

Integrating Ideological, Philosophical, and Sociological Foundations in Arabic Language Curriculum Development: A Case Study at an Islamic Junior High School

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study analyses how ideological, philosophical, and sociological foundations are integrated in developing the Arabic language curriculum at MTs Muhammadiyah Tanjungsari, and how that integration shapes the curriculum's objectives, materials, and learning processes and its relevance to students and society. **Methodology:** A qualitative single-case study was conducted at one madrasah. Data were drawn from eight purposively selected informants, classroom observations, and curriculum documents, using an interview guide, an observation protocol, and a document checklist. Data were analyzed with the Miles and Huberman interactive model (condensation, display, conclusion), with trustworthiness supported by triangulation, member checking, an audit trail, and reflexivity. **Main Findings:** The curriculum rests on three interlocking foundations: an ideological foundation (religious, national, and national-education values) that sets direction; a philosophical foundation (Islamic, progressivist, and constructivist) that shapes objectives, materials, and a student-centred process; and a sociological foundation that keeps the curriculum relevant to learners and society. Their integration is summarized in a proposed conceptual model linking the three foundations to curriculum components. **Novelty/Originality of this study:** Whereas prior studies examine these foundations separately, this study treats them as one integrated framework and offers a conceptual model of their interaction in Arabic curriculum development at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level, providing curriculum developers and teachers with a practical lens for designing a relevant, value-based, and competence-oriented Arabic curriculum.



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A. Introduction

The curriculum is a foundational component of education because it guides the determination of learning objectives, content, processes, and evaluation. In Islamic education, curriculum development is oriented not only toward academic competence but also toward the values that underpin educational practice (Amarulloh et al., 2026). Arabic occupies a distinctive place in this setting, since it is at once a school subject, the language of the primary sources of Islam, and a medium through which religious and ethical values are transmitted (Hilmy, 2025; Rohmawati & Hidayat, 2025). How an Arabic curriculum is grounded therefore has consequences that extend well beyond linguistic attainment.

At MTs Muhammadiyah Tanjungsari, a preliminary review of curriculum documents and initial observation identified three concrete problems that motivate this study. First, the existing Arabic curriculum emphasises linguistic and cognitive competence, while the value and character dimensions are not yet systematically integrated into objectives and materials

(Baiti et al., 2025). Second, the philosophical basis that should orient learning is not explicitly articulated in the curriculum documents, so the link between stated aims and classroom practice is weak (Hermawan, 2011). Third, social change, technological development, and shifting community needs are not yet fully reflected in the curriculum, which makes some learning experiences less relevant to students' lives (Imamuddin, 2025). These site-level observations, rather than general assumptions, frame the present investigation.

Research on Arabic curriculum development has approached the educational foundations from several angles, but largely in isolation. One strand stresses the ideological dimension, arguing that madrasah Arabic curricula should strengthen communicative competence without abandoning Islamic values and identity (Qomariyah, 2022; Wulandari & Fauzi, 2021). A second strand foregrounds the philosophical dimension, showing that the philosophy of education shapes the orientation of learning objectives so that they address character as well as language (Aufa, 2025; Nasution, 2016). A third strand emphasises the sociological dimension, contending that curricula must respond to learners' needs and societal change to remain contextual and meaningful (Muradi & Taufiqurrahman, 2021; Rosdiana et al., 2024).

Taken together, these literatures establish that a sound Arabic curriculum requires firm foundations, yet they share a common limitation: each foundation is typically analysed on its own. Studies that examine the ideological, philosophical, and sociological foundations as a single, interacting system in Arabic curriculum development remain scarce, particularly at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level (Nurfauzan et al., 2026; Saimulani et al., 2025). This is a substantive gap, because the three foundations are interdependent in practice: ideology sets direction, philosophy translates that direction into a view of the learner and the learning process, and sociology keeps both relevant to context (Aziz, 2023). The absence of integrated accounts leaves curriculum developers without a clear picture of how the foundations work together.

Accordingly, this study is guided by three research questions. RQ1: What ideological foundations underlie the development of the Arabic language curriculum at MTs Muhammadiyah Tanjungsari? RQ2: How are philosophical foundations related to, and implemented in, the formulation of the curriculum's objectives, materials, and learning process? RQ3: How are the ideological, philosophical, and sociological foundations integrated, and how does that integration shape the curriculum's relevance to students and society?

The novelty of the study lies in treating the three foundations as one integrated framework rather than as separate topics, and in presenting, in the discussion, a conceptual model that links each foundation to the curriculum's objectives, materials, and processes. The objectives are correspondingly threefold: to identify the ideological foundations, to explain the relationship and implementation of the philosophical foundations, and to analyse the integration of all three and its relevance to students and society. The remainder of the article sets out the method, reports the findings for each research question with supporting evidence, discusses them against theory and prior work through the proposed model, and concludes with limitations and implications.

A second consideration that motivates this study concerns the position of the madrasah within Indonesia's plural educational landscape. As an institution affiliated with Muhammadiyah, MTs Muhammadiyah Tanjungsari operates simultaneously under a national regulatory framework and within a distinctive tradition of Islamic reformism that prizes both religious commitment and openness to modern knowledge (Supardi et al., 2024). This dual

location makes the school a particularly instructive case for studying how educational foundations are negotiated, because the very tensions that a curriculum must reconcile, between fidelity to religious sources and responsiveness to a changing society, are present in concentrated form. Where earlier discussions of Arabic curriculum tend to treat such tensions abstractly, the present study locates them in the concrete decisions of one institution about objectives, materials, and the conduct of lessons.

The choice of Arabic as the subject through which to examine these foundations is deliberate rather than incidental. Unlike subjects whose content is comparatively neutral with respect to identity, Arabic carries a layered significance: it is at once a communicative skill to be mastered, the vehicle of the Qur'an and the classical scholarly tradition, and a marker of belonging within the Muslim community (Hilmy, 2025; Rohmawati & Hidayat, 2025). A curriculum that treats Arabic merely as a foreign language risks stripping it of the religious and cultural meanings that give it purpose in a madrasah, whereas one that treats it only as a devotional instrument risks neglecting the communicative competence that contemporary learners need (Qomariyah, 2022). The educational foundations are therefore not a matter of theory alone but of how a school resolves, in practice, competing conceptions of what Arabic is for.

Finally, the study responds to a practical need felt by curriculum developers and teachers themselves. Recent work has emphasised that curriculum design at the madrasah level is too often guided by inherited routine rather than by an explicit account of the bases on which decisions rest, with the result that documents and classroom practice drift apart (Imamuddin, 2025; Nurfauzan et al., 2026). By making the ideological, philosophical, and sociological foundations visible and by showing how they interact, this study aims to give practitioners a usable framework for diagnosing where a curriculum is well grounded and where it is not. The contribution is thus both scholarly, in offering an integrated reading of the foundations, and applied, in furnishing a lens that can inform the design and revision of Arabic curricula in comparable settings (Putri et al., 2026; Hendri et al., 2026).

It is also worth situating the present inquiry against the recent expansion of digital media in language education. Studies of Arabic teaching increasingly stress that learners now encounter the language in mediated, networked environments, and that a curriculum which ignores this shift risks becoming detached from the contexts in which learners actually read, listen, and communicate (Syagif, 2023; Umam et al., 2025; Abdullah & Rachman, 2026). Empirical studies in Indonesian madrasah and pesantren settings have begun to document how interactive, game-based, and augmented-reality tools can support Arabic learning while raising questions about their fit with the pesantren's pedagogical tradition (Abdullah et al., 2025; Risbiyantoro et al., 2026). For a madrasah, this raises a particular question: how can the integration of digital tools serve, rather than dilute, the religious and value-laden purposes that define Arabic learning in such a setting? By examining how the sociological foundation operates alongside the ideological and philosophical foundations, the study is positioned to address this question with evidence from practice rather than from assumption.

Taken as a whole, then, the study is framed by three convergent needs: a scholarly need to read the educational foundations as an interacting system rather than in isolation, a contextual need to understand how a reformist madrasah reconciles religious and contemporary demands in its Arabic curriculum, and a practical need for a framework that can guide the design and revision of such curricula. These needs jointly justify the single-case design adopted here, which trades breadth of coverage for depth of understanding and so

makes it possible to trace the foundations through the fine grain of one institution's objectives, materials, and lessons (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

B. Methods

Research design

This study used a qualitative approach within a single-case study design, because its aim was to understand, in depth and in context, how the ideological, philosophical, and sociological foundations are integrated in Arabic curriculum development at one madrasah (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case was bounded as the Arabic curriculum of MTs Muhammadiyah Tanjungsari during the 2025/2026 academic year, and fieldwork was conducted over approximately three months. A descriptive case-study design was appropriate because the object of study is a contemporary practice that cannot be separated from its institutional setting, and because the research sought meaning and process rather than measurement or generalisation to a population.

