

Development Of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Curriculum: Understanding And Analyzing Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Curriculum Development Theories

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ABSTRACT

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a strategic role in shaping the religious character of students amidst the multicultural reality of Indonesian society. The challenges of globalization, social pluralism, and the strengthening tendencies of religious intolerance and exclusivism demand the development of a contextual, inclusive, and human values-oriented Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum. This article aims to understand and analyze theories of multicultural Islamic Education curriculum development as a conceptual foundation for designing a moderate and civilized Islamic Education curriculum. This research uses a qualitative approach with the library research method. Data were obtained from books, journal articles, and relevant academic sources, which were analyzed using content analysis techniques. The study results show that the development of a multicultural PAI curriculum is a synthesis of rational-objective curriculum development theory, social reconstruction, and humanistic values with normative Islamic values. The multicultural PAI curriculum emphasizes the integration of content, process, and learning context, and is based on the principles of inclusivity, relevance, value integration, and sustainability. This curriculum has strategic relevance in shaping students who are religious, tolerant, moderate, and have multicultural awareness. Thus, the development of a multicultural PAI curriculum is not only academically important but also has significant implications for strengthening Islamic education that is responsive to social and national dynamics in Indonesia.

I. INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a strategic role in shaping the character, religious attitudes, and worldview of students. In the context of Indonesia's plural and multicultural society, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) not only serves as a means of transmitting Islamic teachings but also as a platform for fostering tolerant, inclusive, and moderate attitudes. Islamic education is required to instill religious values that are in harmony with the diverse social realities, whether in terms of ethnicity, culture, language, or religion (Karadona, 2025; Karadona et al., 2022; Karadona & Sari, 2025; Puja et al., 2025; Rahma et al., 2024). Indonesia, as a multicultural nation, faces serious challenges in maintaining social harmony amidst differences. The phenomenon of conflicts rooted in religion, exclusivist attitudes, and intolerance indicates that education, including Islamic Religious Education, has not yet fully become an effective instrument in building multicultural awareness. This condition indicates an urgent need to reorient religious education approaches to be more contextual, dialogical, and focused on appreciating diversity (Firdaus, 2024; Prasetiawati, 2017; Syaifudin & Syafi'i, 2025). In this context, the PAI curriculum plays a key role as the foundational framework that determines the direction, objectives, content, and learning strategies. The curriculum is not merely an administrative document, but a reflection of the educational paradigm adopted. A PAI curriculum that is normative-dogmatic and less sensitive to social realities

has the potential to produce narrow and exclusive religious understanding. Therefore, the development of a multicultural-oriented PAI curriculum has become an urgent need in the contemporary Islamic education system.

The multicultural PAI curriculum emphasizes the integration of Islamic values with principles of respect for differences, social justice, equality, and universal humanity. This approach is grounded in Islamic teachings that regard diversity as a divine law, as reflected in the principles of ta'āraf, tasāmuh, and 'adl. Thus, multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) is not an effort to relativize Islamic teachings, but rather a pedagogical strategy to present Islam as a religion of mercy for all worlds in the context of a pluralistic society. However, the implementation of multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) cannot be separated from a strong theoretical foundation, especially in curriculum development. Various curriculum development theories, whether derived from general education or Islamic education thought, offer diverse approaches, such as the humanistic approach, social reconstruction, and value-based curriculum. Each theory has different philosophical and pedagogical implications in designing a multicultural Islamic Education curriculum (Fastmadhi et al., 2024; Firdaus, 2024; Rizki et al., 2025; Syaifudin & Syafi'i, 2025). Unfortunately, in academic and educational practice, studies on multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) often stop at the normative and conceptual level without in-depth analysis of the curriculum development theories. Many discourses emphasize the importance of multiculturalism in Islamic Education, but they have not been matched with a systematic understanding of the theoretical framework that can serve as the basis for comprehensive and sustainable curriculum development.

