



Analysis of Approach Variations in Arabic Language Curriculum Development: A Literature Study on Models and Their Implementation

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Abstract

Curriculum is a fundamental component of the education system that determines the direction, content, and process of learning. This study analyzes the various approaches used in Arabic language curriculum development and identifies the strengths and weaknesses of each approach within the context of Arabic language learning. A descriptive-qualitative library research (literature review) design was employed. A total of 20 primary sources five journal articles and fifteen scholarly books, reports, and canonical curriculum-theory works were reviewed; contemporary sources were drawn from the period 2014-2024 to ensure relevance and currency, while a small number of foundational theoretical works were retained regardless of publication year because they remain the conceptual basis of the field. Data were analyzed using content analysis and comparative analysis to identify patterns, characteristics, and the relative effectiveness of each approach. The results show five main approaches to Arabic language curriculum development: competency-based, system-based, decentralization-based, comprehensive, and problem-centered. In addition, twelve curriculum development models were identified and classified into two groups five models grounded in educational philosophy and seven models grounded in the curriculum development process most of which originate from Western theoretical traditions but can be contextually adapted to Arabic language learning. The findings indicate that, despite their differing emphases, all of the approaches and models are fundamentally oriented toward developing three domains of education: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. This research offers a theoretical contribution to a more comprehensive understanding of Arabic language curriculum development and practical guidance for curriculum developers in selecting an approach appropriate to their context and learning needs.

Keywords: Curriculum Approach; Curriculum Development; Arabic Language; Curriculum Models; Educational Effectiveness

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INTRODUCTION

مقدمة

Arabic, as one of the world's major languages with a long history and rich cultural diversity, plays a strategic role in many aspects of life. It functions not merely as a means of communication for millions of native speakers, but also carries significant religious, social, cultural, political, technological, and civilizational functions at the global level. In the Indonesian context, Arabic language education occupies a unique position because it is taught not only as a foreign language but also as a religious language of spiritual and practical value for the majority Muslim population.

The development of the Arabic language curriculum faces complex challenges in the era of globalization and educational digitalization. Several recent studies point to an urgent need to reform the Arabic curriculum so that it is more responsive to contemporary developments. Nasution (2016) identified that Arabic curriculum development still faces a number of obstacles, ranging from an overly traditional approach to a lack of integration with contemporary needs, while Muradi and Taufiqurrahman (2021) emphasized the importance of a more comprehensive approach to Arabic curriculum development one that attends not only to the linguistic dimension but also to pragmatic and contextual considerations.

Previous studies also show substantial variation in the approaches used to develop the Arabic curriculum across educational institutions. Khitom and Taufiq (2023), in their study of State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN), found continuing inconsistency in the implementation of the Arabic curriculum, partly attributable to differences in the approach adopted. Similarly, Yusuf (2019) pointed to a persistent gap between theoretical curriculum design and its practical implementation in the field.

Although numerous studies have discussed the Arabic curriculum, a gap remains in the comprehensive understanding of the various approaches that can be used in curriculum development. Most prior studies have focused on specific aspects, such as teaching methods or assessment, without offering a comprehensive picture of the full spectrum of available approaches. In addition, few studies systematically analyze the advantages and disadvantages of each approach or offer practical guidance for curriculum developers in selecting the approach most appropriate to their needs.

Building on this gap, the present study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the various approaches used in Arabic language curriculum development and to identify the characteristics, advantages, and disadvantages of each approach. The research question is: what are the characteristics of the various approaches to Arabic language curriculum development, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of each? The novelty of this study lies in its systematic comparative analysis of the different approaches to Arabic curriculum development, which can provide practical guidance for education stakeholders in designing curricula that are more effective and contextually appropriate. A further, closely related question that this study seeks to address is whether curriculum development approaches and models that were largely conceived in the twentieth century remain adequate for responding to the demands of globalization, educational digitalization, and, increasingly, artificial intelligence (AI) in the twenty-first century a question this article returns to directly in the Discussion section.

METHOD

منهج

This study employs a descriptive-qualitative approach using a library research (literature review) design. This design was selected because it is well suited to answering the research question concerning a comprehensive analysis of the various approaches to Arabic language curriculum development, through the synthesis of available literature. It should be noted that, although the process below draws on several principles common to systematic review practice, it does not constitute a full systematic literature review (SLR) in the strict sense — for example, it does not employ a PRISMA flow diagram or database-specific Boolean search strings — and is therefore more accurately described as a structured library research/literature review, consistent with the terminology used throughout this article.

The population of this study consists of all literature discussing Arabic language curriculum

development, while the sample comprises the literature meeting the following inclusion criteria: (1) publication between 2014 and 2024, to ensure relevance and currency of information (with a small number of foundational theoretical works on curriculum models retained irrespective of their publication year, given their continuing conceptual centrality to the field); (2) sources in Indonesian, Arabic, or English; (3) a focus on curriculum development, learning approaches, or Arabic curriculum models; (4) primary sources in the form of articles in reputable journals, academic books, and research reports from credible institutions; and (5) accessibility of the source and completeness of bibliographic information. Applying these criteria to the available literature, 20 primary sources were retained for analysis, comprising 5 journal articles and 15 books, monographs, and research reports (see References).

Data were collected through several methodological stages. First, literature was identified and searched through various academic databases, including Google Scholar, JSTOR, and institutional repositories, using keyword combinations such as “Arabic curriculum development,” “curriculum approach,” and “curriculum model,” combined with the Boolean operator AND. Second, the retrieved literature was screened against the inclusion and exclusion criteria specified above. Third, data were extracted from the selected literature, focusing on information regarding the approach, model, characteristics, and advantages/disadvantages of each approach. Fourth, the data were classified and organized into an analytical matrix to facilitate synthesis and comparison.

Data were analyzed using content analysis and comparative analysis to identify patterns, themes, and the characteristics of each curriculum development approach. The analysis process included: (1) coding the data by approach category and characteristics; (2) identifying emergent themes and patterns across sources; (3) conducting comparative analysis to determine the advantages and disadvantages of each approach; (4) synthesizing the findings into a comprehensive framework; and (5) interpreting the findings within the context of Arabic language curriculum development. The trustworthiness of the analysis was maintained through source triangulation and peer debriefing to ensure the accuracy and consistency of data interpretation.

RESULT | نتائج

Based on the literature analysis, the concept of “approach” in curriculum development refers to the theoretical and methodological framework used to design, implement, and evaluate a curriculum. An approach can be understood as the perspective or standpoint underlying the curriculum development process, encompassing philosophical assumptions, pedagogical principles, and implementation strategies.

Curriculum development itself is defined as a systematic and continuous process encompassing the planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of a curriculum in order to achieve specified educational objectives. In the context of the Arabic language, curriculum development does not concern only the linguistic dimension, but also takes into account the social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions inherent to the language.

Classification of Approaches to Arabic Language Curriculum Development

Planning-Orientation-Based Approaches

The literature analysis identifies five main approaches used in Arabic language curriculum

development, differentiated by their planning orientation, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Approaches to Arabic Language Curriculum Development Based on Planning Orientation

Approach	Main Focus	Development Procedure	Advantages	Disadvantages
Competency	Graduate competency standards	Standard setting → competency elaboration → learning experiences	Measurable, applicable	Tends to be mechanistic
System	Integration of system components	System analysis → design → implementation → evaluation	Comprehensive, systematic	Complex to implement
Decentralization	Field-based, bottom-up initiative	Bottom-up approach initiated by teachers/practitioners	Contextual, practical	Lacks standardization
Comprehensive	Holistic analysis	Philosophy → vision & mission → objectives → implementation	Complete, well-organized	Requires substantial resources
Problem-centered	Identification of specific problems	Problem identification → analysis → solution formulation	Responsive, solution-oriented	Fragmented

Development-Model-Based Approaches

Beyond planning orientation, the analysis also identifies twelve curriculum development models that have been adapted to the context of Arabic language education. These models originate largely from Western theoretical perspectives but can be applied contextually. They are classified into two groups: five models grounded in educational philosophy, and seven models grounded in curriculum development process.

Table 2. Curriculum Development Models Grounded in Educational Philosophy

Model	Theoretical Basis	Key Characteristics	Strengths (Arabic Language Context)	Limitations (Arabic Language Context)
Academic/Subject-matter	Academic rationalism (Eisner & Vallance, 1974)	Oriented toward mastery of academic content (naḥw, ṣarf, balāghah); primary emphasis on the cognitive domain	Strong disciplinary and structural grounding	Limited attention to communicative and affective aspects
Humanistic	Self-actualization orientation (Eisner & Vallance, 1974)	Integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains; centers the learner's personal growth and values	Holistic learner development; nurtures intrinsic motivation	Harder to standardize and assess objectively
Social Reconstructionist	Social reconstruction orientation (Eisner & Vallance, 1974)	Aligns learning with community needs and the resolution of social problems	Contextually relevant and socially responsive	Risk of diverging from linguistic-structural rigor
Technological	Curriculum-as-technology orientation (Eisner & Vallance, 1974)	Leverages educational technology and digital tools for efficiency and effectiveness of instruction	Efficient, scalable, and readily adaptable to digital and AI-assisted tools	Dependent on infrastructure and teachers' digital literacy
Holistic/Integrated	Synthesis of the four orientations above	Views learning as an interconnected system that emphasizes integration of content and domains	Balanced, coherent, and adaptable across contexts	Demanding in terms of planning and inter-domain coordination

