

Transformation of Islamic Religious Education Curriculum in the 21st Century: Integrative Design Based on Qur'anic Values in Responding to Global Challenges

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Abstract

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) continues to face fundamental challenges, including a disconnect between its ideal goals and actual classroom practices. Current implementations often emphasize cognitive learning through teacher-centered methods, limiting opportunities for students to engage in value-based reflection and religious behavioral development. This study proposes a transformative curriculum model that integrates Qur'anic values with contemporary educational needs in the 21st century. Using a qualitative descriptive method through literature review and document analysis, the study identifies four major gaps in the current curriculum: the mismatch between objectives and implementation, lack of integration between Qur'anic values and contemporary issues, minimal use of digital technology, and the weak cultivation of moderate, globally aware Muslim learners. In response, the study offers a Qur'an-based integrative curriculum design that emphasizes spiritual, social, and digital dimensions while promoting contextual and inclusive learning. This model aims to develop Muslim students who are not only religiously grounded but also critical thinkers, tolerant individuals, and active contributors in a multicultural global society. By positioning the PAI curriculum as a bridge between divine revelation and real-world challenges, the study underscores the urgency of reforming religious education to remain relevant, transformative, and future-oriented.

Keywords:

Islamic Religious Education, Qur'anic values, 21st-century curriculum, digital integration, Islamic moderation

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is an integral and inseparable part of the Indonesian national education system. Islamic Religious Education plays a strategic role in shaping the spiritual and moral dimensions of students, which are the main foundation in shaping the nation's character (Hyangsewu, 2019). More than just conveying religious teachings, PAI aims to form a complete human being: one who believes in God Almighty, is pious, and has noble character as emphasized in the National Education System Law Number 20 of 2003 (Nasional et al., 2016). PAI is not only present as a compulsory subject at every level of education, but also continues to experience renewal, both in terms of material substance and pedagogical approach (Wahid & Hamami, 2021). Along with the changing times, especially in the era of globalization and digital transformation, the approach in teaching PAI is increasingly directed at strengthening character and contextualizing Islamic values in order to be able to respond to social dynamics and the needs of today's students (Nugroho, 2024).

However, in reality, the implementation of Islamic Religious Education in schools still faces various fundamental problems that reflect the gap between ideal goals and practical reality. There is still a mismatch between the objectives of the curriculum that emphasize the formation of noble morals with learning practices that tend to be cognitive and teacher-centered (Nawawi et al., 2023). Qur'anic values have not been fully linked to contemporary social issues such as justice, the environment, diversity, and technology, so that religious learning seems normative and detached from reality (Wahid & Hamami, 2021). The use of digital technology in Islamic Religious Education learning is still very limited, even though today's students are a digital generation that requires an interactive and contextual approach in understanding Islamic values (Rm, 2024). The explicit orientation of the curriculum in forming the character of moderate, adaptive, and contributive Muslim students in a multicultural society is still not strong (Hidayat, n.d.). This reality shows that the Islamic Religious Education curriculum has not fully become a transformative instrument for forming citizens who are religious and relevant in global social life (Sutrisno, A., Cahyanto, I., & Meiliasari, E. 2025).

This transformation is not only important but also urgent. Religious education can no longer rely solely on verbalistic and textualistic methods (Purwaningrum, 2019). A new approach is needed that is integrative, innovative, and moderate, namely connecting the values of revelation with the needs of 21st-century skills; integrating religious teaching with the contemporary social context; and prioritizing Islam that is friendly, inclusive, and rahmatan lil 'alamin. The importance of a contextual approach in curriculum design based on Islamic values. (Wulandari, 2024) encourages the integration of Islamic science with the challenges of modernity through an interdisciplinary approach.

(Hidayat, n.d.) proposed the idea of a double movement as a social interpretation methodology that can enrich the practical dimension of Islamic education. In the midst of information disruption and value crises, a curriculum that is only dogmatic has the potential to lose its transformative power. Therefore, this study aims to formulate an Islamic Religious Education curriculum model that is relevant to the times, namely a curriculum that not only teaches Islam as a teaching, but also instills Islamic values as an active, reflective, and contributive way of life.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a focus on library research and document analysis. The primary data sources included national curriculum documents, Islamic education policy guidelines, academic literature on curriculum theory and Islamic pedagogy, as well as scholarly articles discussing innovation and challenges in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). The data were analyzed thematically to identify critical gaps in the current curriculum and to explore conceptual frameworks for its transformation. Specific attention was given to how Qur'anic values can be integrated with contemporary issues, the role of digital technology in enhancing religious learning, and the development of a curriculum that fosters moderate, globally minded Muslim learners. Thematic coding and interpretative analysis were used to extract relevant patterns, ideas, and strategic insights from the sources, enabling the formulation of a contextually responsive and value-based curriculum model. This methodological approach allowed the researchers to construct a conceptual design rooted in both classical Islamic teachings and modern educational imperatives, aligning with the needs of 21st-century learners.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