In fact, understanding curriculum development theories is crucial so that the development of multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) is not sporadic, symbolic, or merely rhetorical. Without a clear theoretical foundation, the multicultural PAI curriculum has the potential to lose direction, be inconsistent in implementation, and be difficult to evaluate academically. Therefore, an analysis of the theories of multicultural PAI curriculum development becomes a fundamental step in strengthening the practice of Islamic education. Moreover, the dynamics of globalization and the development of information technology also influence how students understand religion and diversity. The massive flow of information often brings biased, extreme, and non-contextual religious narratives. In this situation, the PAI curriculum is required to equip students with the ability to think critically, empathetically, and reflectively. The development of a multicultural PAI curriculum must be based on theories that can address the challenges of the times without losing the substance of Islamic values. The theoretical study on the development of a multicultural PAI curriculum is also important as an academic contribution to the development of Islamic Religious Education. Thru a systematic literature review, this research is expected to map various theoretical perspectives, find common ground among theories, and identify key principles relevant to the development of multicultural PAI curriculum in Indonesia.

Based on the aforementioned description, this research focuses on the understanding and analysis of multicultural PAI curriculum development theories thru a qualitative approach based on literature review. This research does not aim to test field implementation, but rather to deeply explore the conceptual and theoretical framework that can serve as a foundation in the development of a contextual, moderate, and humanistic-oriented multicultural Islamic Education curriculum. Thus, this research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of Islamic Religious Education curricula and serve as a reference for academics, educators, and education policymakers in designing Islamic Religious Education that is responsive to the multicultural realities of Indonesian society.

II. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a library research type. This approach was chosen because the research aims to deeply understand and analyze the concepts, ideas, and theories of multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum development proposed by experts. Literature review allows researchers to conduct a critical examination of relevant theoretical and conceptual thoughts without involving field data collection, thus directing the focus of the research toward strengthening the scientific foundation and normative-conceptual analysis (Wijaya, 2019). The sources of research data consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data includes main reference books that discuss curriculum development theory, multicultural education, and Islamic Religious Education, both classical and contemporary works. Secondary data, on the other hand, comes from scientific journal articles, proceedings, research results, dissertations, and other relevant academic documents. All data sources were obtained thru literature searches in scientific databases such as Google Scholar, accredited national journals, and reputable academic publications. Data collection was carried out using documentation techniques thru the search for relevant keywords and the grouping of literature based on themes and theoretical approaches (Mahanum, 2021). Data analysis was conducted qualitatively-descriptively using content analysis. The collected literature was analyzed to identify key concepts, principles, and patterns of that in the multicultural PAI curriculum development theory, including its similarities and differences. To maintain data validity, this research applies source triangulation by comparing various perspectives from different literatures and considering the credibility of the authors and publishers. This research is limited to theoretical and conceptual studies, so the research results are expected to provide academic contributions in enriching the understanding and development of multicultural PAI curricula.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Multicultural Education within the Framework of Islamic Religious Education.

The results of the literature review indicate that multicultural education is a pedagogical approach that arises from the awareness of the plural and diverse social realities of society, in terms of ethnicity, culture, language, and religion. Multicultural education is not only understood as the recognition of differences but also as a systematic effort to manage that diversity so that it becomes a source of social strength, not a trigger for conflict. In the context of education, a multicultural approach is aimed at building equality, justice, and respect for human dignity without discrimination. Therefore, multicultural education emphasizes the importance of fostering attitudes of mutual understanding, dialog, and empathy in the social interactions of students (Prasatiawati, 2017; Ramadhan et al., 2023). In the perspective of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), multicultural education has very strong relevance because, normatively, Islamic teachings have recognized and appreciated diversity as part of God's decree (sunnatullah). The Qur'an emphasizes that humans are created in nations and tribes so that they may know one another (li ta'arafu), not to deny or dominate each other. This principle shows that diversity is both a theological and social reality that must be addressed wisely and constructively. Thus, multicultural education in PAI is not a concept imported raw from Western thought, but rather has strong roots in fundamental Islamic values (Abdurrachman et al., 2025; Dute, 2019). The main values in multicultural education in PAI are reflected in the principle of ukhuwwah insaniyyah (human brotherhood), which places all humans as God's creations who possess dignity and rights that must be respected. Moreover, the principle of justice ('adl) demands proportional and non-discriminatory treatment toward the differences in the social and cultural backgrounds of students. The principle of tolerance (tasamuh) encourages an open-minded attitude in addressing differences in views, practices, and religious

expressions, while the principle of balance (*tawazun*) emphasizes the importance of a moderate approach in understanding and practicing Islamic teachings. These values serve as an ethical foundation for the development of PAI with a multicultural perspective.