Site and participants

The site was selected purposively as a Muhammadiyah madrasah that operates within the national education system and offers a structured Arabic programme, making it an information-rich case for examining the educational foundations. Eight informants were selected purposively on the basis of their direct involvement in, and knowledge of, the curriculum, and recruitment continued until no substantively new information emerged (data saturation). The informant profile is summarised in Table 1, and each informant is referred to by an anonymised code to protect confidentiality.

Table 1. Profile of informants (n = 8)

Code	Role	n	Primary data obtained
P	Principal	1	Policy direction and institutional vision (interview)
VPC	Vice-principal for curriculum	1	Curriculum design rationale (interview)
T1–T4	Arabic language teachers	4	Objectives, materials, classroom practice (interviews, observation)
S1–S2	Other curriculum stakeholders	2	Supporting perspectives on implementation (interviews)

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2025/2026

Data collection

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, using primary and secondary sources. Primary data came from semi-structured interviews and from non-participant classroom observation; secondary data came from curriculum documents, syllabi, teaching modules, semester programmes, and relevant regulations (Moleong, 2018). Three instruments were used: an interview guide organised around the three foundations and the curriculum components; an observation protocol focused on how the foundations appeared in classroom practice; and a document checklist mapping each document to the foundation and curriculum component it informed. The instruments were validated through expert judgement by two specialists in Arabic curriculum, and the mapping of sources to research questions is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Mapping of data sources and instruments to the research questions

Research question	Primary source(s)	Instrument(s)
RQ1 (ideological)	Curriculum documents; interviews (P, VPC, teachers)	Document checklist; interview guide
RQ2 (philosophical)	Documents; interviews; classroom observation	Document checklist; interview guide; observation protocol
RQ3 (integration)	Documents; interviews; observation (triangulated)	All three instruments

Source: Authors' construction

In total, eight interviews (each approximately 45–60 minutes), six classroom observations, and a set of fifteen curriculum-related documents were collected. Interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed; observations were recorded with field notes against the protocol; and documents were catalogued and annotated using the checklist. Collecting evidence through three techniques allowed each claim to be examined from more than one source.

Data analysis

Data were analysed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which comprises three concurrent flows: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Analysis proceeded in explicit steps. Transcripts, field notes, and document annotations were first read in full; meaning units were then coded, beginning with three deductive categories derived from the research questions (ideological, philosophical, sociological) and allowing inductive sub-codes to emerge (for example, 'religious moderation' or 'student-centred process'). Codes were grouped into categories and displayed in matrices that juxtaposed evidence from interviews, observations, and documents, after which themes were derived and conclusions verified against the data. An illustrative coding decision and its supporting evidence were retained in the audit trail for each theme.

Trustworthiness and research ethics

Trustworthiness was addressed against the four established criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was supported by source triangulation (interviews, observation, documents), technique triangulation, and member checking, in which key informants reviewed the summarised findings. Dependability and confirmability were supported by an audit trail documenting instrument design, coding decisions, and category revisions, and by peer debriefing with a colleague outside the project. Transferability is supported by the thick description of the case and the transparent account of informants and sources in Tables 1 and 2. The researchers also recorded reflexivity notes on their prior assumptions about Islamic education so that these could be examined rather than imposed. Ethically, institutional permission was obtained from the madrasah, informants gave informed consent, participation was voluntary, and identities were anonymised.

C. Result and Discussion

Findings

This section reports the findings for each research question, drawing on the interviews, classroom observations, and curriculum documents. To keep description separate from interpretation, the findings are stated here as patterns in the data with their evidentiary basis indicated in parentheses; their interpretation against theory and prior work is reserved for the Discussion. Where a verbatim excerpt would strengthen a claim, a marked placeholder

indicates the point at which the authors should insert the relevant quotation from their transcripts or documents.

Ideological foundations of the Arabic curriculum

Analysis of the curriculum documents and interviews indicated that the Arabic curriculum rests on three ideological strands: religious, national, and national-education ideology (document analysis; interviews, VPC and Arabic teachers). The religious strand positions Arabic as the gateway to the sources of Islam, so that objectives consistently couple linguistic mastery with the ability to understand religious texts (document analysis). Learning materials combine linguistic components, namely *mufradat*, *qawa'id*, *istima'*, *kalam*, *qira'ah*, and *kitabah*, with themes such as worship, morality, family, and social life, which positions the language as a medium for internalising values as well as for communication (document analysis; observation). [Insert verbatim excerpt from an interview on the religious orientation of the curriculum here.]

The national strand was evident in the way informants framed Arabic as a foreign language taught without diminishing national identity; materials were reported to foreground tolerance, religious moderation, and respect for diversity, consistent with the values of Pancasila and national education (interviews, principal and VPC; document analysis). The national-education strand appeared in a stated shift from a structural toward a communicative orientation and in references to twenty-first-century competencies in the curriculum's aims (document analysis; observation). Across these strands the data converge on a single pattern: the ideological foundation gives the curriculum its direction, binding language learning to the formation of religious and national character.

A closer reading of the documents showed that the religious strand was not confined to the choice of themes but extended to the way competence itself was defined. Across the syllabi and teaching modules, the stated outcomes repeatedly paired a linguistic objective with a religious or moral one, so that, for example, the ability to read a short text was linked to the ability to draw a moral lesson from it (document analysis). Teachers described this pairing as deliberate, explaining that a lesson was considered complete only when learners had engaged both the form of the language and the meaning it carried for their conduct (interviews, T1-T4). This pattern indicates that the ideological commitment to Arabic as the gateway to the sources of Islam was embedded in the architecture of the objectives rather than added as a supplementary aim.

The national and national-education strands were similarly traceable in concrete features of the curriculum rather than in general statements alone. Materials selected for classroom use foregrounded themes of cooperation, tolerance, and respect for difference, and informants connected these explicitly to the values of Pancasila and to the school's responsibility as part of the national system (interviews, principal and VPC; document analysis). At the same time, the curriculum's aims referred to communicative ability and to competencies associated with the twenty-first century, signalling an orientation that looked beyond grammatical mastery toward the capacity to use the language in real situations (document analysis; observation). Read together, the three strands did not compete but reinforced one another, with the religious strand supplying ultimate purpose, the national strand supplying a frame of citizenship and moderation, and the national-education strand supplying a contemporary, competence-oriented direction.

A further pattern in the documents concerned the sequencing of competence and value across the levels of the programme. Lower-level materials tended to introduce vocabulary

and simple structures through everyday and devotional themes, while higher-level materials moved toward longer texts in which moral and religious reflection became more explicit (document analysis). Teachers described this progression as intentional, explaining that the religious purpose of the curriculum was meant to deepen as learners' linguistic capacity grew, rather than being concentrated at any single point (interviews, T1-T4). This developmental sequencing reinforces the reading that the ideological foundation shaped the whole arc of the curriculum and not merely the choice of individual topics.

Finally, the documents and interviews together indicated that the ideological strands were reinforced, rather than diluted, by the school's assessment practices. Informants reported that evaluation attended not only to linguistic accuracy but also to learners' engagement with the moral and religious meaning of texts, so that the criteria by which competence was judged carried the same dual character as the objectives themselves (interviews, VPC and T1-T4; document analysis). This alignment between aims and assessment suggests that the ideological foundation was institutionalised across the full cycle of the curriculum, from the statement of objectives through the design of materials to the judgement of attainment.

Philosophical foundations in objectives, materials, and process

The data indicate that the curriculum draws on Islamic educational philosophy combined with elements of progressivism and constructivism, and that this philosophical base is visible in the three curriculum components (document analysis; interviews). In the objectives, the four language skills are tied to broader aims of character, faith, and identity, so that the goals are wider than those of general foreign-language teaching (document analysis). In the materials, themes are chosen for their relevance to students' lives and for the values they carry, reflecting a progressivist concern with experience alongside an Islamic concern with moral formation (document analysis). [Insert verbatim excerpt from a curriculum document or interview on objective-setting here.]

In the learning process, observation recorded a tendency toward student-centred methods, including group discussion, *muhadatsah*, language games, presentations, and simple communicative practice, consistent with a constructivist view of the learner as an active builder of knowledge (observation; interviews). Informants also reported that teachers integrate spiritual meaning into ordinary lessons, connecting topics such as worship or morality to students' daily conduct (interviews). At the same time, the data revealed a counter-current: some teaching still concentrates on grammar and memorisation, and constraints in media, teacher capacity, and the Arabic-speaking environment limit fuller implementation (interviews; observation). The philosophical foundation thus shapes practice strongly but unevenly.

The philosophical orientation was most clearly visible in the relationship between the stated objectives and the design of materials. Where the objectives named both communicative ability and the formation of character, the materials were organised so that linguistic content and value content were carried by the same texts and tasks, rather than being taught in separate strands (document analysis). Teachers reported choosing or adapting reading passages and dialogues partly for their suitability as occasions for reflection on conduct, which is consistent with a progressivist concern for learning that connects to experience and with an Islamic concern for moral formation (interviews, T1-T4). This convergence suggests that the philosophical foundation operated less as an abstract commitment than as a working principle guiding the selection and arrangement of content.

In the conduct of lessons, however, the data showed a more mixed picture that qualifies any straightforward claim of constructivist practice. Observations recorded genuine instances of student-centred activity, including pair and group work, short conversations, and simple presentations, in which learners were positioned as active participants rather than passive recipients (observation). Yet the same observations, together with teachers' own accounts, recorded a persistent reliance on grammar explanation and memorisation, which informants attributed to limited media, large classes, uneven teacher preparation, and the absence of a sustained Arabic-speaking environment (interviews; observation). The philosophical foundation was therefore real but unevenly enacted: the documents and the teachers' intentions pointed toward an active, meaning-centred pedagogy, while the conditions of practice pulled lessons back toward more traditional routines.

The unevenness of constructivist practice was not distributed randomly but tracked identifiable conditions. Lessons in which active, communicative methods were sustained tended to be those for which teachers had prepared supporting media and tasks in advance, whereas lessons that fell back on grammar explanation and memorisation tended to coincide with larger classes, limited materials, or topics teachers regarded as difficult to render communicatively (observation; interviews). Informants themselves drew this connection, attributing the gap between their intentions and their practice to capacity rather than to conviction (interviews, T1-T4). The finding indicates that the philosophical foundation's incomplete enactment is best understood as conditioned by practical constraints, a point the discussion takes up in accounting for where and why integration weakens.

Integration of the three foundations and its relevance

Reading the three foundations together, the data show that they are not parallel but interlocking in each curriculum component (document analysis; interviews). In the objectives, ideology supplies religious and national direction, philosophy adds the holistic development of the learner, and sociology requires relevance to societal needs, yielding multidimensional aims. In the materials, the same three pressures select themes that are at once value-bearing, developmentally appropriate, and socially relevant. In the process, communicative and student-centred activity (philosophy) carries embedded values (ideology) while being oriented to real contexts and, increasingly, digital tools (sociology) (observation; interviews). Table 3 summarises this integration as a matrix of the three foundations against the three curriculum components; it is this matrix that the Discussion develops into a conceptual model.

Table 3. Integration matrix of the three foundations across curriculum components

Curriculum component	Ideological (direction)	Philosophical (translation)	Sociological (relevance)
Objectives	Religious and national values; Islamic identity	Holistic development of the learner	Relevance to societal and career needs
Materials	Value-bearing themes (worship, morality)	Developmentally appropriate, experiential themes	Contextual, technology-aware topics
Process	Embedded spiritual meaning in lessons	Student-centred, constructivist methods	Communicative, real-context, digital practice

Source: Authors' analysis of interviews, observations, and documents

The data also indicate where integration is incomplete. Informants noted limited learning resources, uneven teacher professional development, and a residual focus on

grammar that can crowd out the communicative and social aims (interviews). These constraints qualify the relevance claim: the integrated framework is present in the curriculum's design and is partly realised in practice, but its full enactment depends on capacity that the madrasah is still building.

The interlocking of the three foundations was clearest when a single curriculum decision was traced across all three. The selection of a theme such as daily worship, for instance, simultaneously served the ideological aim of connecting language to religious life, the philosophical aim of grounding learning in students' own experience, and the sociological aim of treating a topic that remained meaningful in the learners' social world (document analysis; observation). Informants did not describe these as three separate justifications but as a single rationale in which the religious, developmental, and social reasons for a choice were felt together (interviews). This pattern supports the study's central observation that the foundations function as one system rather than as a checklist of independent bases.

The data also allowed the strength of the integration to be assessed component by component. Integration was strongest in the objectives, where documents consistently expressed multidimensional aims, and in the selection of materials, where value, developmental, and social considerations visibly coincided (document analysis). It was weakest in the learning process, where the sociological pressure toward communicative, technology-aware practice and the philosophical commitment to student-centred method were only partly realised because of the capacity constraints already noted (observation; interviews). The integrated framework was thus present throughout the curriculum's design but realised to differing degrees across its components, a finding that the discussion develops into an account of the conditions on which full enactment depends.

Triangulation across the three sources strengthened confidence in this component-by-component reading. Where documents asserted multidimensional objectives, interviews confirmed that teachers understood the aims in the same layered way, and observation showed at least partial expression of those aims in classroom activity, the three sources converged and the finding could be stated with confidence (document analysis; interviews; observation). Where they diverged, most notably between the documented intention of student-centred process and its partial realisation in lessons, the divergence itself became a finding, marking the learning process as the site where integration was least complete. The use of three techniques thus did more than corroborate claims; it located precisely the points at which the integrated framework held and the points at which it strained.

Considered together, the findings for the three research questions describe a curriculum that is coherent in conception and partial in execution. The ideological foundation gives it a clear and consistently expressed direction; the philosophical foundation supplies a defensible view of the learner that is faithfully reflected in objectives and materials; and the sociological foundation keeps the design oriented to learners' needs and to a changing, increasingly digital environment. The single recurring qualification is that the learning process, where the foundations must be enacted in real time, depends on capacities the madrasah is still developing. This pattern, rather than any single result, is what the discussion seeks to interpret and to formalise in the proposed model.

Discussion

The findings answer the three research questions and, read together, support a single claim: at MTs Muhammadiyah Tanjungsari the Arabic curriculum is best understood not through any one foundation but through the interaction of all three. This section interprets

each result against theory and prior studies, presents the integration as a conceptual model, and states the study's implications and limitations.

Interpreting the ideological foundation

The prominence of religious, national, and national-education ideology is consistent with accounts that treat the madrasah as part of the national system while remaining grounded in Islamic values (Nasution, 2016; Qomariyah, 2022). The study extends this work by showing how the three ideological strands operate together within a single Arabic curriculum rather than as separate commitments: the religious strand sets the purpose of reading the sources, the national strand keeps that purpose compatible with citizenship and moderation, and the national-education strand pushes the curriculum toward communicative, twenty-first-century aims (Supardi et al., 2024; Wulandari & Fauzi, 2021). Ideology, in this case, functions as direction-setting rather than as content alone.

This direction-setting role helps explain a feature of the case that might otherwise appear contradictory, namely the coexistence of a strong religious orientation with an explicit commitment to communicative, twenty-first-century competence. If ideology supplied content alone, the two might be expected to compete for space in the curriculum; because it instead supplies direction, the religious commitment can frame the purpose of communicative competence rather than displace it (Nasution, 2016; Supardi et al., 2024). The case thus illustrates how a madrasah can hold together commitments that are often presented as opposed, provided the ideological foundation is understood as orienting the whole rather than as a body of material to be covered.

The finding also refines accounts that treat moderation and national identity as external constraints imposed on religious education. At MTs Muhammadiyah Tanjungsari these values appeared not as limits placed upon the curriculum from outside but as part of its own articulation of what Arabic learning is for (Qomariyah, 2022; Wulandari & Fauzi, 2021). This suggests that, at least in reformist institutions of this kind, the national and religious strands of ideology are better understood as mutually constituting than as competing, a reading that has implications for how curriculum developers in similar settings might frame the relationship between faith and citizenship in their stated aims.

There is, finally, a developmental implication in reading ideology as direction rather than content. If the ideological foundation fixes purpose, then the gradual deepening of religious reflection observed across the programme's levels is not an addition to the curriculum but an unfolding of its direction over time (Amarulloh et al., 2026). This lends support to the view that value formation in Arabic learning is most coherent when it is built into the trajectory of competence rather than treated as a separate moral syllabus, and it offers curriculum developers a concrete principle for sequencing aims across levels.

Interpreting the philosophical foundation

The blend of Islamic philosophy with progressivism and constructivism echoes the literature on the philosophical basis of Arabic learning objectives and processes (Aufa, 2025; Sarip, 2022). The contribution here is to trace that philosophy concretely through objectives, materials, and process, and to show that its implementation is partial: the persistence of grammar-and-memorisation teaching, reported by informants, reflects a known gap between progressive curriculum philosophy and traditional classroom routine (Triani, 2025; Muhammad, 2024). This tempers any claim that a stated philosophy guarantees a corresponding practice, and it identifies teacher capacity and the language environment as the conditions on which implementation depends.

The partial implementation observed here is consistent with a wider literature documenting the distance between a curriculum's espoused philosophy and its enacted practice (Triani, 2025; Muhammad, 2024). What the present case adds is a more precise location of where the gap opens. The objectives and materials, which are largely shaped at the level of documents and planning, expressed the progressivist and constructivist orientation comparatively faithfully; the gap appeared chiefly in the learning process, which depends on real-time conditions such as teacher capacity, class size, available media, and the surrounding language environment (interviews; observation). Locating the gap in this way reframes it from a failure of intention into a problem of capacity that is, in principle, addressable.

This reading carries a methodological lesson for studies of curriculum philosophy. Because objectives and process can diverge, a study that examines documents alone risks overstating how constructivist a curriculum is, while a study that observes only lessons risks understating the philosophy that informs their design (Aufa, 2025; Sarip, 2022). The triangulation used here, in which documents, interviews, and observation were read against one another, was therefore not merely a technical safeguard but a condition for seeing the philosophical foundation accurately, since each source captured a different layer of the same commitment.

Recognising the gap as one of capacity rather than intention also reframes the policy response it invites. If the shortfall lay in the philosophy itself, the remedy would be to revise the curriculum's stated orientation; because it lies in the conditions of enactment, the remedy is instead to strengthen those conditions, namely teacher preparation, instructional media, and opportunities for authentic language use (Hendri et al., 2026; Muradi & Taufiqurrahman, 2021). The case thus suggests that, for this madrasah, investment in the translational layer of practice would yield more than further revision of already well-articulated aims, an inference that the implications section develops into concrete priorities.

Interpreting the integration and its relevance

The interlocking of the three foundations across the curriculum components supports the view that effective curriculum development rests on complementary rather than isolated foundations (Aziz, 2023; Sutrisno et al., 2026). Where earlier studies analyse one foundation at a time, the present analysis shows the foundations acting jointly in each component, which is the study's main empirical contribution. The relevance of the curriculum to students and society, often asserted in the literature (Putri et al., 2026; Rosdiana et al., 2024), is here shown to depend on the sociological foundation pulling the ideological and philosophical commitments toward contemporary needs, including digital media and intercultural communication (Umam et al., 2025; Syagif, 2023; Abdullah & Rachman, 2026).

The dependence of relevance on the sociological foundation also clarifies why integration was weakest in the learning process. Relevance is not secured once, at the level of aims, but must be renewed continually as learners' needs and the surrounding society change, and that renewal happens largely in the conduct of lessons through the choice of contexts, examples, and media (Rosdiana et al., 2024; Syagif, 2023). Where the conditions for an active, technology-aware pedagogy were missing, the sociological foundation could not exert its full pull, and the curriculum's relevance remained more a property of its design than of its enacted practice (Umam et al., 2025; Annas & Abdullah, 2026). This explains, without explaining away, the gap between the integrated framework on paper and its uneven realisation in classrooms.

Read against prior work, the case therefore supports the claim that the foundations are complementary while specifying the mechanism of their complementarity (Aziz, 2023; Sutrisno et al., 2026). It is not simply that all three foundations are desirable; rather, each performs a distinct function that the others cannot, and the weakness of any one shows up as a characteristic distortion in the curriculum, such as the drift toward grammar-only teaching when the sociological and philosophical pressures are not sustained in practice (Nurfauzan et al., 2026; Saimulani et al., 2025). This functional account is what the conceptual model set out below is intended to capture.

This functional reading is consistent with the broader argument that curriculum relevance is sustained through continual adjustment rather than secured at a single moment of design (Rosdiana et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2026). It also clarifies why the integration documented here should be regarded as a dynamic achievement rather than a fixed property: because the sociological foundation must keep testing the other two against changing needs, the balance among the foundations is liable to shift, and a curriculum that is well integrated at one moment may drift if the conditions that sustain that integration are not maintained. The conceptual model below is intended to make this dynamic explicit and so to give practitioners a way of monitoring it over time.

The case finally suggests that the relevance secured by the sociological foundation has both an outward and an inward aspect. Outwardly, it ties the curriculum to the communicative and digital realities of learners' lives; inwardly, it keeps the religious and philosophical commitments answerable to those realities rather than allowing them to harden into routine (Umam et al., 2025; Rosdiana et al., 2024). Understood in this way, the sociological foundation is not a concession to external pressure but the mechanism by which a value-laden curriculum remains alive to the world it is meant to serve, and it is this mediating role that the model represents as the relevance layer.

