



ARABIC LANGUAGE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN INDONESIAN *MADRASAHS*

Ahmad Maghfurin

Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo- Semarang

Ahmad_maghfurin@walisongo.ac.id

Article history:	Abstract:
<p>Received: February 8th 2023 Accepted: March 7th 2023 Published: March 10th 2023</p>	<p>The curriculum is a very important medium that determines the success of the education program. It also outlines the kind of graduation and what to do after undergoing the education process. The style of the curriculum will be determined by the developer's perspective on the nature of the curriculum and education. This paper will describe the diversity of approaches, models, and procedures for curriculum development and its implications in choosing the right style for developing an Arabic language curriculum in Indonesian Madrasahs.</p>

Keywords: approaches, models, procedures, curriculum, Arabic language

INTRODUCTION

A curriculum is an educational plan with a strategic position in all educational activities. Therefore, its preparation must refer to a clear and solid foundation. This foundation does not only aim at the curriculum developers, but also at implementers (education supervisors, teachers, and other parties related to education management tasks). For curriculum implementers, the foundation functions as a framework for curriculum implementation at every type and level of education.

People are always changing according to the changing times. Thus, the curriculum must also always experience changes, improvements, and updates to adapt and anticipate the latest demands. The style of a curriculum relates to the perspective of its developer in terms of the nature of the curriculum itself and the educational fields where it is developing. This paper will describe some approaches, models, and procedures for curriculum development and their implications for the development of the Arabic language curriculum in *Madrasahs* (Islamic high schools).

Due to its central position, curriculum development must consider many aspects that form the basis of the educational process. Like a building, it may be easily collapsed and damaged by wind or ground shaking if it does not use a solid foundation. The curriculum will be swayed if it does not have a strong framework. The curriculum development frameworks include ideas, assumptions, or principles that become the basis for developing the curriculum. There are many things to examine in the basis for curriculum development, including philosophical and psychological aspects.

Philosophical views can influence the direction of students in the educational world. Differences in the philosophical views held by curriculum developers will also trigger different educational goals. The goals bring differences to other curriculum elements.

Humans are different from other creatures due to their psychological condition. They are different from plants that do not have a psychological aspect. They are also different from animals because they have much higher levels of psychological conditions and are more complex. Because of these psychological abilities, humans can develop, and acquire more skills, knowledge, and skills than other creatures.

Education is related to the engineering of changing behavior that occurs in humans to have a better life. Education can change and move the students' behavior toward maturity in terms of physical, mental, emotional, moral, intellectual, and social sides. However, not all changes are absolute as a result of educational interventions. Changes in human behavior are also influenced by maturity and environmental factors. Therefore, some behavioral changes caused by these two factors are not included in the education discussion. The curriculum should be a medium for developing students' potential abilities into actual ones through specific educational processes.

Curriculum development must be based on assumptions taken from psychological studies which include how students develop, when the development occurs, and how they learn. Therefore, two branches of psychology form the basis of curriculum development, namely developmental psychology and learning psychology. Developmental psychology is a branch of psychology that examines the process of individual development from conception to death. An understanding of students is vital in curriculum development. Based on the assessment of students' development,

there will be a curriculum that follows the students' original characteristics in terms of the abilities to be achieved, the materials to be delivered, the learning process, and curriculum evaluation.

Each individual has different psychological conditions due to different stages of development, sociocultural background, and innate factors. Their conditions also depend on the context, role, and status of an individual among others. The interactions created in educational situations must be in line with the students' and educators' psychological conditions. Educational interactions at home are different from those in schools. Educational interactions in primary schools are different from those in secondary and advanced schools.

Learners are individuals who are having the process of development. Although there are differences regarding age restrictions, psychologists agree that a child's psychological condition develops step by step. These stages have different psychological development. The main task of educators is to help their development optimally. From birth to death, people are always in the process of developing all aspects of their lives. What is educated and how to educate it must be adapted to the patterns of children's development. Characteristics of individual behavior and patterns of development have been the main focuses of developmental psychology.

Most of the developmental progress experienced by children occurs due to learning efforts through the process of imitation, remembering, habituating, understanding, applying, and solving problems. Educators make various efforts for children to learn. The best ways of teaching and learning will end in optimal results. The process of implementation requires systematic and in-depth studies. Such studies are within the field of learning psychology. The findings of these two branches of psychology are crucial for curriculum developers in formulating objectives, selecting and preparing teaching materials, choosing, and applying learning methods and assessment techniques.

If philosophical frameworks lead to set ideal goals to be achieved through the educational process, psychological studies help curriculum developers to be more realistic in determining operational goals. In choosing an accurate learning experience, psychology in general is very helpful. Learning theories, cognitive theories, emotional development, group dynamics, and individual differences in ability, personality, and motivation are all highly relevant in planning appropriate learning experiences.