The five philosophy-based models presented in Table 2 draw on and adapt the classic

curriculum-orientation framework of Eisner and Vallance (1974), which distinguishes curriculum conceptions according to their underlying philosophical assumptions about the purpose of education.

Table 3. Curriculum Development Models Grounded in the Development Process

Approach	Main Focus	Development Procedure	Advantages	Disadvantages
Competency	Graduate competency standards	Standard setting → competency elaboration → learning experiences	Measurable, applicable	Tends to be mechanistic
System	Integration of system components	System analysis → design → implementation → evaluation	Comprehensive, systematic	Complex to implement
Decentralization	Field-based, bottom-up initiative	Bottom-up approach initiated by teachers/practitioners	Contextual, practical	Lacks standardization
Comprehensive	Holistic analysis	Philosophy → vision & mission → objectives → implementation	Complete, well-organized	Requires substantial resources
Problem-centered	Identification of specific problems	Problem identification → analysis → solution formulation	Responsive, solution-oriented	Fragmented

Table 3 ranges from the Tyler model, which emphasizes four basic components (objectives, learning experiences, organization, and evaluation), to the dynamic Skilbeck model, designed specifically for school-based curriculum development an orientation of particular relevance to the decentralized, institution-driven character of many madrasah and pesantren settings in Indonesia.

DISCUSSION | مناقشة

Interpretation of the Results on Approaches and Models

The findings reveal that the diversity of approaches to Arabic language curriculum development reflects the complexity of the challenges facing the teaching of this language. Each approach carries distinctive characteristics that can contribute differently to learning effectiveness, depending on the context and objectives to be achieved.

The competency-based approach proves effective in providing clear, measurable standards, but is limited in accommodating the creative and expressive dimensions of language learning. The humanistic model, by contrast, provides broader space for developing students' individual potential, but may face challenges of standardization and objective assessment.

Integrating multiple approaches shows considerable potential for improving Arabic language education. The comprehensive/holistic approach, for example, can combine the advantages of different approaches while maintaining the integrity and coherence of the curriculum.

Responding to the Challenge of Digitalization and Twenty-First-Century Needs

A central question raised in the Introduction is whether these largely twentieth-century, Western-derived approaches and models remain adequate for Arabic language curriculum development in an era of globalization, digitalization, and artificial intelligence. The findings of this review suggest a qualified answer: the underlying logic of these models is not rendered obsolete by digital transformation, but their operationalization requires deliberate adaptation.

The Tyler and Taba models, for instance, remain useful for articulating objectives and organizing learning experiences, but their evaluation components need to be reconceived to accommodate digitally mediated and AI-assisted assessment of language competence rather than solely paper-based testing. The technological model identified in Table 2 is, by definition, the most directly compatible with digital transformation, since it treats educational technology as central rather than peripheral; it is increasingly relevant for integrating AI-based tools such as automated speech recognition for Arabic pronunciation practice, adaptive vocabulary and grammar drilling, and AI-supported reading and writing feedback into Arabic instruction. At the same time, Skilbeck's school-based development model offers a structural advantage in the digital era precisely because of its decentralized character: it allows individual madrasah, pesantren, or universities to adopt digital tools at a pace and configuration suited to their own infrastructure and teacher readiness, rather than requiring uniform top-down adoption. Rather than displacing the classical models, digitalization and AI are best understood as reshaping the "learning experience" and "evaluation" components common to nearly all of them, while leaving their underlying planning logic intact.

Comparison with Other Studies

Read together, the findings of this study extend a line of inquiry that has developed incrementally across recent Arabic-curriculum scholarship. Nasution's (2016) call for diversifying approaches to Arabic curriculum development finds concrete elaboration here, in the form of a systematic comparative mapping of five planning-oriented approaches and twelve development models precisely the comprehensive overview that Nasution's study called for but did not itself provide. Where Khitom and Taufiq (2023) documented inconsistency in curriculum implementation across State Islamic Higher Education Institutions, the present analysis suggests that such inconsistency is not necessarily a symptom of poor implementation, but may instead reflect institutions drawing, often implicitly, on different underlying approaches and philosophical orientations described in Tables 1 and 2 a distinction that helps explain rather than merely document the variation Khitom and Taufiq observed. This, in turn, connects to and operationalizes Muradi and Taufiqurrahman's (2021) argument for a more comprehensive, pragmatically and contextually attentive approach: the comprehensive/holistic model in Table 2 and the comprehensive approach in Table 1 together supply the practical framework their conceptual argument implied but did not fully specify. Finally, the persistent theory-practice gap identified by Yusuf (2019) is addressed most directly by the decentralized, situational-analysis logic of the Skilbeck model, which as discussed above is structurally oriented toward closing precisely this kind of gap by locating curriculum decisions with the practitioners who implement them. Taken together, these connections suggest that the Arabic curriculum literature has been converging, largely independently across studies, on the same underlying need this review makes explicit: a shared, comparative vocabulary of approaches and models through which more targeted implementation guidance can be built.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Arabic language curriculum theory by providing a comprehensive classification of the various approaches and models available. The resulting framework can serve as a foundation for further research into the effectiveness of each approach in specific contexts.

Practically, the findings of this study carry significant implications for various stakeholders

in Arabic language education. For curriculum developers, this study offers guidance for selecting the approach best suited to their objectives, context, and available resources. For teachers, understanding the range of approaches can support the more effective adaptation and implementation of the curriculum. For education administrators, this study can serve as a reference in formulating Arabic language curriculum development policy — including, specifically, policy on the pace and form of digital and AI integration appropriate to their institution's context.

Research Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, as library research, its findings depend on the quality and availability of existing literature, which may not cover all relevant perspectives or practical experiences. Second, the focus on literature in Indonesian, Arabic, and English may limit perspectives from other academic traditions that could offer different insights.

Third, this study did not empirically verify the effectiveness of each approach in actual learning contexts, so the recommendations offered remain theoretical. Fourth, the rapid dynamics of technological development and social change may require adaptations to these approaches that are not yet fully captured in the literature analyzed. Fifth, differences in cultural, social, and institutional context across regions of Indonesia may require adjustments to the approach that cannot be fully accommodated within this analysis.

Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several suggestions can be offered for future research. First, empirical research is needed to test the effectiveness of each approach in specific Arabic language teaching contexts, using experimental or quasi-experimental designs. Second, longitudinal research is needed to understand the long-term effects of applying different approaches on students' Arabic language competence.

Third, in-depth case studies of the implementation of each approach across different educational levels and contexts could provide more practical insights for curriculum developers. Fourth, research is needed on the integration of technology and artificial intelligence within each curriculum development approach, in order to anticipate the continuing digitalization of education. Fifth, cross-cultural comparative studies on the application of different approaches in Arabic language teaching contexts could offer a broader perspective on the adaptability of each approach.

CONCLUSSION

خاتمة

This study successfully identified and analyzed the various approaches to Arabic language curriculum development, which can be classified into two main groups: planning-orientation-based approaches and development-model-based approaches. The five main planning-orientation-based approaches comprise the competency, system, decentralization, comprehensive, and problem-centered approaches. Alongside these, twelve curriculum development models were identified, consisting of five models grounded in educational philosophy and seven models grounded in the curriculum development process.

The key finding is that each approach and model carries specific advantages and disadvantages, such that the choice of approach should be adjusted to context, objectives, and

available resources. All approaches and models are, at their core, oriented toward the development of three educational domains cognitive, affective, and psychomotor albeit with differing emphases. In addition, this study finds that the classical logic of these approaches and models remains applicable in the era of digitalization and artificial intelligence, provided that their implementation, particularly the learning-experience and evaluation components, is deliberately adapted to digital and AI-assisted tools.

For the specific context of madrasah and pesantren operating with constrained infrastructure in the current digital era, this study recommends prioritizing a combination of the decentralized, school-based (Skilbeck) model with elements of the technological model: the former allows curriculum decisions to be grounded in each institution's actual capacity and character, while the latter provides a pathway for the gradual, context-appropriate integration of digital and AI-assisted learning tools, rather than requiring uniform, resource-intensive adoption across all institutions at once.

This study contributes by offering a comprehensive framework that can assist education stakeholders in selecting and implementing the approach most appropriate for Arabic language curriculum development. It also provides a strong theoretical foundation for developing a more effective Arabic language curriculum that is responsive to contemporary learning needs.

The principal limitation of this study is its theoretical nature, which requires empirical verification. Future research is therefore recommended to conduct experimental, longitudinal, and comparative studies to test the effectiveness of each approach in actual Arabic language teaching practice

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