

The Concept of Curriculum, the Nature of Curriculum, and the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum REC)

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Article history

Received : 27-12-2025

Revised : 19-01-2026

Accepted : 21-02-2026

Keywords: Kurikulum;
Hakikat Kurikulum;
Pendidikan Agama Islam;
Pengembangan Kurikulum;
Pendidikan Karakter

Social change, advances in science, and the dynamics of educational policy demand a clear conceptual understanding of curriculum as a fundamental basis in the implementation of education. In Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the curriculum is not only understood as a learning plan but also as a strategic instrument for developing students' character, values, and competencies based on Islamic teachings. Therefore, the study of the concept of curriculum, the nature of curriculum, and the Islamic Religious Education curriculum is essential to strengthen both the theoretical foundation and educational practice. This research aims to explain the basic concept of curriculum, the nature of curriculum from an educational perspective, and the characteristics of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum. The method used is library research with a descriptive qualitative approach through the analysis of various literature such as books, scholarly articles, and educational policy documents. The results show that the curriculum is dynamic in nature, not merely a formal document, but also a structured learning experience designed to achieve educational goals. The nature of the curriculum encompasses philosophical, sociological, psychological, and pedagogical aspects that are interrelated. The Islamic Religious Education curriculum has distinct characteristics in integrating the values of creed (aqidah), worship (ibadah), and moral conduct (akhlaq) to form an *insan kamil* who is faithful, knowledgeable, and of noble character. The contribution of this study provides conceptual strengthening for curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers in designing a more contextual, integrative, and adaptive PAI curriculum in response to contemporary developments, without neglecting Islamic values.

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INFORMASI ARTIKEL

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Perubahan sosial, kemajuan ilmu pengetahuan, dan dinamika kebijakan pendidikan menuntut kejelasan konsep kurikulum sebagai dasar utama dalam penyelenggaraan pendidikan. Dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI), kurikulum tidak hanya dipahami sebagai rencana pembelajaran, tetapi juga sebagai sarana strategis dalam pembentukan karakter, nilai, dan kompetensi peserta didik yang berlandaskan ajaran Islam. Oleh karena itu, kajian tentang pengertian, hakikat kurikulum, serta kurikulum PAI menjadi penting untuk memperkuat dasar teoritis dan praktik pendidikan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan konsep dasar kurikulum, hakikat kurikulum dalam perspektif pendidikan, serta karakteristik kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam. Metode yang digunakan adalah penelitian kepustakaan (library research) dengan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif melalui analisis berbagai literatur seperti buku, artikel ilmiah, dan dokumen kebijakan pendidikan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kurikulum bersifat dinamis, tidak hanya berupa dokumen formal, tetapi juga pengalaman belajar yang dirancang untuk mencapai tujuan pendidikan. Hakikat kurikulum mencakup aspek filosofis, sosiologis, psikologis, dan pedagogis yang saling berkaitan. Kurikulum PAI memiliki kekhasan dalam integrasi nilai akidah, ibadah, dan akhlak untuk membentuk insan kamil yang beriman, berilmu, dan berakhlak mulia. Kontribusi penelitian ini memberikan penguatan konseptual bagi pengembang kurikulum, pendidik, dan pembuat kebijakan dalam merancang kurikulum PAI yang lebih kontekstual, integratif, dan adaptif terhadap perkembangan zaman, tanpa meninggalkan nilai-nilai Islam.

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Introduction

The curriculum can be understood as a set of concepts with diverse meanings depending on the context in which they are used in education. In general, the curriculum is not only understood as a formal document containing a learning plan, but also as a system that regulates the objectives, content, process, and evaluation of learning in an integrated manner. From the perspective of curriculum development in Indonesia, the curriculum is viewed as a flexible and contextual instructional plan, capable of adapting to the needs of students, the conditions of educational units, and the demands of applicable educational policies. This flexibility demonstrates that the curriculum is not static, but rather dynamic, serving as a guideline in the learning process. Furthermore, the curriculum is also understood as a continuously evolving process, in which schools play a role in implementing curriculum documents, while teachers and students are the main actors in a meaningful learning process oriented toward changes in behavior, knowledge, and skills. (Kamarga, 2004).