Islamic education literature emphasizes that multicultural education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is not intended to relativize the truth of Islamic teachings or dilute the Islamic identity of students. On the contrary, the multicultural approach aims to build a more mature, reflective, and responsible religious understanding. Students are directed to have a strong belief in Islamic teachings, but at the same time, they are able to appreciate differences and live peacefully alongside followers of other religions and cultures. In other words, multicultural education in PAI places faith and tolerance as two complementary aspects, not contradictory to each other. In the pedagogical framework, multicultural education in PAI demands a paradigm shift in learning from a monological and doctrinal nature to a dialogical and participatory approach. The PAI teaching materials are not only presented as a collection of norms and laws but are also contextualized with the social realities faced by the students. Thru this approach, students are invited to understand Islamic teachings comprehensively, including the universal human values contained within them. Multicultural PAI learning also encourages the development of critical attitudes, social empathy, and the ability to resolve conflicts peacefully.

Multicultural education in PAI serves as a means of internalizing Islamic values oriented toward the common good (*maslahah 'ammah*). PAI not only serves to foster individual piety but also social piety, which is reflected in attitudes of respecting differences, rejecting violence, and upholding justice. In the context of a pluralistic society, multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) becomes a strategic instrument to instill the values of Islam as *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, so that Islamic teachings are not understood exclusively, but rather as a way of life that brings peace and social harmony. Thus, the results of the literature review affirm that multicultural education within the framework of Islamic Religious Education is a fundamental necessity in the development of contemporary PAI curricula. This approach allows PAI to function optimally as a means of character formation for students who are faithful, virtuous, open to differences, and capable of making positive contributions to multicultural society. Multicultural education not only strengthens the relevance of PAI amidst plural social dynamics but also emphasizes the strategic role of Islamic education in building a just, peaceful, and civilized civilization.

2. Theories of Curriculum Development and Their Relevance to Multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI)

Literature review shows that the development of a multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum cannot be separated from the contributions of modern curriculum development theories that have evolved in educational studies. One of the most referenced theories is the rational-objective theory pioneered by Ralph W. Tyler. This theory emphasizes the importance of formulating learning objectives clearly, measurably, and systematically as the main foundation of the curriculum. In the context of multicultural Islamic Education (PAI), Tyler's approach is relevant for formulating curriculum objectives that not only focus on the mastery of Islamic knowledge but also on the formation of tolerant, just, inclusive, and virtuous attitudes in facing the realities of social and cultural diversity (Abdurrahmansyah, 2023; Firdayanti et al., 2025). Furthermore, the literature reveals that the application of the rational-objective theory in the multicultural PAI curriculum allows the learning process to be designed in a directed manner and consistently aligned with the values of religious moderation. The explicitly formulated curriculum objectives can serve as a guideline in the selection of materials, teaching strategies, and evaluations that emphasize a balance between cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Thus, the PAI curriculum does not

only emphasize the memorization of normative texts but also the appreciation of values and religious practices that respect differences.

In addition to the rational-objective theory, the social reconstruction theory also serves as an important foundation in the development of a multicultural PAI curriculum. This theory views education as a strategic instrument for enacting social change and improvement. In this perspective, the curriculum is designed to respond to real issues faced by society, including social conflicts, intolerance, radicalism, and religious exclusivism. Literature shows that the social reconstruction approach is highly relevant for multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) because it positions religious education as a means to build students' critical awareness of complex social dynamics. Within the framework of social reconstruction, the multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) curriculum is no longer positioned merely as a tool for transmitting religious doctrine, but rather as a vehicle for transforming Islamic values oriented toward social justice, peace, and humanity. Students are directed to understand Islamic teachings contextually and reflectively, so they can relate Islamic values to the plural social reality. With this approach, PAI plays an active role in shaping a generation of Muslims who are not only ritualistically obedient but also sensitive to humanitarian and national issues.

