

MANAGEMENT OF MONTESSORI-BASED ARABIC CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN PRE-SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract: This research aims to analyze the management of Montessori-based Arabic curriculum development for pre-school students at Raudlatul Athfal An-Nidham Sumenep. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. Data were collected through observation, interviews and documentation. The results showed that the implementation of Montessori-based Arabic curriculum at RA An-Nidham involves careful planning, implementation in accordance with Montessori principles, and continuous evaluation. This research contributes to the development of Montessori-based curriculum in the context of Arabic language education at the early childhood education level.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis manajemen pengembangan kurikulum Bahasa Arab berbasis Montessori pada siswa pra sekolah di Raudlatul Athfal An-Nidham Sumenep. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa implementasi kurikulum Bahasa Arab berbasis Montessori di RA An-Nidham melibatkan perencanaan yang matang, pelaksanaan yang sesuai dengan prinsip Montessori, dan evaluasi berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada pengembangan kurikulum berbasis Montessori dalam konteks pendidikan bahasa Arab di tingkat pendidikan anak usia dini

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (ECE) is a crucial stage in a child's development that affects their future cognitive, social and emotional abilities. One effective method in early childhood education is the Montessori approach, which emphasizes child-centered learning, the use of concrete tools, and the provision of freedom in learning. Montessori preschool education significantly improves short-term emotional development in children aged 3-5 years compared to conventional education,

with respect, independence, community, and conflict resolution being key aspects.¹ Past studies have shown that Montessori education has a significant positive impact on children's academic and non-academic outcomes, especially in executive function, academic achievement, and social skills, compared to conventional education. In addition, Montessori education has a significant positive impact on children's academic and non-academic outcomes than traditional education methods. For example, in Vietnam, Montessori principles in Vietnamese preschools can optimize children's capacity and contribute to the nation's future development, but face challenges such as teacher training, high school fees, and misconceptions. Other research also shows that Montessori education outperforms traditional education in improving academic and non-academic outcomes, with larger effect sizes for non-academic outcomes.²

In the field of language, research shows that the Montessori method can improve students' vocabulary acquisition, especially in the aspects of meaning and pronunciation. It also increases students' confidence and participation in class.³ Montessori-based implementation in English language learning in some kindergartens and shows positive results in students' English language ability and performance.⁴ However, in comparison with traditional methods, studies show that Montessori methods are not always superior to traditional methods in foreign language learning. For example, there is no significant difference in student achievement between Montessori schools and traditional schools in learning English as a foreign language.⁵ Another study shows that the Montessori method is more effective than the play method in improving language skills in preschool students, especially in urban environments.⁶

While the Montessori method has been adapted in various educational institutions, including Raudlatul Athfal (RA), an early childhood education institution that focuses on Islamic education. One of them is Raudlatul Athfal An-Nidham Sumenep which adopts the Montessori curriculum in teaching Arabic. This is because Montessori learning effectively instills Islamic values in children. In early childhood through habituation, collaborative lectures, fun activities, teaching materials, and food served.⁷ The integration of Islam and Montessori is also applied in Bandung, which can be implemented in harmony, with Islam as the main foundation and Montessori as a supporting foundation in the reconstruction of the Islamic Montessori Curriculum at Rumah Bermain Kota

¹ Tebben, C. (2023). Montessori Education: A Study on the Impact of Montessori Preschools in Washington on Short-Term Emotional Development in Children. *Journal of Student Research*. <https://doi.org/10.47611/jsrhs.v12i3.4717>.

² Randolph, J., Bryson, A., Menon, L., Henderson, D., Manuel, A., Michaels, S., Rosenstein, D., McPherson, W., O'Grady, R., & Lillard, A. (2023). Montessori education's impact on academic and nonacademic outcomes: A systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 19. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1330>.

³ Amelia, T., & Ngadiso, N. (2020). Improving Vocabulary Mastery of Young Learner by Making Use of the Montessori Method. *English in Education*, 8, 156-165. <https://doi.org/10.20961/EE.V8I3.39596>.

⁴ Rizki, E., Azizah, N., Kusrini, R., Khoiriyati, S., Pesantren, I., Abdul, K., & Mojokerto, C. (2023). Applying Montessori Method To Improve Early Childhood English Skill. *Jurnal Darussalam: Jurnal Pendidikan, Komunikasi dan Pemikiran Hukum Islam*. <https://doi.org/10.30739/darussalam.v12i1.2421>.

⁵ Alaskar, H. (2017). The Montessori Method in Enhancing English As a Foreign Language Kindergarten Children's Learning: A Case Study. *Arab World English Journal*, 1-60. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/th.187>

⁶ Musa, R., & Adeyinka, A. (2021). School Environment and Methods of Teaching as Correlates of Language Skills Achievement of Pre-Primary School Pupils in Edo State Nigeria. , 4. <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/8gz2j>.

⁷ Windiastuti, E. (2022). Islamic Religion through Islamic Montessori Learning: A Curriculum Development for Early Childhood. *HIKMATUNA: Journal for Integrative Islamic Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.28918/hikmatuna.v8i1.4643>.

Bandung.⁸ Even so, teaching Arabic at an early age is important because this language is the language of instruction in many aspects of Islamic religious and cultural life. So from the description above, it is important to analyze how Montessori-based Arabic curriculum development management is implemented in RA An-Nidham Sumenep. Namely, it includes the planning process, implementation, to the evaluation of the monitoring process and follow-up of the implementation of the Montessori-based Arabic curriculum at the institution.

Pre-school Curriculum Management and Development

Pre-school curriculum management and development is essential to ensure children have a strong foundation in literacy, numeracy and life skills. Curriculum management and development is a structured process that aims to ensure the curriculum is effective, relevant and able to achieve educational goals. This process includes the stages of planning, organizing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the curriculum. If it is depicted in a table, it will appear as below:

Curriculum Planning	Develop learning objectives, content, and strategies that are in line with the development of science, the needs of students, the vision of the community, and the mission of the educational institution
Organizing	Organize source resources, forming team curriculum developers, and divide tasks and responsibilities systematically and collaboratively.
Implementation	Implementing the curriculum in the learning process, including the use of relevant methods, media, and assessments
Monitoring and Evaluation	Supervise, analyze constraints, and evaluate learning processes and outcomes for improvement sustainable

In developing the curriculum, a number of principles and approaches must be observed. First, comprehensive and systematic which means the process is carried out thoroughly, structured, and sustainable.⁹ Second, it is collaborative by involving various parties such as the government, principals, teachers, students, and the community.¹⁰ Third, it is adaptive and responsive because the purpose of curriculum development is to improve the quality of education.¹¹ The fourth principle is competency-oriented, which emphasizes the development of learners' knowledge, skills and attitudes.¹²

⁸ Julita, D. (2021). Islamic Montessori Curriculum Reconstruction. Indonesian Journal of Islamic Early Childhood Education. <https://doi.org/10.51529/ijiece.v6i1.240>.

⁹ Kasypul Anwar. "Management and Curriculum Development." (2018): 132-135. <https://doi.org/10.2991/ICCITE-18.2018.30>.

¹⁰ Elsa Sabrina, Muhammad Giatman and E. Ernawati. "Development of curriculum management in the world of education." Fair Value: Jurnal Ilmiah Akuntansi dan Keuangan (2022). <https://doi.org/10.32670/fairvalue.v4i10.1741>.

¹¹ Sofiatu Sobriyah. "Konsep Fundamental Manajemen Kurikulum dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Program Pendidikan." Harmoni Pendidikan: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan (2024). <https://doi.org/10.62383/hardik.v2i1.1016>.

¹² A. Adagale. "Curriculum Development in Higher Education." International journal of applied research, 1 (2015): 602-605.

Another theoretical fact is that recent research has highlighted the importance of the teacher's role, curriculum structure, and effective challenges and methods in pre-school curriculum implementation. Teacher involvement in pre-school plays an important role in curriculum development and reform, including evaluation and adaptation of the curriculum to the needs of the classroom. A bottom-up approach, where teachers are actively involved in curriculum change, is considered more effective than a bureaucratic top-down system.¹³ Another role of teachers is managerial skills, which affect teachers' performance and ability to develop the curriculum. Good managerial skills have been shown to improve prospective teachers' planning, communication and mentoring skills.¹⁴

On the other hand, the professional work of pre-school teachers can be hampered by a number of technical and non-technical factors. Lack of resources, inadequate training and time constraints, for example, hinder the effective implementation of the curriculum. More targeted support and professional development is needed to improve the quality of curriculum implementation.¹⁵ Other determinants of a curriculum's success include children's physical and mental health, family environment, teacher quality, and the content and form of teaching. Effective methods such as situation-based learning, games, demonstration and interactive assessment has been shown to be effective in supporting holistic child development.¹⁶

From the above description, it can be understood that pre-school curriculum management and development is an important foundation in shaping children's character, competence and readiness for the next level of education. This process must be carried out in a planned, organized and regularly evaluated manner, by promoting holistic, child-centered principles and involving all stakeholders.

Montessori Integration in Pre-school Arabic Language Teaching

In Indonesia, Arabic language subjects were specifically included in the school curriculum (primary, secondary, and tertiary schools) in 1976. In its development, the curriculum was revised in 1984, until it was finally included in the 1994 Curriculum, KBK, KTSP, and K13.¹⁷

The integration of Arabic language learning with the Montessori approach can also be said to be Islamic Montessori. The Islamic Montessori curriculum for pre-school combines Montessori principles with Islamic values, including the teaching of Arabic as part of the child's language and character development. The curriculum covers the five main areas of Montessori: Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, Mathematics, and Cultural Studies, all of which are aligned with Islamic

¹³ Reuben Sitonik Olkishoo, Francis Maina Gichuru, C. Khayeka-Wandabwa, Methody Florian Owaki, S. Wamalwa, P. Marinda and Tianxi Xu. "Preschool Teachers in Bottom-top Curriculum Change-Invigoration and Implementation." *Educational Process: International Journal*, 8 (2019): 222-232. <https://doi.org/10.22521/edupij.2019.84.2>.

¹⁴ "Reshaping the Preservice Preschool Teachers' Curriculum to Give the Emphasis to the Managerial Domain." *European Journal of Educational Research* (2022). <https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.11.3.1273>.

¹⁵ Mohamad Aidil Hazidi Bin Kasdiah, Mohd. Safwan Bin Saidin, Mohammad Aniq Bin Amdan and Naldo Janius. "Challenges of preschool teachers in the implementation of early children's curriculum." *International Journal of Science and Research Archive* (2024). <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijrsra.2024.13.2.2152>.

¹⁶ Yan Liu. "The Key Factors and Methods of Preschool Curriculum Teaching." *International Journal of New Developments in Education* (2023). <https://doi.org/10.25236/ijnde.2023.052321>.

¹⁷ Muzammil, A., Yunus, M., & Mohammad, N. (2023). إدارة المنهج لتعليم اللغة العربية في المدرسة. *Insyia: Journal of Arabic Studies*, 1(2), 1-12.

values.¹⁸ So in the context of Arabic, children are introduced to the Hijaiyah letters and Arabic language communicatively and intensively, with an approach that emphasizes independence and interest-based learning.

Montessori is an effective way to develop children's language skills with a comprehensive approach and in accordance with their developmental stage. The integration of Islamic values in the Montessori curriculum at RA An-Nidham also provides additional strength in shaping children's character through Arabic language learning. Furthermore, the integration of Arabic language learning Montessori-based refers to the application of Montessori principles in the process of learning Arabic, with the aim of creating a more active, independent and enjoyable learning experience. This approach can increase student engagement and help develop their academic potential.

The application of Montessori principles in Arabic language teaching shows that this method can have a positive impact in early childhood language learning. As explained by Lillard, child-centered learning allows them to learn through direct experience, which is very compatible with language learning. The integration of Arabic learning with the Montessori approach allows for a more natural and thorough development of language skills. By using tools and activities that support independent exploration, children can develop language understanding through fun, hands-on experiences. This in-depth and organized Montessori-based learning, when combined with contextualized Arabic learning materials, can have a positive impact on children's language development.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of how Montessori-based Arabic curriculum development management is implemented at RA An-Nidham Sumenep. This research was conducted at Raudlatul Athfal An-Nidham Sumenep, which is located in Sumenep district, East Java. The research subjects consisted of the principal, Arabic teachers and curriculum staff involved in curriculum development and implementation. Data was collected using three main techniques, including direct observation of classroom learning activities. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with principals, teachers and curriculum staff to obtain information related to curriculum planning and implementation. Documentation was also conducted by collecting documents related to the curriculum, lesson plans, and learning evaluation results. The data obtained were then analyzed thematically involving reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing as well as triangulation tests to ensure the reliability of the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Montessori-based Arabic Curriculum Planning at Raudhatul Athfal An-Nidham

¹⁸ Asmida, Mewujudkan PAUD Montessori Islam: Memadukan Metode Montessori dengan Nilai Islami, January 21, 2025. <https://bktki-dmi.or.id/archives/144>

Before starting learning activities, teachers must plan in advance so that implementation can be carried out effectively and efficiently.¹⁹ In the process of developing the Arabic language curriculum, it is necessary to improve the syllabus from existing conditions to better conditions. To achieve the goals of Arabic language learning planned by educational institutions, of course, good Arabic language learning management is needed and in accordance with the understanding of management itself.²⁰

Planning the Montessori-based Arabic curriculum at RA An-Nidham begins with identifying the needs and characteristics of the children. The curriculum development team designs a curriculum that matches with principles Montessori, such as the use of concrete aids (e.g. tactile letters) and independent learning. In addition, the curriculum also pays attention to the aspect of Islamic values taught through Arabic, so that children can learn while understanding religious teachings.

2. Organizing the Montessori Arabic Curriculum at Raudhatul Athfal An-Nidham

The organization of a Montessori-based Arabic curriculum for pre-school students involves the basic principles of the Montessori method that can be applied in Arabic language teaching. The aim is to create a learning environment that facilitates natural language development, based on each child's individual interests and rhythms. The Montessori method, developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, focuses on learning through hands-on experience, freedom within clear boundaries, and the development of independence.

In the context of organizing the Montessori Arabic curriculum for pre-school in RA. An-Nidham, uses a number of principles, namely: First, individualized learning where each child is given the opportunity to learn according to his or her abilities, without pressure to follow a uniform schedule or way of learning. Second, experiential learning. Language is learned through direct interaction with the environment, objects and activities, as well as through the experience of speaking, listening and interacting with others. Third, a flexible curriculum. The curriculum is designed to evolve with children's needs and interests. Children are free to choose the activities they want to do according to their developmental level. Fourth, the environment is well organized. The Montessori classroom is designed to stimulate exploration and discovery, with props that support language development.

3. Implementation of Montessori-Based Arabic Curriculum at An-Nidham

¹⁹ Muzayyanah, U., & Rauhillah, S. (2021). إدارة تعليم اللغة العربية في مدرسة المتوسطة معارف نهضة العلماء تنجونج ساري. IJ-ATL (International Journal of Arabic Teaching and Learning), 5(2), 202-216.

²⁰ Ernis Dhazulfa, Teguh Ridwan, Ahmad Nur Cholis, " إدارة تكامل المناهج التعليمية المحلية والدولية في تعليم اللغة العربية " بمدرسة الابتدائية (دراسة متعددة المواقع في المدرسة الابتدائية الكونتوري تولونج أجونج والمدرسة الابتدائية الإرشاد الإسلامية تولونج) Vol. 2 No. 1 (2023): 2nd International Conference On Islam, Law, and Society (INCOILS) 2022

The implementation of the curriculum at RA An-Nidham involves the use of Montessori tools such as sandpaper letters to introduce Arabic letters, as well as visual teaching materials that support children's understanding of language vocabulary. The teacher functions as a facilitator, giving children the freedom to choose learning activities that are interesting, but still within the boundaries that have been determined.

This Montessori-based learning allows children to interact directly with materials and gain real learning experiences. Montessori tools, such as flashcards, letter boards, and manipulatives, can be adapted to teach vocabulary, sentence structure, and listening and speaking skills in Arabic. For example, using picture cards to introduce the names of objects in Arabic or using letter boards to learn to recognize the hijaiyah letters.

In addition, RA. An-Nidham implements Arabic language learning through practical activities. For example, in Montessori everyday activities such as cooking, tidying or gardening are often used to develop motor and cognitive skills. These activities can be adapted to involve Arabic, for example by giving instructions in Arabic for the steps in the activity, so that children can learn the language while participating in practical activities. An outline can be described as follows:

Skills That Developed	Activities
Listening	1. