

ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY “The Role of Philosophy in PAI Curriculum Development”

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Abstract

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a strategic role in shaping the character, morals, and spirituality of students. However, the implementation of PAI curriculum in the field still tends to emphasize cognitive aspects, thus neglecting affective and psychomotor dimensions. This article aims to examine the role of Islamic education philosophy in the development of PAI curriculum to be more holistic, contextual, and transformative. This research uses a library research method with a descriptive-analytical approach to the thoughts of the figures and relevant literature. The results show that the philosophical foundations-ontological, epistemological, and axiological-contribute greatly to formulating the direction, content, methods, and evaluation of PAI curriculum. The ontological foundation emphasizes the development of human potential as a whole; the epistemological demands integration between revelation, reason, and experience; while the axiological prioritizes Islamic moral and ethical values in education. Thus, the philosophy of Islamic education becomes an important foundation in building PAI curriculum that is not only instructional, but also loaded with transcendental and humanistic values.

Keywords: Philosophy of Islamic Education, Islamic Education Curriculum and *Insan Kamil*

Introduction

Education plays a central role in shaping the character, morality, and intellect of students, especially within the Islamic context, which emphasizes a balance between spiritual, intellectual, and social aspects. The curriculum, as a key component of education, must have a strong philosophical foundation to align with Islamic values. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) aims to form *insan kamil* (the perfect human being),

meaning a person who is complete in intellect, heart, and action. However, the PAI curriculum in practice often remains dominant in the cognitive aspect and falls short in addressing affective and psychomotor domains. This is where the philosophy of Islamic education plays a crucial role as a foundation for designing and developing a curriculum that is contextual, applicable, and relevant to contemporary developments.

Thinkers such as Hasan Langgulung emphasize the importance of integrating revelation and reason in Islamic education, while Al-Attas asserts that the goal of Islamic education is the internalization of *adab* (Islamic etiquette and discipline), not merely the transmission of information. Islamic educational philosophy helps formulate the objectives, content, methods, and evaluation of learning within the PAI curriculum, ensuring it is not solely dogmatic but also fosters Islamic character and critical thinking. With a philosophical approach, the PAI curriculum becomes a means of spiritual and social transformation, reflecting the vision and mission of Islamic education. Therefore, this study is essential to understand how the philosophy of Islamic education genuinely contributes to the development of PAI curricula at various educational levels.

Research Method

Research methodology refers to the methods used to search, record, discover, and analyze until a report is compiled to achieve research objectives (Aakhamdi, 1997). The type of research employed here is library research, which focuses its discussion on references such as books, journals, and other publications (Basri, 2001). This is because the research aims to identify, analyze, interpret, and generalize from the actual thoughts and ideas written by thinkers and experts in developing concepts and models for the PAI curriculum. In terms of its nature, this research is **descriptive**, which aims to provide a thorough explanation of an individual or the characteristics of a specific group (Zainudin, 2011). Furthermore, according to Kartini Kartono, descriptive research is an observation that merely describes, elaborates, and reports an event, object, or target of an event, leading to conclusions.

Result and Discussion

Educational philosophy provides three main foundations for the development of the PAI curriculum: ontological, epistemological, and axiological (Muhaimin, 2009). These three foundations form a framework for thinking and acting in designing a curriculum that is not only technical but also philosophically and religiously valuable and meaningful. Other educational thinkers also enrich the understanding of these three foundations.

1. Ontological Foundation

Ontology discusses the nature of reality and existence. In the context of PAI, ontological philosophy highlights the Islamic perspective on human beings, nature, and God. Humans are viewed as creations of Allah SWT, possessing

physical and spiritual potential, as well as moral responsibility. The PAI curriculum must reflect this understanding by emphasizing the formation of character (*akhlak*) and spirituality in students. In the philosophy of Islamic education, the ontological aspect is very important because it determines how the curriculum is designed, what goals are to be achieved, and how the educational process unfolds.

The Nature of Human Beings in Islam, In the Islamic view, humans are creations of Allah SWT, comprising two main elements: physical (material) and spiritual (non-material). Allah states in the Al-Qur'an: "Then He perfected him and blew into him from His [own] soul..." (QS. As-Sajdah: 9)

This indicates that humans are not merely biological beings but also spiritual beings with transcendental potential. Therefore, Islamic education does not only aim to develop cognitive aspects and skills but also to touch the spiritual dimension through the cultivation of faith (*iman*), character (*akhlak*), and worship (*ibadah*).

According to Zuhairini et al. (2007), humans, from an Islamic perspective, are characterized as rational and responsible beings. They are capable of distinguishing between good and evil and are given freedom of choice (*ikhtiyar*), yet always within the boundaries set by the Sharia. The PAI curriculum, therefore, must consider this potential and direct students to use their intellect responsibly within the framework of divine values.

The Concept of Caliph and Trust (*Amanah*), According to Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1993), humans are beings who carry a trust (*amanah*) and are appointed as caliphs on earth. The concept of caliph reflects the social and ethical responsibility of humans to prosper the earth, maintain environmental balance, and uphold justice.