In addition, several literatures also highlight the relevance of humanistic theory in the development of a multicultural PAI curriculum. This theory emphasizes the importance of holistic human potential development, including emotional, social, and spiritual aspects. In the context of multicultural PAI, the humanistic approach supports dialogical, participatory learning that values the life experiences of students. The PAI curriculum with this approach provides space for students to express their views, engage in critical discussions, and build empathy toward other groups with different cultural and religious backgrounds. Thus, the literature review emphasizes that the development of a multicultural PAI curriculum requires a synthesis of various curriculum development theories. The integration of rational-objective, social reconstruction, and humanistic theories allows the PAI curriculum to be designed systematically, contextually, and oriented toward the formation of multicultural character. The multicultural PAI curriculum not only functions as an academic instrument but also as a strategic means of building a moderate, harmonious, and virtuous religious life within a diverse society.

3. Theoretical Analysis of Multicultural PAI Curriculum Development

The results of the theoretical analysis show that the development of a multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum is a form of conceptual synthesis between contemporary curriculum development theories and the normative values of Islamic teachings. The multicultural PAI curriculum cannot be narrowly understood as a collection of materials or a learning syllabus, but rather as a design of structured, systematic learning experiences oriented toward the formation of moderate, inclusive, and humanistic religious attitudes. In this context, the curriculum functions as a strategic instrument to shape the mindset, attitudes, and behaviors of students so that they can live harmoniously amidst the diverse realities of society. Theoretically, the development of a multicultural PAI curriculum requires balanced attention to three main components: content, process, and context of learning. In terms of content, PAI materials should not only focus on ritual and doctrinal aspects but also include universal Islamic values such as justice, tolerance, brotherhood, and respect for differences. Teaching materials need to be organized integratively by linking Islamic teachings with current social issues, such as pluralism, diversity, human rights, and conflict resolution, so that students can understand the relevance of Islamic teachings in real life.

From the process side, the literature emphasizes the importance of a dialogical, participatory, and reflective learning approach. The multicultural PAI curriculum demands a shift in the learning paradigm from teacher-centered to student-centered learning, where students are given space to engage in dialog, discussion, and develop critical thinking regarding the religious realities around them. The learning process not only aims to transfer religious knowledge but also to develop empathy, mutual respect, and social skills in interacting with individuals from different cultural and belief backgrounds. Meanwhile, in terms of context, the development of a multicultural PAI curriculum must consider the social, cultural, and characteristic conditions of the students. The curriculum cannot be uniformly structured without taking into account the local realities and the dynamics of the society where the students live. Therefore, the multicultural context of Indonesia—characterized by ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity—must be the foundation in designing a contextual and responsive PAI curriculum to the needs of the times. Literature also emphasizes that the integration of religious moderation values is a key element in the development of a multicultural PAI curriculum. Religious moderation is understood as a fair, balanced, and non-extremist attitude toward religion, both in thought and religious practice. Values such as *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawazun* (balance), *i'tidal* (justice), and *musyawarah* (deliberation) need to be systematically internalized within the curriculum structure, from the formulation of objectives, selection of materials, to learning evaluation strategies.

