



How Can Pesantren Curriculum Development Keep up with Society's Needs for Life Skills Education?

Iswan Fadlin,^{1*} Hendra,² Mehmet Uzunboylu³

¹ Institut Agama Islam Al Muslim Bireun

² STAIN Tengku Dirundeng Meulaboh

² Programme in Educational Administration and Supervision, Yildiz Technical University

ABSTRACT

This study examines the development of life skill curricula in Islamic boarding schools from a qualitative perspective, concentrating on planning approaches, curriculum integration with extracurricular activities, and implementation strategies. This is a qualitative study employing descriptive survey methods. The investigation was conducted at several modern Islamic boarding schools (Pesantren) in the Aceh province, including Pesantren AlMuslim Bireuen Pesantren and Dayah Ruhul Qurani Meulaboh. The result shows monitoring and evaluation processes and examines the role of community collaboration and continuous teacher performance improvement in light of the importance of holistic development. The insights derived from this discourse can potentially inform and enhance education policies, fostering the desirable life skills within pesantren organizational settings. Life skill curriculum development in Islamic boarding schools adopts a bottom-up planning approach, accommodating the needs of graduates and institutions while integrating the national curriculum with extracurricular values and activities. Implementation occurs through lectures, counseling, soft skill enrichment, and boarding school activities. Monitoring and evaluation are performed internally and externally, aiming to develop life skills rooted in monotheism, Sharia, and noble character.

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Corresponding Author: ✉ Iswan Fadlin | ✉ iswanfadhlin@stainmeulaboh.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly changing world, it is crucial to equip students with the necessary tools and skills to adapt and thrive (Songgirin, 2020). A comprehensive educational approach that combines academic and spiritual elements is essential in enabling students to achieve intellectual growth and emotional and moral development (Fatkhuronji et al., 2015; Mufarokah et al., 2022). A holistic approach to education that integrates both academic and spiritual components fosters a comprehensive comprehension of the world and enables students to attain not only intellectual but also emotional and moral growth (Kholiq, 2022).

The implementation of life skills education at all levels of formal and informal education is one method for achieving an effective education (Eissa & Khalid, 2019). Although life skills education is essential for students, most pesantren have not incorporated it into their curriculum (Amirudin & Muzaki, 2019; Nasir, 2020). The purpose of the study is to describe the factual model of life skills education training management, to design a model of life skills education training management based on local potential, to determine the validity of the conceptual model of management training, and to determine the efficacy of the management model of life skills training (Prasetyo & Bashori, 2021; Shahroom & Hussin, 2018).

From a sociological standpoint, the educational function plays a crucial role in cultivating students' mental and rational processes to develop noble morals (Rustandi, 2020). This process, which consists of manifest and latent functions, substantially contributes to economic growth by increasing employer productivity and market adaptability (Wu & Siswanto, 2020). Pesantren, a community-based educational institution, has substantially improved its educational system. It now promotes a more dynamic, adaptable, emancipatory approach that is responsive to the evolution of society and government policies (Sidiq, 2017). The institution prioritizes adjustments and the incorporation of new values or innovations that directly or indirectly affect its educational system (Rohayana, 2019; Siregar & Prasetyo, 2023).

Combining Islamic teachings with contemporary pedagogical techniques, these distinctive Islamic educational institutions play a crucial role in nurturing students' creativity (Dakir et al., 2020; Musdi et al., 2024). Pesantren enables students to experience the relationship between creativity, spirituality, and social responsibility by incorporating Islamic creative arts and social responsibility programs into their curriculum (Hikmawati & Hosnan, 2022; Ihsan et al., 2021). The Pesantren's unique blend of science-religion curriculum designed to meet societal requirements for life skills education balanced with religious instruction,

there is a societal bias against individuals who pursue life skills outside of the curriculum without religious input (Bandura, 2018; Siswanto, 2016).

The modernization of Pesantren's education has resulted in significant changes to its traditional structure. This has allowed for the expansion of knowledge while also altering some fundamental principles, such as sincerity, which is being replaced by characteristics that prioritize personal advantage as a result of modern influences (Azra, 2018; Prasetyo et al., 2022).

METHODS

This is a qualitative study employing descriptive survey methods. The investigation was conducted at several modern Islamic boarding schools (Pesantren) in the Aceh province, including Pesantren Al-Muslim Bireuen Pesantren and Dayah Ruhul Qurani Meulaboh. Participant observation techniques, informal interviews, and digital documentation studies were used to collect data. There were five information sources, including the Pesantren's principal, deputy principal for curriculum matters, teaching coordinator, and instructors. The gathered information was then processed using data reduction techniques. The techniques of Miles and Huberman were applied to the analysis of data. Comparison techniques and SWOT analysis were used to analyze the data. In addition, several relevant research results pertaining to novel aspects of this study were included to bolster the research findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Conceptualization of Pesantren Modernization

Modernizing Pesantren education has resulted in significant alterations to its traditional structure, paving the way for the success of modern Muslim students. While this transformation has enabled the growth of these students' knowledge and abilities, it has also altered the essence of Pesantren. This transformation is exemplified by the shift in the Pesantren education's long-standing foundational principle of sincerity. This trait is being supplanted by traits that place a premium on personal advantage, reflecting the influences of the modern world. Modernization has created a structural difference between traditional Pesantren education and the newly established modern school system within the context of Pesantren's educational system. The modern system emphasizes two primary components. First, it emphasizes transmitting knowledge-based skills, ensuring students have a solid foundation for their future professional endeavors. Second, it places a significant emphasis on character development, nurturing intellectually and morally well-rounded individuals.

In traditional Pesantren, the relationship between teachers and students is characterized by a profound sense of veneration on the part of the students, which reflects the teachers' central role in forming their character and knowledge. This reverence translates into a profound respect for their teachers and an implicit comprehension that they are the ultimate authority on matters of religion and education.

According to Driskill the modern educational system has altered this dynamic relationship, making it increasingly uncommon to find such pronounced respect between students and instructors (Driskill, 2018; Mustofa, 2021). In its stead, the new system allows for a more open environment in which students are encouraged to engage in constructive discourse and critically evaluate their teachers' perspectives. This change signifies a transition towards a more balanced and egalitarian relationship between instructors and students, creating an environment conducive to critical thought and intellectual development.

The modernization of Pesantren education has produced both positive and negative outcomes (Sidiq, 2017). While it has endowed students with essential knowledge and skills, it has also disrupted the enduring principles and values that have defined Pesantren education for generations. This dynamic environment necessitates a nuanced comprehension of how to preserve the essence of Pesantren while embracing the advancements and opportunities brought about by modernization.

Curriculum and Policy Politics

Education and politics share a complex, intertwined relationship that extends far beyond the boundaries of their respective domains (Akmal, 2018; Sykes et al., 2012). This reciprocal association is evident in various aspects of both fields, as educational policies often take shape under the influence of the political climate. At the same time, education is a powerful medium for shaping future political landscapes.

Political conditions play a substantial role in the development of education policies—decisions concerning the allocation of resources, the focus on subjects, and the structure of educational systems are all influenced by the values and priorities of the political environment (Kanalán & Celep, 2011). This connection is further exemplified by the fact that governments frequently use educational policies to promote their beliefs, foster national identity, and address societal issues. However, the connection between politics and education also extends to how education is delivered through the curriculum and learning activities.

A curriculum-oriented approach emphasizes the significance of curriculum in shaping students' cognitive, social, and moral development. In this context, the

curriculum serves as a conduit for the transmission of political ideologies, values, and perspectives to the younger generation (Sykes et al., 2012; Willis et al., 2021). By exposing students to principles, ideas, and historical narratives, educational institutions contribute, whether consciously or unconsciously, to the formulation of future political structures through the design and implementation of their curricula.

Over time, as students engage in learning activities that emphasize these perspectives, they may adopt their educators' shared values and beliefs, thereby passing on the political legacy to future generations. In addition, education's role in politics extends beyond the classroom, as educational systems and their outcomes have the potential to influence broader political dynamics. The development of an educated and informed citizenry is essential for a healthy democracy, and education plays a crucial role in nurturing critical thinking skills, which enables citizens to make informed decisions and actively participate in the political process.

The symbiotic relationship between education and politics highlights these two domains' intricate, multifaceted nature. While educational policies often take shape under the influence of political conditions, the education system is a powerful vehicle for shaping future political climates. This convergence of education and politics underscores the importance of vigilance in developing and implementing curricula, mindful of its potential to impact both individual students and wider society.

Education is pivotal in addressing various requisites to optimize the caliber of the forthcoming generation, encompassing aspects of culture, societal needs, and child development. Pesantren institutions must strive to establish three core pedagogical focal points:

Preserving the essence of human relationships (insani) and divine connection (ilahi);

Upholding the fundamental principles of interpersonal connections (insani) and spiritual bonds (ilahi) with coherence and efficacy constitutes an integral aspect of holistic education in contemporary society. Implementing the preservation of interpersonal relationships (insani) and spiritual ties (ilahi) in a Pesantren, or Islamic boarding school, can be accomplished in several ways:

Curriculum Development: Include topics and lessons highlighting the significance of insani and ilahi values. This may involve the study of interpersonal ethics, Islamic spirituality, and character formation. These subjects should supplement the existing curriculum by emphasizing academic, religious,

and practical education.

Through extracurricular activities, foster an environment in which students can actively engage in spiritual, social, and community-based activities. These activities may include study circles, workshops, and volunteer projects that foster the development of human and spiritual relationships.

Teacher Training: Provide educators with the knowledge, training, and resources necessary to teach *insani* and *ilahi* values to their students effectively. Regular training sessions and workshops should be held to ensure that teachers thoroughly understand these principles and their *Pesantren* implementation.

Establish a support system for students, such as a mentoring or counseling program, in order to address their emotional, social, and spiritual well-being. This will enable students to develop strong interpersonal relationships and an appreciation for the significance of their divine connection.

Encourage collaboration between *Pesantren*, students, and their families in promoting *insane* and *ilahi* values. Open communication channels and regularly engage parents and community members in events, discussions, and projects that highlight the significance of human and divine connections.

Developing a Conducive Environment: Create a *Pesantren* learning environment where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, embracing their vulnerability, and connecting more deeply with their peers and teachers regarding spirituality. By implementing these strategies in a *Pesantren*, educators can effectively instill *insani* and *ilahi* values in their students, fostering a solid foundation for their overall character and spiritual development.

Pesantren, being unique Islamic educational institutions, offer a perfect environment to harness and cultivate creativity in children. By integrating Islamic teachings with modern pedagogical methods, *Pesantren* can inspire students to explore and develop their creative potential rooted in strong spiritual and ethical foundations.

To actualize this objective, several practices can be considered. Firstly, the inclusion of both religious and secular subjects in the curriculum can provide students with a well-rounded base of knowledge and a broader world view. This combination serves to enrich the students' cognitive abilities and stimulates their curiosity, prompting them to think creatively and critically. Secondly, the encouragement of active learning through project-based and collaborative educational activities ensures that students are actively engaged in their learning process. By implementing group work, practical exercises, and interdisciplinary projects rooted in Islamic principles, students can communicate, collaborate, and create together, fostering their creative problem-solving skills.

Lastly, it is essential to maintain strong connections with the community and involve parents in the educational process. Encompassing Islamic creative arts, such as calligraphy, architecture, and poetry, as well as encouraging involvement in volunteer and outreach programs, allows students to experience the connection between creativity, spirituality, and social responsibility.

Cultivating proficient and productive educators who possess the ability to foresee future challenges.

Ultimately contributing to the evolving structure of the professional landscape, rather than merely adapting to the anticipated economic necessities.

Developing skilled and productive educators capable of anticipating future challenges with life skills in Islamic boarding schools. In today's modern society, the knowledge-based economy is rapidly expanding, making the importance of the education sector increasingly vital. As a result, it is crucial to develop educators with comprehensive competencies. Moreover, educators must predict and address future challenges wisely. As Islamic education institutions, boarding schools have a primary mission to achieve harmony between religious and general education, so educators must possess the skills that correspond to these objectives.

Several factors must be considered to develop competent educators in boarding schools. First, through curriculum development, educators should be given the opportunity to enhance their ability to predict the future. Realistic solutions based on research and experience must be sought to achieve this. Second, creating an educational environment that supports educators in acquiring knowledge and developing their thinking abilities, creativity, and independence is essential. Educators can strengthen their competencies by integrating predictive skill development into the curriculum. Third, educators must be given opportunities to learn various life skills needed to face future challenges. These life skills include critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and stress management abilities, which educators can apply in an educational context and in their daily lives.

Developing educators in boarding schools is a shared responsibility of the community. To achieve this, the community, government, and educational institutions must collaborate to provide opportunities and resources that enable educators to develop themselves. Overall, this process will enhance educators' competencies and create a new generation of educators ready to face future challenges in boarding school environments. In this context, producing educators capable of addressing future challenges as experts in Islamic boarding schools is

an essential task in these times.

Education and politics are closely intertwined and have a reciprocal relationship. Political conditions influence the formulation of education policies. On the other hand, education through curriculum content (curriculum-based) and learning activities can serve as a vehicle for forming a political structure.

Principles and Indicators of Life Skill Development.

The orientation of life skills is to avoid an education system that is limited to mere formalities, standardization, and rigidity. The informality can be observed in the life skill targeting model. The development of the family living and youth development concept when implementing an education program for capable, competent children who value society. The life skill targeting model consists of several life skill ability factors. All factors are interconnected and integrated. Each factor refers to individual competencies required by their social environment. The life skill development construct is divided into eight indicators that serve as a reference for education programs, including:

Decision making:	The ability to make choices among alternatives, create a list of options before making decisions, consider the consequences of decisions to be made, and evaluate the choices already made.
Wise use of resources	Utilizing references, being useful, having a sense of responsibility, and prioritizing.
Communication	The ability to convey opinions, information, or messages to various people through conversation, writing, body language, and effective expressions.
Leadership	The ability to influence and explain something to various parties within a group.
Useful/marketable skills	The ability to become a worker and be needed by the job market.
Healthy lifestyle choices:	The ability to choose a healthy lifestyle for body and mind, avoiding illness and injuries
Self-responsibility	The ability to take care of oneself, respect one's behavior and its effects, and choose between right and wrong.

Life Skills Curriculum Development Principles:

According to the principles of life skill curriculum development, Islamic boarding schools are required to connect each subject to various aspects of life

skill education relevant to the students' milieu, educational setting, and the real world. With the development of the targeting model, it is anticipated that life skills can be developed in students from the beginning of their schooling by integrating life skill development into every subject. Not altering the current educational system.

1. The curriculum does not need to be changed, but it needs to be reoriented and integrated to emphasize life skills development.
2. The nation's socioreligious values can be incorporated into the educational process.
3. Learning is based on knowing, doing, being, and living together.
4. Using school/educational institution-based management to implement life skill education.
5. The surrounding area's potential can be reflected in the provision of education, in accordance with contextual education and broad-based education principles.
6. The learning for life and school-to-work paradigms can serve as the foundation for educational activities, fostering connections with the workplace and other relevant parties.
7. The purpose of education should always be to enable students to achieve a healthy and high-quality life, acquire extensive knowledge and insights, and have access to an acceptable standard of living.

This pattern is also a context-based learning process that enables students to learn how to apply the content of learning materials to the solution of everyday problems. In this model, a distinct form of evaluation, known as authentic evaluation, is implemented to assess the students' behaviour in employing their learnings.

Pesantren Strategies

Education serves many functions in shaping the lives of individuals and societies. Philosophically, its primary function is to educate learners through mental and rational processes, helping them to achieve and exemplify noble morals. From a sociological perspective, however, education carries two main functions: manifest and latent. The manifest function refers to the intended outcomes, such as developing intellectual abilities and acquiring knowledge. In contrast, the latent function pertains to education's unintentional or secondary consequences, such as fostering social relationships and promoting cultural awareness.

Economically, education plays a significant role in contributing to economic growth by enhancing employer productivity. It is important to recognize that capital investments do not solely determine a thriving economy; trained and competent individuals with high adaptability to new skills play a crucial role in keeping up with the ever-changing marketplace and economic structures.

To accomplish this goal, several strategies need to be implemented. Firstly, blending religious and secular subjects within the curriculum provides students with a well-rounded education and a diverse world perspective. This combination enriches their cognitive abilities, stimulates their curiosity, and encourages them to think creatively and critically. Secondly, promoting active learning through project-based and collaborative educational activities ensures that students remain fully engaged in the learning process. Students can communicate, collaborate, and create by incorporating group projects, hands-on exercises, and interdisciplinary tasks rooted in Islamic principles. This fosters creative problem-solving skills and strengthens their understanding of Islamic values.

Furthermore, it is essential to establish a supportive learning environment that encourages inquiry, exploration, and experimentation. Educators should be trained to foster open-mindedness and curiosity while creating trust and mutual respect. In this environment, students will feel comfortable expressing their ideas and emotions, especially in the context of their spiritual development.

This requires raising awareness and enlisting the support of all stakeholders, including the government, educational authorities, parents, and the community, to provide teachers with abundant opportunities and resources for self-improvement, life skill development, and competency enhancement. In doing so, we can effectively prepare a generation of capable successors to face various future challenges for graduates of Islamic boarding schools.

To achieve this objective, stakeholders should actively participate in developing comprehensive teacher training programs and opportunities for ongoing professional development. These should emphasize developing essential life skills, such as critical thinking, effective communication, collaboration, and emotional and stress management, as well as enhancing their instructional abilities. In addition, stakeholders must work together to develop a curriculum that balances religious teachings with practical knowledge and contemporary skill sets. This will contribute to the holistic development of both educators and students, resulting in a more solid foundation for overcoming future challenges.