Understanding philosophical and psychological principles is vital for generating an expected curriculum. Therefore, curriculum developers must always pay attention to current studies and future visions to ensure the sustainability of educational institutions and the students' future interests.

METHOD

Conceptual Research Methodology Flow: Problem identification: Identifying the primary issues related to Arabic language curriculum development in Indonesian madrasahs. Literature review: Conduct a relevant literature review to understand theories, principles, and practices related to Arabic language curriculum development in madrasahs. Development of the conceptual framework: Formulating a conceptual framework encompassing essential elements in Arabic language curriculum development, such as educational objectives, essential competencies, teaching materials, learning strategies, and evaluation. Analysis and synthesis: Integrating findings from the literature review and the conceptual framework to produce an in-depth analysis of the issues and challenges faced in Arabic language curriculum development in madrasahs. Recommendation of development strategies: Based on the analysis and synthesis, proposing effective and innovative Arabic language curriculum development strategies to improve the quality of education in Indonesian madrasahs. Conclusion: Present a conclusion that reflects the results of the analysis and the recommended development strategies, as well as the implications for practitioners, policymakers, and researchers in the field of Arabic language education. By using this conceptual research methodology flow, the study will provide comprehensive insights into Arabic language curriculum development in Indonesian madrasahs and offer concrete recommendations for enhancing the quality of Arabic language teaching and learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Different perspectives on language influence what must be learned and how learning a language can run well. In general, there are two approaches to language. This difference in perspective will in turn lead to differences in the curriculum models they design.

Structural approach

This approach views language in its physical form (Canale, 1983) namely the structured fabric of its various constituent units (Ferdinand de Saussure, 1996). The purpose of learning a language is to master the elements of language and the system of relationships that govern it. These elements include the sounds of language and vocabulary arranged in such a way as to produce a certain meaning. Thus, learning a language is essentially learning grammar in the composition of the language. The curriculum produced by this approach is in the form of a subject-academic structure arranged linearly based on a sequence of word and sentence patterns.

This model curriculum comes from classical education (perennials and essentialism) oriented towards the past times (Nana Syaodih Sukmadinata, 2007). All knowledge and values have been discovered by previous thinkers. The function of education is maintaining and passing it on. The curriculum prioritizes educational content. Learning means trying to master as much knowledge as possible. People are said to be successful in learning if they have succeeded in mastering all or most of the educational content provided by the teacher.

According to this approach, the contents of education come from the structure of knowledge developed by experts. Curriculum developers do not need to painstakingly prepare and develop their materials. All they have to do

is choose the science materials developed by these experts and organize them systematically. Excessive attention to language rules and translation in learning Arabic in Islamic boarding schools stems from this mindset. That is why it is only natural that we find that Arabic learning is prepared according to the level of the textbooks of Arabic grammar like interpreter class, *umrithi* class, *alfiyah* class, and so on.

This is the oldest approach in the world of Arabic learning and other foreign languages. It has received a lot of criticism because (1) it only covers some aspects of language; (2) it does not follow the natural ways of language acquisition; (3) it only pays attention to sentences that are out of context; and (4) it has more concerns with forms than meaning (Richards, J. C., and Rodgers, 2001). Regarding the last criticism, we can find many students who memorize hundreds or even thousands of Arabic grammar. However, their effort does not apply in their language activities in terms of receptivity and productivity. Therefore, many educational experts have abandoned it.

Functional approach

It views language in terms of its function as a medium for communicating ideas (Richards, J. C., and Rodgers, 2001). Communicative language learning comes from this assumption. This approach emphasizes function rather than language structure. Thus, the language learning curriculum is structured in a situational thematic manner. This approach is considered more humane because it provides opportunities for the students to develop their language skills authentically through learning. They will act as learning subjects, not just objects where teachers pour their knowledge as in the structural approach. Second-language curriculum development has become increasingly complex since the advent of communicative language teaching during the 1980s (Omaggio, 1986). CLT promised to restore the balance between language usage and language use (Sandra J. Savignon, 2005).

More attention to the functional approach to aspects of language skills does not mean that grammar is not matter. *Qawaid*, although not a stand-alone skill, is a basic element in all language skills. The students must master *qawaid* to understand what other people say and understand other them with their language. The difference is in the depth and way of presentation. *Qawaid* is not presented in detail and comprehensively to be memorized. It is selected according to current needs. *Qawaid* is learned to integrate into language skills by instilling a sense of language that develops slowly and naturally through the students' personal experiences in associating with language. There will be some exercises provided to the students so that they can apply *qawaid* accurately and effectively. Accurate means grammatically correct and effective means it is right on target according to the desired context and functions of communication.