The essence of the curriculum demonstrates that it is a construct that is not only technical, but also philosophical, sociological, psychological, and pedagogical. The curriculum was born from the needs of society and develops with the changing times, so it is always being adjusted to remain relevant to scientific developments and the needs of students. In this context, the curriculum serves not only as a learning guide, but also as a strategic instrument in shaping the character, competencies, and life values of students. Therefore, the essence of the curriculum positions education as a complete and continuous process, oriented not only toward cognitive

outcomes, but also toward the formation of balanced attitudes and personalities.

Meanwhile, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum is an integral part of the national education system, uniquely grounded in the values of the Qur'an and Hadith. The PAI curriculum is not only oriented toward mastering religious knowledge, but also toward internalizing spiritual, moral, and social values, aimed at developing a perfect human being – a person who is faithful, knowledgeable, and has noble character. In its implementation, the PAI curriculum encompasses the integrated development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, thereby shaping the holistic personality of students. Thus, the PAI curriculum serves not only as a means of transferring religious knowledge, but also as a vehicle for character development relevant to the challenges of modern life and the evolving needs of society.

In the development of modern curriculum theory, various experts emphasize that the curriculum has very broad dimensions and cannot be limited to merely administrative documents. The curriculum is a system that encompasses the planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning that are systematically interconnected. Tyler emphasized that the curriculum must be developed based on clear educational objectives, then translated into structured learning experiences and measurable evaluations. This view demonstrates that the curriculum is rational, systematic, and oriented toward achieving well-planned educational goals. Meanwhile, Taba emphasized that the curriculum should be developed from the bottom up (grassroots approach), namely based on the real needs of students and the socio-educational conditions in the field. Thus, the curriculum is not only a product of policy, but also the result of a reflection of continuously evolving educational practices. (Rahayu et al., 2023).

Furthermore, understanding the nature of the curriculum cannot be separated from the changing paradigm of 21st-century education, which demands the strengthening of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication competencies. The curriculum no longer simply emphasizes mastery of material, but also the process of developing higher-order thinking skills. In this context, the curriculum becomes a tool for educational transformation that not only teaches knowledge but also shapes students' thinking, attitudes, and skills. Therefore, the essence of the curriculum can be understood as a system of values and learning experiences designed to shape the whole person.

From the perspective of Islamic Religious Education, the curriculum has distinct characteristics compared to the general curriculum, as it is based on the values of revelation derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. The Islamic Religious Education curriculum serves not only as a means of transferring religious knowledge, but also as a process of internalizing the values of faith, piety, and noble morals. Thus, the main objective of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum is to shape individuals who have a balance between their relationship with God (*habluminallah*), their relationship with fellow human beings (*habluminannas*), and their relationship with nature (*habluminminal 'alam*). The integration of these three aspects forms the basis for developing a holistic Islamic Religious Education curriculum oriented toward character building. (Astuti et al., 2026).

Furthermore, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum must also be able to respond to the challenges of globalization, the development of information technology, and rapid social change. In today's digital era, students require not only a textual understanding of religion but also the ability to internalize Islamic values in real life and the digital world. Therefore, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum is required to be adaptive, contextual, and innovative to remain relevant to the needs of the times. Teachers, as curriculum implementers, have a strategic role in developing learning strategies that are not only lecture-based but also based on experience, discussion, problem-solving, and contextual learning.

The development of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum is also inseparable from the principle of integrating science and Islamic values. A good curriculum must harmoniously connect religious knowledge and general knowledge, preventing a dichotomy between the two.

From this perspective, Islamic education not only produces students with a normative understanding of religion but also able to apply Islamic values in various aspects of life, including social, economic, technological, and cultural aspects. Therefore, the PAI curriculum plays a strategic role in shaping a generation that is religious, moderate, and globally competitive.(Sapitri & Zahri, 2022).