This understanding brings a social and ecological dimension into the PAI curriculum. This means that religious education does not solely discuss the vertical relationship between humans and God (*habl min Allah*) but also the horizontal relationship with other humans and nature (*habl min al-nas* and *habl min al-'alam*). Therefore, topics such as social justice, environmental concern, and moral responsibility must be integrated into the PAI curriculum content.

Moral and Spiritual Education, Hasan Langgulung (1986) asserts that if humans are understood as spiritual and moral beings, then the direction of Islamic education—including its curriculum—must be geared towards the formation of noble character (*akhlaqul karimah*). Education is not merely the transmission of knowledge but also a process of personality transformation. Therefore, the PAI curriculum must allocate significant emphasis to cultivating attitudes, behaviors, and habituating Islamic values in daily life. For instance, the topic of honesty in Islam should not only be presented as theory but also

accompanied by practical application in classroom activities, character-building programs, and evaluations that assess behavioral aspects.

This concept is also reinforced by Abdurrahman Shaleh Abdullah (1989), who emphasizes that the ultimate goal of Islamic education is *insan kamil*—a perfect human being who harmonizes faith, knowledge, and action. In this ontological context, the PAI curriculum must educate students not to be trapped by mere academic intelligence but to live meaningfully within the framework of devotion to God and service to fellow human beings.

The application of this ontological foundation is evident in the arrangement of PAI curriculum materials, which include teachings on faith (*aqidah*), worship (*ibadah*), character (*akhlak*), and social interactions (*muamalah*). All these are designed to shape students into individuals who are aware of their identity and responsibility as servants of Allah and caliphs on earth. Each material is taught not just as theory but as part of the process of forming a complete human being.

Thus, the ontological foundation is not merely a philosophical starting point but also manifests in the practical development of a contextual and functional curriculum. A PAI curriculum built on this foundation will be better equipped to address contemporary challenges while preserving the integrity of Islamic values.

From the above explanation, it can be concluded that the Islamic ontological foundation demands the PAI curriculum to:

- a. Recognize and develop all human potentials (physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual).
 - b. Formulate educational goals that lead to a balance between worldly and otherworldly pursuits.
 - c. Design teaching materials that are not only cognitive but also build character and spirituality.
 - d. Design learning activities that are humanistic, ethical, and oriented towards devotion to Allah and social well-being.
- By understanding humans as holistic beings, the PAI curriculum can be designed to create individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also faithful, ethical, and responsible for their individual and social lives.

2. Epistemological Foundation

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that discusses the nature, sources, limits, and validity of knowledge. In the Islamic context, epistemology has a unique foundation because it is not solely based on rationality or empiricism, as in the Western tradition, but also relies on revelation as the highest source of knowledge. This epistemological understanding greatly influences how the PAI curriculum is designed, implemented, and evaluated.

Sources of Knowledge in Islam In Islamic epistemology, knowledge originates from three main elements:

- a. Revelation (Al-Qur'an and Sunnah): This is the primary and absolute source of knowledge. Revelation not only conveys theological truths but also provides moral, social, and legal guidance. Therefore, the PAI curriculum places revelation at the center of its teachings, in aspects of creed (aqidah), worship (ibadah), and character (akhlak).
- b. Reason (Aql): Used to understand, reason, and develop meaning from revelation and the realities of life. In the Islamic view, reason does not stand alone but operates within the framework of divine values. Al-Ghazali, for example, emphasizes the importance of synergy between revelation and reason in attaining truth.
- c. Experience (Empirical and Intuitive): Life experiences, both external and internal, also serve as a means to acquire wisdom. Islamic education values experience as part of the process of personal formation and contextual understanding of Islamic teachings.

According to Zuhairini et al. (2007), this integrative approach among revelation, reason, and experience forms an important foundation in the development of the PAI curriculum. The curriculum not only contains normative and dogmatic material but is also dialogical and applicable, demanding deep and reflective understanding.

Islamic epistemology rejects the dichotomy between religious sciences and general sciences. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1993) emphasizes the importance of *ta'dib*—the process of inculcating correct knowledge and *adab* within the framework of *tawhid* (Oneness of God)—as the core of education. This implies that the PAI curriculum should not merely convey teachings textually but also shape Islamic personality and teach how knowledge is used ethically. Al-Faruqi (1982), in his idea of the Islamization of knowledge, also states that Islamic education must form a curriculum that unites spiritual and rational dimensions, so that students do not become mere *hafiz* (memorizers) but also *faqih* (understanders), and even *mujtahid* (creative interpreters) in their social context.

Thus, the development of a PAI curriculum based on Islamic epistemology must consider:

- a. Balance between text and context: Teaching the Al-Qur'an and Hadith not only as memorization but as a basis for thought and a guide for life.
- b. Critical and reflective reasoning: Encouraging students to understand the rationale behind a teaching and connect it to real life.
- c. Utilization of experience and social reality: Opening space for problem-based learning, discussions, observations, and direct practice.