Moreover, intercultural dialog becomes an important pedagogical approach in the multicultural PAI curriculum. Islamic religious education not only teaches Islamic identity but also equips students with the ability to interact constructively with adherents of other religions and cultures. Through intercultural dialog, students are invited to understand differences as a social reality that must be managed wisely, not avoided or opposed. In the framework of character education, the multicultural PAI curriculum plays a strategic role in shaping students' personalities to be noble, responsible, and committed to the nation. Character values such as honesty, justice, empathy, and social responsibility must be explicitly integrated into the goals and processes of PAI learning. Thus, the PAI curriculum not only produces students who cognitively understand Islamic teachings but also enables them to implement these teachings in a multicultural social life. This theoretical analysis emphasizes that the development of a multicultural PAI curriculum demands a holistic, integrative, and contextual approach. The curriculum must be designed reflectively, taking into account social dynamics and global challenges, so that Islamic Religious Education can serve as a strategic instrument in building a religious, tolerant, and civilized society amidst the pluralism of modern life.

4. Principles of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Curriculum Development

Literature review shows that the development of a multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum must be based on a set of principles that are philosophical, pedagogical, and sociological in nature. These principles serve as conceptual guidelines in designing, implementing, and evaluating the curriculum to respond to the reality of societal diversity while remaining rooted in the values of Islamic teachings. Several key principles that stand out in the literature on multicultural PAI curriculum development include the principles of inclusivity, relevance, value integration, and sustainability. The principle of inclusivity emphasizes that the multicultural PAI curriculum must be able to accommodate the reality of student diversity, both in terms of cultural, ethnic, linguistic backgrounds, and social conditions. The curriculum must not be exclusive or excessively emphasize one identity to the point of potentially negating the existence of other groups. In the perspective of PAI, inclusivity aligns with Islamic teachings that emphasize respect for differences and recognition of diversity as a divine law. Therefore, the content, methods, and

evaluation of PAI learning need to be designed in such a way as to create a space for dialog and mutual respect among students (Abdillah, 2024; Sholikah et al., 2025).

The principle of relevance emphasizes the importance of aligning PAI teaching materials with the social context, the needs of the students, and the challenges of the times. The multicultural PAI curriculum is not enough to merely present normative religious concepts textually; it must also be able to relate them to the daily realities of the students' lives. Issues such as pluralism, religious tolerance, social justice, radicalism, and globalization need to be proportionally integrated into PAI learning. Thus, students not only understand Islamic teachings theoretically but are also able to apply them in addressing social issues in a multicultural environment. Furthermore, the principle of value integration demands a harmonious unification of Islamic values, universal humanitarian values, and national values. The multicultural PAI curriculum must be able to position Islamic teachings as a source of values that encourage the creation of attitudes of peace, justice, and social responsibility, while also strengthening national commitment within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. This integration is important to avoid a dichotomy between religious identity and national identity, and to affirm that Islamic values are in line with the principles of national and state life.

The principle of sustainability emphasizes that the multicultural PAI curriculum must be dynamic, flexible, and adaptive to social, cultural, and scientific developments. The curriculum must not be static or rigid, but should be continuously evaluated and improved in accordance with societal developments and the needs of students. This principle demands a process of continuous reflection and innovation in curriculum development, both at the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of PAI learning. In its implementation, the principle of sustainability is also related to strengthening educators' capacities and developing a school culture that supports multicultural values. PAI teachers are required not only to understand the substance of Islamic teachings but also to possess multicultural sensitivity and adequate pedagogical skills. Thus, the multicultural PAI curriculum does not merely stop at written documents but is truly internalized in the practice of learning and school life. The development of a multicultural PAI curriculum based on the principles of inclusivity, relevance, value integration, and sustainability is expected to shape students who possess strong faith, noble character, and high multicultural awareness. Such a curriculum plays a strategic role in preparing a generation of Muslims who can live together peacefully, justly, and with dignity in a diverse society.

5. The Relevance and Implications of a Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Curriculum for Contemporary Islamic Education

The results of the literature review indicate that the development of a multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum has very strategic relevance in the context of contemporary Islamic education. Social changes marked by globalization, the digitalization of information, and the increasing intensity of cross-cultural and interfaith interactions have brought new challenges to the world of Islamic education. On one hand, technological advancements open up vast spaces for the exchange of ideas, but on the other hand, they also have the potential to strengthen identity polarization, the spread of exclusive religious ideologies, and the increase of intolerant attitudes. In this context, the multicultural PAI curriculum emerges as a responsive and solution-oriented approach (Ahadi & Sugiarto, 2025; Janah et al., 2025). The relevance of the multicultural PAI curriculum is evident in its ability to make religious education not only a means of transferring Islamic knowledge but also an instrument for fostering social awareness and religious ethics. This curriculum encourages students to understand Islamic teachings comprehensively, contextually, and

dialogically, so that they can be open to differences without losing their religious identity. With a multicultural approach, PAI serves as a medium for internalizing Islamic values that are rahmatan lil 'alamin and relevant to the realities of a pluralistic society.