Furthermore, the implementation of the PAI curriculum in the field shows that the success of learning is greatly influenced by the teacher's competence in understanding and developing the curriculum.(Noble, 2022)Teachers are not only implementers but also developers of the curriculum at the educational unit level. This aligns with the concept of "teacher as curriculum developer," where teachers have the academic freedom to adapt learning materials, methods, and assessments to meet student needs. This ensures the curriculum becomes more vibrant and contextualized because it is tailored to the realities of the classroom and learning environment.

On the other hand, curriculum evaluation is also an important aspect in ensuring the effectiveness of the implementation of the PAI curriculum.(Alqudsi, 2024; Azis, 2021; Qurrotul Aini & Kusferiyanto, 2024). Evaluation is not only carried out on student learning outcomes, but also on the learning process and the suitability between objectives, materials, methods, and the evaluation itself.(Anwar, 2019; Aula, 2024; Gani et al., 2026; Mulabbiyah, 2007)Through continuous evaluation, the curriculum can be refined and perfected to remain relevant to scientific developments and societal needs. In other words, the curriculum is cyclical, continually improving through a process of evaluation and reflection.

Conceptually, the meaning of curriculum(Rahayu et al., 2023), the nature of the curriculum, and Islamic Education learning(Panjaitan, 2023)The two concepts are closely intertwined and inseparable. The definition of curriculum provides a conceptual basis, the essence of curriculum provides a philosophical and theoretical foundation, and the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum provides an applicable context within the Islamic education system. These three concepts form a unified whole in building a quality, character-based, and value-oriented education system.

Thus, it can be emphasized that the curriculum is not merely a learning tool, but rather a complex, dynamic, and multidimensional educational system. The curriculum is the primary instrument in determining the direction of education, the quality of learning, and the character of students. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, the curriculum plays a very strategic role in shaping a generation that is not only intellectually superior but also possesses strong spiritual and moral depth. Therefore, the author attempts to review how the Islamic Religious Education curriculum must be implemented sustainably, adaptively, and based on the needs of the times without abandoning the fundamental values of Islamic teachings.

Thus, it can be emphasized that understanding the concept of curriculum is a crucial foundation in educational studies. Curriculum is understood not only as an administrative document containing learning plans, but also as a system that regulates the entire educational process, from objectives, content, learning strategies, to evaluation of learning outcomes. A comprehensive understanding of curriculum is the basis for designing targeted, effective, and student-centered learning in various educational contexts.

Furthermore, the essence of the curriculum demonstrates that it is a multidimensional construct, encompassing philosophical, sociological, psychological, and pedagogical aspects. The curriculum is not static, but rather dynamic and constantly evolving in line with social change, scientific developments, and the demands of the times. Therefore, the essence of the curriculum positions education as a continuous process in shaping individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also emotionally, socially, and spiritually mature.

In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the curriculum plays a strategic role in shaping students' character and personality based on Islamic values. The PAI curriculum is not only oriented towards mastering religious knowledge, but also towards internalizing the values

of faith, worship, and morals in daily life. Thus, the PAI curriculum serves as the primary instrument in shaping a perfect human being who is faithful, knowledgeable, and has noble character. Studies on the definition of curriculum, the nature of curriculum, and the Islamic Religious Education curriculum are closely related and complementary. These three aspects form an important conceptual foundation for developing a more systematic, integrative, and adaptive Islamic education to current developments. Therefore, this study is expected to contribute to strengthening theoretical understanding and developing the practice of the PAI curriculum in educational institutions.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research design, where data are collected from various literature sources such as scholarly books, indexed journal articles, and educational policy documents relevant to the concepts of curriculum, the nature of curriculum, and the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum. The data collection technique is conducted through documentation study by examining, identifying, and classifying relevant literature in accordance with the focus of the study. The collected data are then analyzed using a descriptive-analytical method to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the concepts being studied. Data analysis is carried out through interpretation, comparison, and synthesis of various theoretical perspectives in order to produce coherent conceptual findings, while conclusions are drawn inductively based on patterns and meanings emerging from the reviewed literature.

