

Issues in the Islamic Education Curriculum in the Modern Era

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ABSTRACT

The advancement of science and technology in the modern era has significantly impacted various aspects of life, including the educational system. As an integral part of the national education system, Islamic education is required to continuously adapt in order to remain relevant amidst the rapid changes of the times. The curriculum, being the core component of the educational process, must be reviewed and developed to address global challenges while preserving the fundamental values of Islamic teachings. The current era, characterized by technological progress, globalization, and dynamic social change, demands that Islamic education remain both relevant and functional. In this context, the development of the Islamic education curriculum has become a strategic issue—not only in terms of transforming content and teaching methods, but also in integrating Islamic values with 21st-century competencies. Key challenges include the gap between traditional curricula and real-world needs, the lack of pedagogical innovation, and limited resources to support educational modernization. In practice, curriculum development in Islamic education continues to face issues such as the dichotomy between religious and secular sciences, insufficient integration of Islamic values into contextual learning, and a lack of innovation in instructional methods. Moreover, external challenges such as secularization, the dominance of foreign cultural influences, and moral crises among the younger generation pose serious threats that must be addressed through targeted curriculum reforms. Therefore, a holistic, contextual, and responsive approach to curriculum development is essential—one that adapts to contemporary changes without compromising the core principles of Islam. Research and in-depth studies on this issue are crucial in formulating effective strategies for developing a curriculum that is adaptive, morally grounded, and capable of producing a generation of Muslims who are intellectually, spiritually, and socially competent.

1. Introduction

Every religion positions itself as a noble value system that underpins all aspects of life, including education. Education is not merely an important issue in human life—it is fundamental and inseparable from it. It plays an essential role across all dimensions of life, from the family unit to the broader context of nation-building. The progress or decline of a nation is largely influenced by the state of its educational system. (Mukhlison Efendi, 2008).

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Islamic education is fundamentally understood as a system—a set of interrelated components working together to achieve specific goals. In practice, however, Islamic education continues to face complex challenges, both internal and external. Internally, the issues pertain to key components of the education system itself, including the professionalism of educators, curriculum design, and other structural elements. Externally, the challenge lies in preparing Islamic education to remain resilient and relevant in the face of contemporary and future-oriented demands. (Lalu Abdurahman Wahid & Tasman Hamami, 2021).

The widespread emergence of moral and ethical issues in society—particularly among the younger generation—such as drug abuse, student brawls, acts of violence, prostitution, murder, promiscuity, and corruption, has become a persistent social problem with no comprehensive solution to date. This situation is deeply concerning, as it directly relates to the development of national character, which is crucial for building a society capable of standing alongside other advanced and prosperous nations.

2. Literature Review

Prior to conducting this research, the researcher reviewed several scholarly sources relevant to the chosen theme. One such source is the work of Lalu Abdurahman Wahid and Tasman Hamami (2021), titled "The Challenges of the Islamic Education Curriculum and Development Strategies in Meeting Future Competency Demands." This article discusses the development of the Islamic education curriculum in response to the challenges faced by the younger generation in the modern era. The study emphasizes the need for the Islamic education curriculum to be continuously developed in order to remain relevant in a rapidly evolving world. It highlights the importance of advancing methods and techniques within the curriculum so that Islamic education can adapt effectively to modern-day realities. Curriculum development in Islamic education is especially critical today, as many young people are beginning to drift away from core moral values due to the unchecked influence of modern cultural trends.

3. Methodology

This article employs a library research approach and falls under the category of qualitative research. According to Amir (2022), library research is a form of qualitative inquiry that operates at an analytical level and adopts an emic perspective—meaning that the data is not derived from the researcher's personal assumptions, but from conceptual and theoretical facts examined through critical analysis. This method involves thoroughly reviewing and analyzing relevant materials such as books, journals, and scholarly articles, which serve as credible references to support the study.

4. Results and Discussion

In the modern era characterized by rapid technological advancements, globalization, and an almost limitless flow of information the field of education faces increasingly complex challenges and demands. Islamic education, as an integral part of the national education system, is not exempt from these dynamics. Its curriculum is expected to address the needs of the times while preserving the fundamental values that form the essence of its teachings. Amid rapid social and cultural changes, a critical question arises: To what extent can the Islamic education curriculum adapt to contemporary developments, and how can it maintain a balance between Islamic values and the competencies required in the 21st century? This issue has become a central point of discussion in efforts to reconstruct Islamic education so that it remains relevant and meaningful in the face of modernity.

4.1. The Relevance and Adaptability of Islamic Education

In general, the term relevance refers to appropriateness or suitability. According to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), relevance is defined as a connection or relationship. In the context of Islamic religious education, relevance can be understood as the alignment or harmony between education and the demands of real life. Within the educational field, the concept of relevance is seen as the compatibility that emerges through a process, which then produces outcomes that are felt or experienced.