A conceptual model of integrated foundations

The integration documented in Table 3 can be stated as a compact conceptual model with three propositions. First, the ideological foundation operates as the directional layer that fixes the curriculum's values and ultimate aims. Second, the philosophical foundation operates as the translational layer that converts those aims into a view of the learner and a corresponding design of objectives, materials, and process. Third, the sociological foundation operates as the relevance layer that continually tests and adjusts the other two against learners' needs and societal change. The three layers are not sequential but simultaneous, and each curriculum component, objectives, materials, and process, is the joint product of all three. The model thus reframes the foundations from a checklist of bases into a working system, and it offers curriculum developers a lens for diagnosing which layer is weak when a curriculum drifts toward, for example, grammar-only teaching.

A second set of implications concerns method and the building of evidence. Because the study found that documents, teacher accounts, and observed practice can diverge, it follows that efforts to improve a curriculum should be informed by all three rather than by any one in isolation; relying on documents alone would have concealed the very gap in the learning process that the data identified as the priority for action (Moleong, 2018; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Schools seeking to strengthen their Arabic curricula might therefore pair document review with structured classroom observation and with teachers' own diagnoses, so that scarce resources are directed to the layer where enactment is weakest rather than to aims that are already sound.

Implications

Practically, the model implies that improving an Arabic curriculum requires attention to all three layers at once: clarifying values (ideological), making the philosophy of learning explicit in documents and teacher practice (philosophical), and building in mechanisms for keeping content relevant, including technology and teacher development (sociological) (Umam et al., 2025; Hendri et al., 2026; Pratama et al., 2025). For this madrasah specifically, the priority indicated by the data is the translational layer, namely strengthening teacher capacity and the Arabic-speaking environment, where the influence of learners' mother tongue on Arabic acquisition is well documented (Islami et al., 2025), so that the stated student-centred philosophy is realised in practice. Theoretically, the study contributes an integrated framework and model that future research can test in other settings.

It should be added that the conceptual model proposed here is offered as an analytic instrument rather than as a predictive theory. Its value lies in helping developers and researchers see which foundation is doing which work in a given curriculum, and so to diagnose characteristic distortions, rather than in forecasting outcomes; whether the model travels well to madrasahs with different traditions, resources, or regional contexts is an empirical question that this single case cannot settle (Saimulani et al., 2025; Sutrisno et al., 2026). Future studies that apply the model comparatively, across institutions that differ deliberately in capacity and orientation, would test both its descriptive reach and its usefulness as a guide to action.

Limitations

Several limitations bound these findings. The study is a single-case, descriptive design at one madrasah, so its findings are context-specific and are offered for analytical, not statistical, generalisation. The evidence rests on eight informants, six observations, and a finite document set gathered over one term, and analysis depended on the researchers' interpretation; although triangulation, member checking, an audit trail, and peer debriefing were used, independent inter-coder verification was not performed. The conceptual model is an interpretive proposal grounded in this case and should be regarded as a framework to be tested rather than as an established result.

D. Conclusion

This study set out to analyse how ideological, philosophical, and sociological foundations are integrated in Arabic language curriculum development at MTs Muhammadiyah Tanjungsari. In answer to RQ1, the curriculum is grounded in religious, national, and national-education ideology that together set its direction. In answer to RQ2, an Islamic educational philosophy combined with progressivism and constructivism shapes the objectives, materials, and a largely student-centred process, although implementation remains partial because of constraints in teacher capacity and the language environment. In answer to RQ3, the three foundations interlock across every curriculum component, and it is their integration that keeps the curriculum relevant to students and to society.

The study's contribution is to treat the three foundations as one interacting system and to express that system as a conceptual model of three simultaneous layers: direction (ideological), translation (philosophical), and relevance (sociological), which jointly produce the curriculum's objectives, materials, and learning process. The model reframes the foundations from a list of bases into a working system and provides curriculum developers with a lens for diagnosing which layer is weak when a curriculum drifts. For this madrasah, the evidence points to the translational layer, namely strengthening teacher capacity and the Arabic-speaking environment, as the immediate priority.

Because the findings rest on a single descriptive case, they are offered for analytical rather than statistical generalisation. Future research should test the model in other madrasahs and regions, combine documentary and interview data with classroom-based or comparative designs, and incorporate independent inter-coder verification, so that the integrated framework proposed here can be examined, refined, and, where necessary, revised against practice across a range of settings.

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