Results and Discussion

1. Results

The results of the study indicate that curriculum conceptually has diverse meanings, both etymologically and terminologically. Etymologically, curriculum comes from the Latin word *currere*, meaning "the path to be taken," so that curriculum is understood as a systematic and continuous educational journey. (Astuti et al., 2026; Syaodih, 2021). Meanwhile, terminologically, curriculum was initially understood as a number of subjects that students must take to obtain a diploma or move up a level.

a. Basic Concepts of Curriculum

The results of the study show that the curriculum conceptually has a very broad meaning and develops according to the context of modern education. Etymologically, the curriculum comes from the Latin word *currere* which means "track" or "the distance that must be covered by a runner from the starting line to the finish line", which in the context of education is interpreted as a continuous journey of student learning experiences. This meaning shows that the curriculum is not only static, but is a dynamic process that describes a person's educational journey from the beginning to achieving learning goals.

Terminologically, curriculum was initially understood as a set of subjects that students must complete to achieve graduation or a diploma. From this perspective, the curriculum remained oriented toward content or learning materials (subject-centered curriculum), where educational success was measured by cognitive mastery of the subjects. However, this understanding is considered limited because it tends to ignore aspects of student development as a whole, such as social, emotional, and psychological aspects.

In subsequent developments, the curriculum is no longer understood narrowly as a list of subjects, but as the entire learning experience designed by educational institutions, both inside and outside the classroom. Thus, every activity that provides learning experiences to students can be categorized as part of the curriculum. The curriculum, in the modern sense, also encompasses objectives, content, processes, and evaluation, all integrated within a single

educational system.

b. Curriculum as an Integrated Education System

In the modern sense, curriculum is also understood as a set of plans and arrangements regarding objectives, content, learning materials, and learning methods to achieve specific educational goals. Based on this definition, curriculum has two main dimensions: the planning dimension (objectives and content) and the implementation dimension (learning strategies). These two dimensions indicate that curriculum is not only conceptual but also operational in educational practice.

Furthermore, the curriculum also serves as the primary guideline for implementing learning in schools. All learning processes undertaken by teachers must adhere to the established curriculum, ensuring alignment between educational objectives, learning materials, and expected outcomes. Thus, the curriculum serves as a control system that directs all educational activities so they run effectively and effectively.

In practice, the curriculum is also closely linked to the learning process, from planning through implementation to evaluation. This demonstrates that the curriculum cannot be separated from classroom learning activities, as the two are interconnected and influence each other. Therefore, educational success depends heavily on the extent to which the curriculum is designed and implemented consistently.

c. The Nature of Curriculum in Educational Perspective

The study's findings indicate that the essence of a curriculum is not limited to a written document or a list of subjects, but rather a comprehensive learning experience systematically designed to achieve educational goals. The curriculum has philosophical, sociological, psychological, and pedagogical dimensions that are interrelated and inseparable.

As an educational plan, the curriculum systematically outlines learning objectives, content, methods, and evaluation. This process begins with determining educational objectives, selecting learning experiences, organizing materials, and evaluating learning outcomes. This demonstrates that the curriculum is a structured planning system with a clear direction.

Beyond being a plan, the curriculum is also understood as the learning experiences students undergo throughout the educational process. All interactions, activities, and experiences designed by the school are part of the curriculum, impacting student development. Thus, the curriculum functions not only on paper but is truly present in the learning experience.

Furthermore, the curriculum is a system consisting of several main components: objectives, materials, learning strategies, and evaluation. All of these components are interrelated and form a unified whole in achieving educational goals. The curriculum also serves as a tool for social transformation because education plays a role in shaping societal change for the better.