Implications for PAI Curriculum An epistemological approach in Islam directs the PAI curriculum to:

- a. Cultivate faith based on understanding, not just memorization.
- b. Train reason to analyze and examine religious arguments rationally and contextually.
- c. Encourage active and reflective learning so that students can apply Islamic values in real life.
- d. Build synergy between textual (naqliyah) and rational (aqliyah) knowledge.

3. Axiological Foundation

Axiology is the branch of philosophy that discusses values, both ethical (moral) and aesthetic (beauty). In the context of Islamic educational philosophy, axiology becomes an important foundation because education is not only oriented towards the acquisition of knowledge (cognitive) but also the formation of a personality based on Islamic values. Therefore, the development of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum cannot be separated from the values it intends to instill and cultivate.

Core Values in PAI Curriculum. Within the axiological framework, the PAI curriculum is directed at forming individuals with noble character (akhlaqul karimah), as this is the primary goal of Islamic education itself: to produce individuals who are faithful, knowledgeable, and righteous (amal saleh). These values include, among others:

- a. Justice (*al-'adl*): Justice is a fundamental value in Islamic teachings, as affirmed in QS. An-Nahl: 90. The PAI curriculum must instill a sense of justice in thinking, acting, and behaving towards others. This includes social justice, gender equality, and respecting diversity in the context of modern life.
- b. Compassion (*rahmah*): Islam teaches that Allah is Most Gracious and Most Merciful, and this attribute should be reflected in human behavior. PAI education must foster empathy, tolerance, and social concern, as exemplified by Rasulullah SAW.
- c. Honesty (*ṣidq*): Honesty is a pillar of personal integrity. Rasulullah SAW was known as “al-Amin” due to his honesty. In the PAI curriculum, honesty should not only be teaching material but also needs to be internalized through exemplary learning and practical application.
- d. Responsibility (*mas'ūliyyah*): Responsibility in Islam encompasses personal, social, and spiritual accountability. The PAI curriculum must encourage students to be responsible for themselves, others, the environment, and especially to Allah SWT.

Application of Axiology in Curriculum, According to Azra (1999), Islamic education functions not only as knowledge transmission but also as value

transformation. The curriculum must support the process of holistic and continuous value inculcation. This means that Islamic values are not merely taught as concepts but are also integrated into contextual and applicable learning activities. Muhaimin (2009) states that in the context of PAI curriculum development, axiological values must be the spirit in all aspects of education: from objectives, content, methods, to evaluation. Ideally, PAI learning creates a religious and humanistic atmosphere where students not only know goodness but are also encouraged to manifest it. Abuddin Nata (2003) adds that value education in Islam includes cognitive (knowledge of values), affective (appreciation of values), and psychomotor (practice of values) dimensions. Therefore, PAI learning must use approaches that touch all these aspects, such as through methods of exemplification (*uswah*), habituation (*ta'dib*), and character building.

Axiological Implications for PAI Curriculum, This has several direct implications for PAI curriculum development:

- a. Educational goals are directed towards the formation of a complete Islamic character.
- b. Curriculum content includes teachings that reflect universal Islamic values.
- c. Teaching methods emphasize the internalization of values through exemplification, ethical discussions, case studies, and reflection.
- d. Evaluation not only measures cognitive aspects but also assesses behavior and attitudes.

Thus, the axiological foundation provides a normative and ethical direction for the PAI curriculum so that it does not get trapped in formalistic education but becomes education that truly shapes the comprehensive personality of students, as is the goal of Islam in forming *insan kamil*.

Conclusion

The development of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum cannot be separated from profound philosophical foundations: ontological, epistemological, and axiological. These three foundations serve as a conceptual framework for designing a curriculum that is not only technical-instructional but also rich in transcendental and humanistic Islamic values. The Ontological Foundation provides an understanding of the nature of human beings as creations of Allah SWT, possessing both physical and spiritual dimensions. Therefore, the PAI curriculum must be directed at developing all human potentials in a balanced way: intellect, heart, and spirituality. The concept of humans as caliphs and bearers of trust demands a curriculum that fosters noble character, social awareness, and ecological responsibility. The Epistemological Foundation explains that sources of knowledge in Islam stem from revelation, reason, and experience. The PAI curriculum must be integrative, not only emphasizing memorization of religious texts

but also fostering critical and practical understanding of Islamic teachings. This approach enables students to internalize religious values contextually in real life. The Axiological Foundation emphasizes the importance of ethical and moral values as the core of Islamic education. The PAI curriculum must be a vehicle for cultivating Islamic character through values such as honesty, justice, compassion, and responsibility. This value education must be implemented comprehensively in the objectives, content, methods, and evaluation of learning, in order to form an *insan kamil* who is balanced cognitively, affectively, and psychomotorically. Overall, these three philosophical foundations provide a clear direction for the development of the PAI curriculum, ensuring it not only focuses on mastering religious material but also shapes students who are faithful, knowledgeable, and of noble character—ready to fulfill their roles as servants of Allah and caliphs on earth. A curriculum built upon such an Islamic educational philosophy will be more relevant, holistic, and transformative in addressing the challenges of the times.

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