The implications of the multicultural PAI curriculum for contemporary Islamic education are also evident in the shift in the learning paradigm. The learning of Islamic Education (PAI) is no longer solely oriented toward the mastery of normative material and memorization, but emphasizes the development of critical attitudes, social empathy, and dialog skills. Students are encouraged to reflect on the values of Islamic teachings in the context of real life, including in facing social issues such as identity-based conflicts, discrimination, and social injustice. Thus, multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) contributes to the formation of students' character that is moderate, just, and virtuous. From an institutional perspective, the development of a multicultural PAI curriculum has implications for Islamic education policies and the management of educational units. Islamic educational institutions are required to integrate multicultural values into the vision, mission, and culture of the school. This includes strengthening the competencies of Islamic Education teachers in understanding multiculturalism issues, religious moderation, and the use of participatory and dialogical teaching methods. Thus, the multicultural PAI curriculum not only becomes a normative document but is also implemented in practice in education.

Socially and nationally, the multicultural PAI curriculum plays an important role in strengthening social cohesion and national unity. In the context of Indonesia as a multicultural country, inclusive and moderate Islamic religious education contributes to strengthening the values of tolerance, diversity, and nationalism. This curriculum helps students understand that the commitment to Islam does not contradict the commitment to nationalism; rather, they strengthen each other in building a peaceful and harmonious society. Thus, the development of a multicultural PAI curriculum not only holds academic significance as a discourse on the development of educational theory and practice but also has strategic implications in addressing the challenges of Islamic education in the contemporary era. This curriculum is expected to produce a generation of Muslims with strong faith, inclusive Islamic insight, and a strong sense of social and national responsibility in community and state life.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study and discussion, it can be concluded that the development of a multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum is a fundamental necessity in addressing the challenges of Islamic education in a plural and dynamic society. Multicultural education within the framework of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a strong normative foundation in Islamic teachings, particularly on the principles of respecting diversity, justice, tolerance, and human brotherhood. Therefore, multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) does not contradict the substance of Islamic teachings; rather, it serves as a pedagogical strategy to present Islam as rahmatan lil 'alamin in the context of a diverse social life. This study shows that curriculum development theories, such as the rational-objective theory, social reconstruction theory, and humanistic theory, have significant relevance in the development of multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) curricula. The integration of these various theories allows the PAI curriculum to be designed systematically, contextually, and oriented toward the formation of moderate, inclusive, and humanistic religious attitudes. The multicultural PAI curriculum not only emphasizes the mastery of Islamic knowledge but also the development of social awareness, empathy, and dialogical skills among students.

Theoretically, the development of a multicultural PAI curriculum requires balanced attention to the aspects of content, process, and learning context. The PAI curriculum needs to be developed integratively with current social issues, the learning process must be dialogical and participatory, and the socio-cultural context of the students should be a primary consideration in curriculum design. The principles of inclusivity, relevance, value integration, and sustainability are important foundations to ensure that the multicultural PAI curriculum is not normative-dogmatic, but adaptive and functional. The implications of developing a multicultural PAI curriculum for contemporary Islamic education are very broad, both at the pedagogical, institutional, and socio-national levels. This curriculum plays a strategic role in shaping a generation of Muslims who are strong in faith, noble in character, and possess multicultural awareness and national commitment. Thus, the development of a multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum not only contributes to strengthening the academic study of Islamic Religious Education but also serves as an important instrument in building a peaceful, tolerant, and civilized society amidst Indonesia's pluralism.

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