From a contemporary perspective, curriculum is understood as a competency-based system, oriented toward learning outcomes, and integrated with technological developments. This demonstrates that the curriculum is dynamic and constantly changing according to the times and the needs of students.

d. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Curriculum

The study results show that the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum is a crucial component of the education system, focused on developing students' religious character. The PAI curriculum focuses not only on religious knowledge but also on developing attitudes, values, and behaviors consistent with Islamic teachings.

Conceptually, Islamic Religious Education is a conscious guidance process designed to develop students' physical and spiritual potential based on Islamic values. The primary goal of Islamic Religious Education is to develop individuals who are faithful, devout, and possess noble morals, and able to practice Islamic teachings in their daily lives.

The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum differs from the general curriculum because it is based on the values of the Quran and Hadith. This curriculum encompasses several key aspects: faith, worship, morals, the Quran and Hadith, and Islamic cultural history. All of these aspects are designed to develop students with a balance of knowledge, spiritual attitudes, and social skills.

Furthermore, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum emphasizes the integration of science and Islamic values. Learning is conducted not only theoretically but also through practical experiences in everyday life. This aims to ensure that Islamic values are not only understood but also internalized and practiced by students.

e. Discussion: Relevance of Curriculum, Nature, and Islamic Religious Education in Modern Education

Based on the study's findings, it is clear that the concept of curriculum, the nature of curriculum, and the Islamic Religious Education curriculum are closely related. As a fundamental concept, curriculum provides a theoretical foundation for understanding education systematically. The nature of curriculum broadens the understanding that education is not merely formal but also a complex and dynamic learning experience.

Meanwhile, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum provides a practical dimension in the implementation of Islamic educational values. In the context of modern education, these three concepts are highly relevant because they can address the challenges of globalization, digitalization, and rapid social change. The curriculum no longer functions merely as an administrative document, but as a primary instrument in shaping students' character and competencies.

Thus, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum development must be carried out sustainably, taking into account the needs of the times without abandoning fundamental Islamic values. Teachers, schools, and policymakers play a crucial role in ensuring the curriculum is implemented effectively, contextually, and meaningfully. This demonstrates that the curriculum is a living, dynamic educational system that is constantly evolving with changing times.

f. Characteristics of Islamic Education Curriculum

The characteristics of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum essentially demonstrate unique characteristics that distinguish it from other subject curricula. The PAI curriculum is not only oriented toward mastering the cognitive aspects of religious knowledge, but also emphasizes the development of spiritual attitudes and the practice of Islamic values in daily life. Thus, the PAI curriculum is holistic because it integrates the three main educational domains—cognitive, affective, and psychomotor—in a balanced manner throughout each learning process.

Another characteristic is that the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum is directly derived from the values of Islamic teachings enshrined in the Quran and Hadith. This gives the PAI curriculum a strong normative foundation and is not merely empirical or rational, unlike general science. The values of monotheism, worship, and morality are the main core that must be internalized by students, so that PAI learning is not only informative but also transformative in shaping Islamic personalities.

Furthermore, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum is integrative and

contextual, connecting religious teachings with the realities of students' social lives. This curriculum not only addresses religious concepts theoretically but also guides students in applying Islamic values in real life, including social interactions, digital ethics, and community life. Therefore, the PAI curriculum must be adaptive to current developments without losing its Islamic identity.

Another characteristic is that the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum is dynamic and oriented toward character building. This demonstrates that the PAI curriculum is constantly evolving in line with societal needs, scientific developments, and global challenges. Its primary focus is on developing a perfect human being, someone who is faithful, knowledgeable, has noble character, and is able to contribute positively to social life. Thus, the PAI curriculum serves not only as a transfer of knowledge but also as a means of continuously developing students' religious and moral character.

g. History of Islamic Education Curriculum in Indonesia

The study results show that the existence of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Curriculum in Indonesia cannot be separated from the legal basis of the national education system. Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System stipulates that religious education is a mandatory part of the curriculum at all levels of education, from elementary school to university. This provision strengthens PAI's position as a strategic component of the national education system, functioning to shape students who are faithful, pious, and have noble character. Furthermore, Government Regulation Number 55 of 2007 emphasizes that religious education is not only oriented towards the transfer of knowledge, but also the formation of attitudes, personality, and skills in practicing religious teachings in their entirety in everyday life.

Furthermore, the function of religious education as stipulated in the regulation demonstrates that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a crucial role in building national character. Religious education is aimed at developing Indonesians capable of maintaining peace, harmony, and interfaith harmony. Furthermore, PAI also aims to develop students' abilities to understand, internalize, and practice religious values in a manner that balances developments in science, technology, and the arts. Thus, the PAI curriculum is not merely normative but also functional in building a civilized and moderate civilization.

From a historical perspective, the development of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in Indonesia has shown significant dynamics over time. In the pre-independence era, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning remained traditional and centered in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) with informal systems such as *sorogan* and *wetonan*. Learning materials focused on classical texts, with an orientation toward strengthening faith (*aqidah*) and Islamic jurisprudence (*fikih*). However, with the introduction of the colonial education system, a process of adaptation occurred through modern Islamic educational institutions such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, which began integrating the classical system and incorporating general subjects into the curriculum.

During the Old and New Order eras, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum began to undergo a stronger process of standardization and institutionalization. PAI was then established as a compulsory subject at all levels of education, while simultaneously integrating with the values of Pancasila, the fundamental ideology of the state. During this period, the PAI curriculum tended to be structured and uniform nationally, with an emphasis on cognitive and ideological aspects as part of socio-political stability. This development demonstrates that the PAI curriculum is not only pedagogical, but also political within the context of state policy.

Entering the Reformation era, the curriculum paradigm shifted from a centralized to a decentralized one. The Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK) and the School-Level

Curriculum (KTSP) provided teachers and schools with greater autonomy in developing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in accordance with local contexts. This change marked a shift from a content-oriented approach to a competence-oriented one, emphasizing holistic student mastery of competencies.(Tampubolon et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the 2013 Curriculum reinforces an integrative approach through the development of Core Competencies encompassing spiritual, social, knowledge, and skills aspects. In this curriculum, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is measured not only by written exam results but also through observations of students' religious attitudes and behaviors in their daily lives. This demonstrates efforts to strengthen character education based on religious values.

The most recent developments are evident in the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes flexibility, contextual learning, and strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile and the Rahmatan lil 'Alamin (P5RA) Student Profile. This curriculum encourages Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning that is oriented not only toward individual piety but also toward social piety through the values of religious moderation, tolerance, and inclusivity. Thus, the Independent Curriculum strengthens PAI's position as a means of developing student character that is adaptive to global challenges and a multicultural society.(Istanti, 2019).

Overall, these findings indicate that the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum has undergone a highly dynamic evolution, both in terms of regulations, pedagogical approaches, and learning orientation. These changes reflect the Indonesian education system's efforts to balance religious values, modern demands, and student needs. Thus, the PAI curriculum serves not only as an instrument for religious learning but also as a strategic tool in shaping a national character that is religious, moderate, and globally competitive.

In modern developments, the curriculum is no longer limited to a list of subjects, but encompasses learning plans, objectives, content, learning activities, and evaluation as a unified educational system. The curriculum can essentially be understood as a plan or learning guideline that provides clear direction in the implementation of educational activities. In this sense, the most prominent aspect of the curriculum is the arrangement of materials or subjects that serve as references in the learning process. Thus, the curriculum is not only used in the context of formal education, but can also be interpreted more broadly as a guideline in various life activities, because every activity basically has a plan or direction that can be analogized as a curriculum.(Istanti, 2019).

According to Nasution, the traditional definition of curriculum emphasizes the list of subjects that students must take to obtain a diploma or reach a certain level, as well as the overall material presented by the educational institution. However, in subsequent developments, the curriculum is understood as a design or learning plan that includes the process of preparation, implementation, and refinement based on evaluation results. In the modern view, as stated by Ahmad Tafsir, the curriculum is not only limited to a written plan, but includes all learning experiences that actually occur in the educational process, both inside and outside the classroom, so that all activities that provide learning experiences can be categorized as curriculum.(Astuti et al., 2026).