Another perspective divides the concept of relevance into two main ideas: cognitive effect and processing effort. As a cognitive effect, something is considered relevant when it factually and empirically meets certain requirements. Meanwhile, from the standpoint of processing effort, something becomes relevant after undergoing a series of actions or treatments that make it meet predefined relevance standards.

Adaptation refers to the process of interaction between changes made by an organism to its environment and changes the environment imposes on the organism. There are two types of adaptation: the first is autoplasmic adaptation (from "auto," meaning self, and "plastic," meaning form), which refers to self-initiated adjustments; and the second is alloplasmic adaptation (from "allo," meaning other, and "plastic," meaning form), which involves adjusting to external conditions. In essence, adaptation is the state in which a person forces themselves to become accustomed to new conditions or environments.

Linguistically, the term education is derived from the root word "didik" (to nurture or train), which refers to efforts to instill good character and intellectual ability. Based on this linguistic meaning, education can be defined as a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment and process that enables students to actively develop their potential in order to acquire spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills necessary for themselves, society, the nation, and the state.

Islamic education refers specifically to religious education in Islam—an effort to instill the teachings and values of Islam so they become a person's way of life and worldview. In this context, Islamic education can take two forms: 1) All activities carried out by individuals or institutions aimed at helping learners internalize and develop Islamic teachings and values. 2) Any interaction or encounter between two or more individuals that results in the internalization and growth of Islamic values and teachings in one or more of the parties involved.

4.2. Development of the Islamic Education Curriculum in the Modern Era

Islamic Religious Education plays a crucial role in shaping the morals and character of learners. Amid rapid societal changes, the Islamic religious education curriculum is expected to integrate Islamic values with advancements in technology and modern educational methodologies (Nurhidin, 2017).

Historically, at the beginning of Islamic civilization, the term curriculum was often understood as maddah referring to the subjects that must be taught to students. In Arabic, the term manhaj (curriculum) is commonly defined as a clear path or a bright way that individuals follow in various aspects of life. Omar Al-Syaibani further explains manhaj as a clear path followed by educators alongside their students to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Curriculum development emphasizes that curriculum is not merely about the quality and relevance of the material delivered or the quantity of students, but more importantly, it involves the interconnectedness of educational components that form a coherent system. This system should be contextually aligned with the progress and changing needs of learners after they complete their education. In essence, curriculum development functions to measure, understand, and evaluate the progress achieved by students. This concept aligns with the idea of learning opportunity, which refers to creating a learning experience by establishing relationships between educational components implemented in teaching activities aimed at achieving desired educational goals.

In this context, traditional methods commonly used in Islamic religious education should be adjusted and integrated with modern approaches to create a relevant and effective curriculum for the 21st century. Several studies have explored the integration of traditional and modern teaching methods within Islamic Religious Education. Adapting the Islamic Religious Education curriculum to meet the needs of the millennial generation is vital to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of Islamic education in contemporary times.

This study aims to elaborate on the importance of adapting the Islamic Religious Education curriculum for millennials and to propose strategies to achieve this goal. The necessity for adaptation arises from social, technological, and value changes faced by the millennial generation. Such adaptation involves tailoring the curriculum to better reflect the social realities and needs of millennials. This includes incorporating learning materials relevant to contemporary issues such as technology, globalization, and modern moral challenges. Additionally, the use of technology in teaching should be enhanced to increase the appeal and effectiveness of learning.

A curriculum adjusted to the needs of the millennial generation is expected to foster a deeper understanding of Islam and strengthen their Islamic identity in facing increasingly complex challenges. Therefore, the adaptation of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum is essential to ensure that Islamic education remains relevant and contributes positively to shaping a highly qualified millennial generation.

5. Conclusion

The development of the Islamic education curriculum in the modern era is an urgent necessity that must be carried out comprehensively and continuously. Social, cultural, technological changes, and global demands require a curriculum that not only preserves Islamic values but also remains relevant to contemporary needs. Today's Islamic curriculum must integrate religious knowledge with general sciences while fostering 21st-century competencies without compromising Islamic identity. Challenges such as the dichotomy between religious and secular knowledge, a lack of pedagogical innovation, and the influence of foreign cultures that contradict Islamic values must be addressed through a contextual, flexible curriculum grounded in Islamic principles. Therefore, a collaborative effort among the government, educational institutions, academics, and the broader community is essential to formulate and implement a curriculum that is adaptive, transformative, and solution-oriented. With the proper development of the curriculum, Islamic education will be able to produce Muslim generations who are not only intellectually capable but also spiritually mature, morally upright, and prepared to contribute positively to the global society.

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