In contrast to the structural approach regarding *qawaid* as the core and goal of language learning, the functional approach is a means of understanding other people. Understanding means being able to catch other people's words and writings grammatically and correctly. Understanding means producing language through speech and writing to be understood by others. The ability to understand what others are saying can be achieved only by mastering grammar. Therefore, *qawaid* learning is cannot run separately but is integrated with language learning itself.

Qawaid is one part of the curriculum content according to this functional approach. It is related to pragmatic needs in using the language according to its level. Therefore, the term functional grammar (*al-nahwu al-wadhifi*) accompanies this functional approach. In contrast to the structural approach which prioritizes the introduction and technical understanding of language, the functional approach focuses on mastering the functions and meanings desired by certain language structures according to context.

Moreover, the meaning of a sentence cannot always be understood through its surface structure. Many sentences have the same outer structure but have different meanings. This difference is due to the deep structure of the sentence known through the context of its use. Due to this fact, Noam Chomsky proposed a new school called "transformational generative grammar" (Abdul Chaer, 1994) to replace Saussure's "structural linguistics" which failed to show the relationship between language and meaning. Thus, the functional meaningfulness approach is a must to include in learning *qawaid*.

Arabic Curriculum Development Model

Based on the skills to be developed in each theme, there are two models for preparing this thematic-functional curriculum.

1. Separated Model

In this model, each language element and skill is developed separately. This model is also called the discrete model. The Arabic, according to this model curriculum, consists of some separate sections. *Istima'*, *kalam*, *qiraah*, *kitabah*, *qawaid*, and others are independent lessons. Each is studied based on its curriculum as stated in the policy set by the institution.

This model curriculum allows learning of each branch of Arabic to be more focused and in-depth. Learning problems encountered in each unit can be solved completely. It is just that this discrete curriculum requires a longer time allocation. Besides, the separation of each component and language skills makes the students' language development unbalanced, so that sometimes some are proficient in certain aspects but weak in others.

2. Integrated Model

This model combines all language skills at once in one theme. This model is often referred to as the all-in-one system/ *nadhariyyah al-wihdah*. There is no separate syllabus for each language element and skill. *Istima'*, *kalam*, *qiraah*, *kitabah*, *qawaid*, and others are presented in an integrated manner in a predetermined theme. The starting point for the lesson can be in the form of readings or examples of *hiwar* which are then developed through other

linguistic activities. If the theme carried in a chapter is "*Hadiqah al-Hayawana*" (a zoo), then the *mufrodāt* shown is what should be discussed in that theme. The text and examples of expressions are also about the theme arranged according to a specific and planned structure.

This approach is closer to nature because all language components and skills are always interrelated. Proficient in listening skills but having weak speaking skills makes communication stop. Good at speaking but mastering weak grammar will lead to misunderstandings in communication. Therefore, this model curriculum develops all language components and skills together. The weakness of this approach is that it is impossible to deepen the aspects being developed.

Both models have their advantages and disadvantages. Abdul Alim Ibrahim viewed that an integrative approach is more appropriate for teaching foreign languages at the beginner and intermediate levels (Ibrāhīm, no date). At this level, language learners naturally need all aspects of language skills so that their learning cannot be separated from each other. In actual practice, all components and communicative functions of language constitute a unified whole. All these elements and functions must be studied as one unit. Mastery of one particular aspect of language will support the mastery of others. The achievement of certain skills also depends on the achievement of others.

After the students already have good basic Arabic skills, at the next level, the curriculum can be arranged separately for each language element and skill. Even so, in real practice, the learning should not make each aspect truly stand-alone and separate from the others. The division aims to facilitate the process and to emphasize certain expected aspects. At this level, the students do not have to learn all language skills. They can choose certain skills that they are interested in. The curriculum can be developed separately so that there will be a specific curriculum for listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Arabic Curriculum Development Procedure

What is the most appropriate party to develop the curriculum? This question generates two policy models.

1. Top-down procedure

This is the oldest model. As the name implies, this model curriculum development initiative comes from above. It is also called the administrative model because the idea comes from education administrators (ministers, director generals, directors, etc.). The curriculum resulting from the top-down procedure is centralized and uniform. Thus, it does not accommodate the diversity of schools and regional needs. Curriculum standards may be considered light by one school but will be heavy by others due to differences in facilities and students' readiness. The gaps may be wider among the schools from different regions.

The top-down curriculum is also inefficient because the results cannot be implemented immediately. It demands complete readiness from the implementers. They need instructions, explanations, and sufficient knowledge and skills. In its implementation, there must also be monitoring, supervision, and guidance from relevant officials. Due to the longer time for socialization, training, and equalization of the views of education administrators in different areas, the curriculum produced by this procedure cannot keep pace with the rapid development of science. As a result, the curriculum becomes obsolete before it is implemented.