Furthermore, the curriculum, from a broader perspective, is understood as the entire learning experience of students designed by educational institutions, both inside and outside the classroom. The curriculum also has a legal basis as a set of plans and regulations regarding the objectives, content, and methods of implementation of learning to achieve specific educational goals. Thus, the curriculum serves as the primary guideline in the learning process, directing all educational activities in a structured and directed manner.

Essentially, the curriculum is a dynamic and multidimensional system encompassing planning, learning experiences, educational systems, and social transformation. The

curriculum serves not only as a document but also as a process that continually evolves in response to societal needs and scientific developments. From a modern perspective, the curriculum is viewed as an integrated system that connects learning objectives, materials, strategies, and evaluation into a single, interrelated whole.

In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the curriculum is understood as a set of activities, knowledge, and experiences systematically designed to achieve the goals of Islamic education. The PAI curriculum is oriented towards developing students' personalities of faith, piety, and noble character through the integration of the values of the Qur'an and Hadith. Furthermore, the PAI curriculum encompasses aspects of faith, worship, and morals, as well as the balanced development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects.

Based on the results of this conceptual study, it can be concluded that the curriculum is a comprehensive, dynamic, and contextual educational system. The essence of the curriculum emphasizes that education is a process of developing the whole person, not merely the transfer of knowledge. Meanwhile, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum has unique characteristics grounded in Islamic values, designed to shape a perfect human being who adapts to changing times without abandoning the fundamental principles of religious teachings.

h. Analysis of the Dynamics and Problems of the Islamic Education Curriculum

Analytical, changes to the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in Indonesia are not neutral, but are influenced by three main determinants: the tug-of-war of political interests within the ruling elite, the demands of globalization and job market needs, and the internal dynamics of the Muslim community in responding to changing times. These three factors make the PAI curriculum both adaptive and compromising, constantly undergoing adjustments in each period of national education policy. In practice, these dynamics often give rise to a number of fundamental problems that impact curriculum implementation in the field. One of the main problems is the scientific dichotomy, namely the relatively strict separation between religious education under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and general education under the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Technology, which often results in overlapping regulations and discontinuity in curriculum development. (Istanti, 2019; Rohani, 2025; Samsul Bahri & Erni Qomariyah, 2023).

Furthermore, problems are also evident in the readiness of human resources, particularly Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers. The transformation toward the Independent Curriculum, which demands creativity-based, differentiated, and student-centered learning, has not been fully matched by the pedagogical readiness of teachers in the field. Some teachers still tend to maintain conventional, one-way or indoctrinating approaches, thus hindering the optimization of critical, reflective, and contextual learning. This situation indicates a gap between the demands of curriculum policy and the reality of implementation in educational institutions.

Historically, the development of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in Indonesia can be understood as a linear-dialectical process that moved from a traditional, pesantren-based model to a classical model during the colonial period, then towards an ideological-orthodox model during the New Order era, and finally developed into an emancipatory-competent model during the Reformation era and into the current Merdeka Curriculum. This transformation indicates a paradigm shift from merely transferring religious knowledge to strengthening values, character, religious moderation, and 21st-century competencies. Thus, the PAI curriculum is no longer solely oriented towards mastering religious material, but also towards the formation of individuals who are moral, tolerant, and adaptive to global social change without losing their Islamic spiritual identity.

In recent developments, the existence of Islamic Religious Education has also been further strengthened through various scientific forums and academic conferences at both the national and international levels in 2025–2026. Conferences such as the National Islamic Boarding School Education, ICONIE, AICIRE, AICIS, as well as academic forums within the UIN and AGPAII environments have become strategic spaces for discussing curriculum development, learning methodologies, teacher professionalism, and the integration of technology in Islamic education. These various conferences demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education continues to experience strengthening in academic and policy aspects, while also serving as proof that Islamic education must be able to adapt to current developments. Ultimately, all of these dynamics lead to one main goal, namely to make Islamic Religious Education an instrument for developing perfect human beings who are able to achieve happiness in this world and the hereafter in a balanced manner.