It is essential to invest in state-of-the-art facilities, tools, and resources that enable teachers to reach their full potential and regularly update their knowledge and skills in accordance with evolving global trends. By doing so, we can ensure

a sustainable environment that fosters our educators' ongoing growth and development. To provide teachers with ample opportunities and resources for self-improvement, development of life skills, and skill development, all stakeholders must be aware of and supportive of this need. This collaborative effort will ultimately equip graduates of Islamic boarding schools with the skills and knowledge required to face future challenges, resulting in a more prepared generation of successors.

Maintaining strong ties with the community and actively involving parents in the educational process is crucial. By introducing Islamic creative arts, such as calligraphy, architecture, and poetry, and encouraging participation in volunteer and outreach programs, students can experience the connection between creativity, spirituality, and social responsibility. This involvement assists in establishing a balance between individual growth and collective well-being, which is essential for the holistic development of students.

Pesantren is a community-based educational institution that uniquely blends science and religion in its curriculum. Its orientation in establishing life skills is to fulfill society's needs for life skills that teach science and technology while balancing it with religious education. However, society still judges individuals who pursue life skills education outside the Pesantren and national curriculum without religious input as weak in religious knowledge and behaviour.

Pesantren Life Skills Curriculum Model

To manage and develop the curriculum effectively, Pesantren acknowledges that the national curriculum is still lacking in achieving its vision and mission. To overcome this, the Pesantren curriculum involves stakeholders from the business and industrial world as well as alumni. This involvement yields advantages for students in acquiring productive, up-to-date subject knowledge.

It also facilitates work training, apprenticeship, and even job placements after graduation. The alignment of the curriculum with stakeholders' aspirations is essential for Pesantren as it ensures the curriculum is relevant to the community's current and future needs. The involvement of business and industrial stakeholders influences the curriculum development to balance the preparation for both life and work. The type of jobs and companies in society require adequate preparation from Pesantren.

Stakeholder involvement in the curriculum development process at Pesantren provides the appropriate result based on the stakeholder's position. Involving stakeholders from the business and industrial world outside of Islamic

education improves the institution's image, cultivating a working culture based on performance as applied in the world of work and business. The working ethos of teachers and employees also improves, leading to a shorter waiting period for graduates to obtain a job, increasing the trust of stakeholders.

Planning life skill curriculum development in Islamic boarding schools uses a bottom-up planning approach, which is more suitable for operational planning. Life skill curriculum development planning considers the needs of graduate users and institutions that require input from the boarding school community.

The organization of the life skill curriculum development integrates the national curriculum with extracurricular values and activities in Islamic boarding schools to achieve maximum life skill outcomes. The life skill curriculum development results are reflected in the syllabus and lesson plans. Life skill development implementation occurs during lectures, counselling guidance, soft skill development through extracurricular activities, and activities at the boarding school.

Monitoring and Evaluation (Monev) activities are carried out internally and externally based on the boarding school. The role of Islamic boarding schools in life skill curriculum development includes organizing activities aimed at developing monotheistic life skills, Sharia-based life skills, and noble character-based life skills. Based on this research, it is suggested that boarding school leaders synergize the curriculum and activities with the existing curriculum and activities in the boarding school. Teachers and boarding school administrators should continue to improve their performance and religious knowledge. Boarding school leaders are expected to provide ongoing support through productive, effective, and measurable policies.

The establishment of education around Pesantren offers an alternative education by removing the dichotomy between intellectual dimension development and the dimension of attitude or personality in the educational process. It paves the way for the creation of a highly competent and well-rounded individual capable of contributing their talents to society.

The evolution of Pesantren over time demonstrates an increasingly dynamic approach to education that remains pertinent for students while remaining rooted in spiritual principles. In this context, integrating Islamic teachings with contemporary pedagogy provides students with the necessary skills for future success.

CONCLUSION

The cultivation of life skill curricula within Islamic boarding schools encompasses many dimensions, such as meticulous planning methodologies,

harmonization of national educational frameworks with extracurricular endeavours, and the execution of genuine evaluative measures in conjunction with vigilant assessments. Furthermore, fostering synergistic alliances with the community, uplifting pedagogical proficiency and spiritual erudition, and endorsing efficacious policies by the vanguards of boarding schools remain paramount in this educational landscape.

Life skill curriculum development in Islamic boarding schools adopts a bottom-up planning approach, accommodating the needs of graduates and institutions while integrating the national curriculum with extracurricular values and activities. Implementation occurs through lectures, counselling, soft skill enrichment, and boarding school activities. Monitoring and evaluation are performed internally and externally to develop life skills rooted in monotheism, Sharia, and noble character. To optimize results, boarding school leaders should synergize the curriculum with existing activities, encourage teachers and administrators to enhance their performance and religious knowledge and support productive, effective, and measurable policies.

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