There are several things that are critical reflections on the actual condition of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum. First, there is a significant gap between the ideal objectives of the PAI curriculum and the practice of its implementation in the field. The curriculum, which is normatively aimed at forming students who are faithful, pious, and have noble morals, in reality has not been fully able to realize a complete and applicable Islamic character in everyday life. This is caused by a learning approach that is still predominantly cognitive and does not touch on the affective and psychomotor dimensions of students. The minimal integration of Qur'anic values with contemporary issues is an obstacle for the PAI curriculum to play a role as a solution to various social problems faced by students. The noble values in the Qur'an have not been maximally raised in the context of social justice, environmental conservation, human rights, or the challenges of diversity. The curriculum, which is still normative and textual, causes Islamic teachings not to appear as a source of

contextual and transformative social ethics. The limited use of digital technology in the process of compiling and implementing the curriculum is an obstacle in itself in presenting interesting and relevant religious learning for the digital generation. Today's students tend to have a visual, interactive, and technology-based learning style, but this has not been widely answered in the design or implementation of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum. As a result, innovation in religious teaching methods tends to be stagnant and less adaptive to developments in the era, and the weak formation of moderate, adaptive, and contributive Muslim student characters reflects the absence of an explicit curriculum orientation to foster values of tolerance, openness, and global insight. In an increasingly diverse and pluralistic society, Islamic Religious Education should act as an agent of peace and a bridge for dialogue, but this orientation has not been firmly embedded in the current curriculum design. Therefore, a more progressive and inclusive curriculum approach is needed so that Islamic values can answer the need for the formation of universal national and humanitarian character.

The inconsistency between the ideal goals and practices of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum shows the tension between normative rhetoric and implementation reality. Although conceptually the curriculum document has emphasized the formation of character and noble morals as the main priority (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2007), in practice, Islamic Religious Education learning in the classroom is still predominantly trapped in the logic of knowledge transfer alone (Cholid Abdurrohman, 2022). The orientation of learning has not moved from the traditional teacher-centered pedagogical paradigm, where teachers act as the center of information and students as passive recipients (Bahri, 2018; Harum et al., 2023; Parnanda, 2021). Evaluation is also more focused on the cognitive aspect through written exams, while the affective and psychomotor dimensions that are the main determinants of the internalization of religious values are often neglected. In fact, as emphasized by (Suhada et al., 2022), the goals of education must be internalized in concrete and meaningful learning experiences. The process of forming faith and piety should not only be measured by the ability to memorize arguments, but also from the depth of inner experience, reflection on values, and their application in a social context (Dinia et al., 2015; Suprihatin, 2023).

The Islamic Religious Education curriculum is still less responsive to contemporary issues faced by modern society. Quranic values that should be alive and provide solutions are actually fragmented in normative narratives that are detached from reality. The Quran that is taught as a memorized text is often not contextualized through a deep and applicable tadabbur method (Dalimunthe, 2023; Ridlo Maghriza & Nursikin, 2024). This is contrary to the idea (Taufik & Yasir, 2017), which emphasizes the importance of a double movement approach in understanding the Quran, namely moving from the context of the past to the

present to interpret divine messages contextually (Panji et al., 2023). When religious learning fails to build connections between text and context, students lose their critical power to respond to social challenges through Islamic values (Fathurrahman, 2020).

Low utilization of digital technology in the preparation and implementation of Islamic Religious Education learning (Dinia et al., 2015; Judijanto et al., 2024). This is a paradox in the midst of the digital era, when children and adolescents live in a world that is highly connected online. The curriculum's lag behind the flow of digitalization not only causes a decrease in the attractiveness of religious learning, but also opens up empty spaces in the digital ecosystem that can be filled by extreme Islamic narratives (Hidayat, n.d.; Rusmiati et al., 2021). As stated by (Setyowati et al., 2023), digital space is the main arena for the formation of the religious identity of the younger generation. Therefore, the integration of technology into the curriculum is not just a pedagogical demand, but also a cultural strategy to ensure the presence of inclusive, attractive, and moderate Islam in a competitive cyberspace (Fitriasari et al., 2020).

The importance of making the Islamic Religious Education curriculum a vehicle for forming the profile of moderate, adaptive, and contributive Muslim students in global society (Arifa, 2023; Siregar, 2022) Islamic moderation is not a slogan, but the epistemological foundation of teachings that are based on the principles of balance, justice, and universal goodness (wasathiyah) (Kurniawati et al., 2023). In the context of increasing symptoms of radicalism and identity exclusivism, Islamic religious education has a moral and spiritual responsibility to sow inclusive and tolerant religious attitudes. (Pattasang & Imron Rosadi, 2021) emphasize that Islam, which is rahmatan lil 'alamin, must be actualized in a spirit of openness and respect for diversity. Therefore, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum needs to explicitly include the values of tolerance, interfaith dialogue, and global insight as the main competencies of Muslim learners in the modern era (Madihah, H., & Cahyanto, I 2024).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in Indonesia is fundamentally designed to shape students who not only comprehend Islamic teachings conceptually but also internalize its values in daily life. However, this study reveals significant gaps between the ideal objectives stated in curriculum documents and the actual implementation in schools. These gaps include the dominance of cognitive, teacher-centered approaches; the limited integration of Qur'anic values with contemporary social issues; the underutilization of digital technology; and the weak orientation toward nurturing moderate and globally engaged Muslim learners. These shortcomings indicate the urgent need for a comprehensive transformation of the PAI curriculum to make it more

integrative, contextual, and responsive to the spiritual, moral, and digital demands of the 21st century.

To address these challenges, it is recommended that educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers adopt a more holistic and interdisciplinary approach to curriculum design. The new model should integrate Qur'anic values with modern competencies, utilize digital tools to enhance interactivity, and promote moderate Islamic worldviews through critical thinking and social engagement. Training for PAI teachers should be prioritized to ensure effective implementation of transformative curriculum practices. Moreover, continuous evaluation and refinement are essential to align the curriculum with evolving educational needs and to foster a generation of Muslims who are faithful, inclusive, and actively involved in global society.

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