2. Discussion

Conceptually, the curriculum has diverse meanings both etymologically and terminologically. Etymologically, the term *curriculum* originates from the Latin word *currere*, meaning “a path or course to be taken,” which in educational terms refers to a systematic and continuous learning journey. This definition emphasizes that the curriculum is not merely a static structure but a dynamic educational process that represents learners’ progression from the beginning of education toward the achievement of learning objectives.

Terminologically, the curriculum was initially understood as a set of subjects that students must complete in order to obtain a diploma or advance to a higher level of education. This traditional perspective reflects a narrow, content-centered approach in which educational success is measured primarily by cognitive mastery of subject matter. However, such an understanding is considered limited because it tends to neglect the holistic development of learners, including their social, emotional, and psychological dimensions.

In its subsequent development, the curriculum is no longer viewed merely as a list of subjects, but as the entirety of learning experiences designed and provided by educational institutions both inside and outside the classroom. This shift indicates a paradigm change from a subject-centered approach to an experience-based curriculum, in which all educational activities that contribute to student learning are considered part of the curriculum.

From a modern educational perspective, the curriculum is also understood as an integrated system consisting of objectives, content, learning processes, and evaluation mechanisms that are interrelated within a unified framework. In this sense, the curriculum serves not only as a conceptual framework but also as an operational guide for teaching and learning activities in schools.

Furthermore, the curriculum functions as the primary guideline for teachers in implementing instructional activities, ensuring alignment between learning objectives, materials, and expected outcomes. It also operates as a control system that directs and coordinates all educational processes to achieve effectiveness and coherence in learning implementation.

In essence, the curriculum is closely connected to the entire learning process, including planning, implementation, and evaluation. This demonstrates that curriculum and instruction are inseparable, as they mutually influence each other in shaping educational quality.

Moreover, the essence of curriculum extends beyond a written document or list of

subjects; it represents a comprehensive and systematically designed learning experience aimed at achieving educational goals. It encompasses philosophical, sociological, psychological, and pedagogical dimensions that are interrelated and collectively shape the educational process.

The curriculum also functions as a structured educational plan that includes objectives, content, methods, and evaluation processes arranged in a systematic sequence from planning to assessment. In addition, it reflects all learning experiences that students undergo during their educational journey, both inside and outside the classroom.

In a broader sense, curriculum is understood as a system that includes learning objectives, instructional content, strategies, and evaluation mechanisms that function in an integrated manner. It also serves as a tool for social transformation, as education plays a significant role in shaping societal development.

In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the curriculum is designed as a structured set of learning experiences aimed at developing students' faith, piety, and noble character based on the integration of Qur'anic and Hadith values. The PAI curriculum emphasizes the balance between cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains through the integration of faith, worship, and moral values.

Overall, these findings confirm that the curriculum is a comprehensive, dynamic, and contextual educational system. It is not merely a document but a continuously evolving process that responds to societal changes and scientific development, while the Islamic Religious Education curriculum maintains its unique identity rooted in Islamic values, while adapting to contemporary educational demands.

Conclusion

Based on the study, it can be concluded that the curriculum is a comprehensive, dynamic, and contextual educational system that is not only understood as an administrative document, but also as a learning plan and experience that includes objectives, content, processes, and evaluation in an integrated manner and functions as the main guideline in the implementation of education. In essence, the curriculum emphasizes the process of forming a whole person that includes cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects in a balanced manner, while in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the curriculum plays an important role in forming students who are faithful, pious, and have noble character through internalizing the values of the Qur'an and Hadith. In addition, the development of the PAI curriculum in Indonesia shows complex dynamics due to the influence of politics, globalization, and the internal needs of Muslims, so that it continues to undergo transformation from the traditional model to the Independent Curriculum that emphasizes competence, religious moderation, and teacher professionalism in Islamic education.

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