2. Bottom-up procedure

Initiatives and efforts to develop this model of curriculum do not come from top management but from teachers or schools. The first policy model is used in a centralized education management system, while the bottom-up model will develop in a decentralized education system. In the grassroots model, the teachers make curriculum development efforts. This development or refinement can relate to a curriculum component, one or several fields of study, and even all fields of study and all curriculum components. The development of this autonomous curriculum allows for competition in improving the quality and education system, which in turn will lead to more independent and creative human beings.

The development of the grass root model curriculum is based on the consideration that the teacher is the executor and perfecter of teaching in the classroom. They are the ones who know the needs of their students, so they are the most competent persons in preparing the curriculum. Nonetheless, there must be a consideration of various aspects before the implementation of a decentralized curriculum system. The readiness of the local government, the teachers' ability, the adequacy of funds, and the availability of library materials are some main requirements.

Even though the centralized approach cannot fully accommodate the diversity of regional needs, the central government considers that the education authorities including teachers, supervisors, and related officials are not yet ready to develop their curricula. That is the reason why the Indonesian government for more than 50 years since independence still applies a centralized system in developing the education curriculum.

School Level Curriculum as an alternative

In terms of the Indonesian educational world, the birth of the Education Unit Level Curriculum policy is a middle ground between the two approaches above. This model curriculum adopts many of the advantages possessed by the autonomous curriculum, namely:

- A higher level of democracy preferred by educational participants
- A curriculum structured on a participatory basis results in greater commitment.
- Participation encourages teacher responsibility and creativity.
- The curriculum can be adapted to the potential, characteristics, and needs of regional development (Idi, 2007).

The curriculum developed by the educational unit is more adaptable to the potential and characteristics of the local people, socio-cultural conditions, and the students. The schools or *madrasahs* can develop their curriculum and syllabus based on the basic curriculum framework and content standards set by the central government through the relevant ministries. Even though the central government does not relinquish all of its authority, in this curriculum model, the schools have great opportunities to develop their curriculum according to with vision and missions. It's just that the developed curriculum still has to refer to the standards set by the central government by obeying the following guidelines. Curriculum development refers to the National Education Standards to realize the National Education Goals.

- The curriculum development at all levels and types of education must be in line with the principle of diversification of educational units, regional potential, and students.
- The curriculum development at the unit level of primary and secondary education is held by schools and school committees based on graduates' competency standards, content standards, and guidelines established by the National Education Standards Agency

In the context of *madrasahs*, the development of the Arabic language curriculum is based on minimum national standards. The *madrasah* or groups of *madrasahs* can develop their curriculum according to their uniqueness. The standards set out by the Minister of Religion are the minimum limits that must be achieved by the process of learning Arabic in all the educational units. As a minimum limit, *madrasahs* may not reduce but are allowed to increase the content standards if they meet the requirements. The conditions referred to are the basic students' abilities that exceed the minimum limits of the Minister of Religion, teachers' readiness, and the availability of supporting facilities.

Arabic learning in *madrasah* is a subject that aims to encourage, guide, develop, and foster receptive and productive skills. It also functions to foster a positive attitude towards Arabic. Receptive ability means an ability to understand others' speech and writings. Meanwhile, productive ability is the ability to use language as a means of communicating one's thoughts to others verbally and in writing. Language skills and a positive attitude towards Arabic are crucial in helping the students understand the sources of Islamic teachings, namely the Qur'an and hadith, as well as Arabic books related to Islamic laws.

This statement implies that learning Arabic aims to the attainment of basic language competence, which includes the four language skills taught integrally, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. To use Arabic receptively and productively, the students must also be provided with elements of language which include the sound system, vocabulary, and grammar. Thus, the Arabic language course in *madrasah* consists of three language elements and four Arabic language skills in a comprehensive manner according to their level.

Observing the function of the Arabic language, the functional approach is more appropriate to develop the curriculum. The content standards that serve as a reference for the development of the Arabic language curriculum at the educational unit level are prepared thematically within four language activities, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. All of them are within the framework of certain rules needed by the students according to their educational level.

The functional thematic approach in the Arabic language curriculum at the *madrasah* level in Indonesia is the best choice according to the latest theories in foreign language learning. Therefore, changes and improvements to the Arabic language curriculum should not be beyond this frame.

CONCLUSIONS

There have been detailed descriptions of different approaches, models, and procedures for developing the Arabic language curriculum. Each has its advantages and disadvantages. According to Jack C. Richard, there is no empirical evidence showing that certain approaches, models, and procedures are the best for developing curricula for all purposes (Jack C. Richard, 1990). Thus, each of them should be used in different situations and conditions according to their characteristics. There might be also an opportunity to combine them all by taking all the advantages and leaving all the disadvantages.

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