Skills application. Integrates practical skills such as leadership, cooperation, and problem-solving within an Islamic context.

These activities are designed to develop relevant life skills (Thomas, 2000). (c) Evaluation and feedback, including: (i) Performance assessment. Involves ongoing evaluation of students' understanding of theory and application of practices. Assessments can be conducted through exams, projects, and personal reflections (Darling-Hammond, 2006). (ii) Feedback. Provides constructive feedback to students to enhance their understanding and skills.

### **Implementation of the Model and Challenges**

Implementing a balanced curriculum model that integrates academic and practical elements requires addressing various challenges such as resources, educator training, and institutional support.

To address these challenges, several strategic steps need to be taken: (i) Educator training. Provide intensive training for educators on how to integrate theory and practice in teaching (Haris, 2019). (ii) Resource development. Supply teaching materials and facilities that support practical activities (Aziz, 2020). (iii) Institutional support. Build support from school management and stakeholders to ensure successful curriculum implementation (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

The development of a balanced PAI curriculum model that integrates academic and practical components requires effective integration of theoretical and practical elements. This model is designed to provide a holistic learning experience while considering implementation challenges. With this approach, it is hoped that students can understand and apply religious values more effectively and relevantly.

### **Key Components in the PAI Curriculum Model**

Research indicates that a balanced PAI curriculum model requires several key components to ensure effective and comprehensive integration. These components include: (i) Theoretical components, (ii) Practical components, (iii) Teaching methods and evaluation, (iv) Resources and infrastructure. Each component plays a crucial role in supporting the balance between theory and practice in the PAI curriculum, including: (i) Theoretical components. This includes delivering content related to the fundamental principles of Islamic teachings, such as *aqidah*, *ibadah*, *akhlak*, and Islamic history. This content is designed to provide a strong knowledge base for students (Sutrisno, 2021). (ii) Practical components. Involves activities that allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-life situations. This includes worship simulations, community projects, and activities that link religious teachings with daily life (Kolb, 1984; Harpaz, 2005). (iii) Teaching methods and evaluation. Teaching methods include various approaches to delivering content, such as lectures, discussions, project-based learning, and problem-based learning. Evaluation includes assessing students' performance in understanding theory and applying practices (Bruson, 2005; Thomas, 2000). (iv) Resources and infrastructure. This includes providing adequate teaching materials, facilities for practical activities, and training for educators. Institutional support is also essential to ensure effective and sustainable curriculum implementation (Aziz, 2020; Darling-Hammond, 2006).

### **Implementation and Integration of Components**

To implement the balanced PAI curriculum model, it is important to integrate the key components cohesively. This involves designing a curriculum that ensures each component supports and complements the others.

Implementing the curriculum model requires careful planning and coordination among various components. Theoretical and practical components must be aligned so that students can understand theoretical concepts and apply them in practical contexts. Teaching methods and evaluation should be designed to measure students' understanding holistically, while resources and infrastructure must be prepared to support all aspects of the curriculum. The use of educational technology, educator training, and ongoing evaluation are also important parts of this process (Yusri, 2017).

The development of a balanced PAI curriculum model requires key components designed to integrate theory and practice effectively. By considering theoretical and practical components, teaching methods, and resources, the curriculum can be designed to provide a holistic and relevant learning experience for students.

### **Strategies for Implementing the PAI Curriculum Model**

Research shows that implementing a balanced PAI curriculum model requires effective implementation strategies to ensure the model's successful application in educational institutions. These strategies include: (i) Planning and preparation, (ii) Training and professional development, (iii) Use of resources and infrastructure, (iv) Evaluation and feedback.

Each strategy plays a crucial role in ensuring the successful implementation of the curriculum. Detailed explanations of these strategies are as follows: (i) Planning and preparation. Careful planning is a crucial first step in implementing the PAI curriculum model. This involves creating detailed curriculum plans, developing syllabi, and scheduling learning activities (Yusri, 2017). Preparation also includes adjusting existing curriculum structures to fit the new model and ensuring that all necessary teaching materials are available. (ii) Training and professional development. Training for educators is a crucial aspect of implementing a new curriculum. Educators need adequate training on teaching methods, evaluation techniques, and the use of new teaching materials (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Ongoing professional development is also important to ensure that educators stay updated with curriculum developments and teaching techniques. (iii) Use of resources and infrastructure. Providing adequate resources and supportive infrastructure is key to successful curriculum implementation. This includes teaching materials, educational technology, and facilities supporting practical activities (Aziz, 2020). Educational institutions must ensure that all required resources are available and accessible to both educators and students. (iv) Evaluation and feedback. Continuous evaluation and feedback are essential parts of the implementation process. Evaluation should include assessing the effectiveness of the curriculum, teaching methods, and student achievements (Bruson, 2005). Feedback from educators, students, and other stakeholders should be used to continuously improve and refine the curriculum.

### **Challenges in Implementation and Solutions**

The implementation of the PAI curriculum model often faces various challenges, such as resistance to change, lack of resources, and the need for intensive educator training (Haris, 2019). To address these challenges, the following strategies can be applied: (i) Effective communication. Establish good communication with all stakeholders to explain the benefits and objectives of the new curriculum model. (ii) Additional resource provision. Seek support from external sources such as donors or government agencies to provide the necessary resources. (iii) Intensive training

programs. Develop comprehensive training programs for educators to prepare them to face challenges and use the curriculum effectively.

The implementation of a balanced PAI curriculum model requires strategies that include careful planning, educator training, resource provision, and ongoing evaluation. By addressing existing challenges and applying appropriate strategies, educational institutions can successfully implement a curriculum that balances academic and practical aspects, thus improving the overall quality of Islamic education.

### **Curriculum Implementation Evaluation Plan**

Effective evaluation is a critical component in ensuring that the developed PAI curriculum model is properly implemented and achieves its desired goals. The evaluation plan should encompass various aspects, including the process, outcomes, and impact of the curriculum implementation. The evaluation plan for the PAI curriculum model includes the following key steps: (a) Process evaluation. Process evaluation focuses on how the curriculum model is implemented on the ground. This involves assessing implementation processes such as educator training, resource provision, and curriculum activities (Yusri, 2017). Evaluation methods include: (i) Direct observation. Observing curriculum implementation in the classroom and practical activities (Haris, 2019). (ii) Interviews. Conducting interviews with educators, students, and relevant parties to gather feedback on the implementation process (Bruson, 2005). (b) Outcome evaluation. Outcome evaluation assesses students' achievements in understanding and applying the curriculum. This includes measuring students' progress in both academic and practical aspects of the PAI curriculum (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Evaluation methods include: (i) Tests and examinations. Assessing theoretical understanding and practical skills of students through written tests and practical exams. (ii) Performance assessment. Evaluating projects, presentations, and assignments that demonstrate the application of knowledge (Thomas, 2000). (c) Impact evaluation. Impact evaluation measures the extent to which the curriculum brings about positive changes in students' competencies and overall improvement in Islamic education quality (Kolb, 1984). Evaluation methods include: (i) Surveys and questionnaires. Collecting data from students, educators, and parents regarding the impact of the curriculum on learning outcomes and personal development (Harpaz, 2005). (ii) Case studies. Analyzing specific cases to assess long-term changes resulting from the curriculum implementation.

### **Curriculum Implementation Monitoring Plan**

Ongoing monitoring is necessary to ensure that the curriculum remains relevant and effective over time. This involves routine reviews of implementation and making adjustments as needed. The monitoring plan includes the following steps: (a) Routine monitoring. Routine monitoring is conducted to ensure that the curriculum implementation is proceeding as planned and to identify any emerging issues (Aziz, 2020). Monitoring methods include: (i) Periodic reports. Collecting reports from educators about curriculum implementation and the challenges faced. (ii) Curriculum audits. Conducting periodic audits of teaching materials and methods to ensure alignment with the curriculum model (Sutrisno, 2021). (b) Curriculum adjustments. Based on evaluation and monitoring results, curriculum adjustments may be necessary to enhance effectiveness and relevance (Yusri, 2017). Adjustments may include revising teaching materials, methods, or practical activities. Adjustment methods include: (i)

Workshops and discussion forums. Organizing workshops to discuss evaluation results and plan adjustments (Haris, 2019). (ii) Consultations with stakeholders. Involving educators, students, and parents in the adjustment process to obtain comprehensive feedback.

An effective evaluation and monitoring plan is key to the successful implementation of a balanced Islamic Education Curriculum (PAI) model. Evaluations of processes, outcomes, and impacts should be thorough, while routine monitoring and continuous adjustments are necessary to ensure that the curriculum remains relevant and effective in achieving Islamic education goals.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study explores various aspects of developing the Islamic Education Curriculum (PAI) with a focus on achieving a balance between theory and practice. The findings of the study reveal several key points: (i) Balanced curriculum model. The developed curriculum model includes complementary theoretical and practical components. The theoretical components provide a strong religious knowledge base, while the practical components allow students to apply this knowledge in real-life contexts. This creates a holistic and relevant learning experience. (ii) Implementation strategies. Implementing the curriculum model requires careful planning, educator training, resource provision, and ongoing evaluation. Strategies involve direct observation, interviews, tests, performance assessments, and surveys to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the curriculum. (iii) Evaluation and monitoring. Evaluating the processes, outcomes, and impacts of the PAI curriculum implementation is crucial for the success of the curriculum model. Evaluation should include continuous assessments and curriculum adjustments based on feedback from various stakeholders.

The results of this study contribute significantly to PAI curriculum development in several ways: (i) Improving curriculum quality. The research provides in-depth insights into key components of a balanced PAI curriculum that integrates academic and practical aspects. By combining theory and practice, the curriculum can better meet the needs of holistic Islamic education. (ii) Implementation guidance. The identified strategies for curriculum implementation offer practical guidance for educational institutions to effectively apply the curriculum model. This includes planning, training, resource provision, as well as evaluation and monitoring. (iii) Evaluation practice development. The developed evaluation and monitoring plans provide a systematic approach to assessing and optimizing the PAI curriculum. This helps identify strengths and weaknesses of the implemented curriculum and make necessary adjustments to enhance its effectiveness. (iv) Academic and practical contributions. This research contributes to the academic understanding of curriculum development and provides practical solutions that can be implemented by educators and policymakers. It strengthens the foundation for the development of a better and more relevant PAI curriculum in the future.

A balanced PAI curriculum model and its implementation strategies can improve the quality of Islamic education in a more comprehensive and relevant manner. Effective implementation and evaluation are key to achieving educational goals and ensuring that the curriculum can adapt to student needs and changing times.

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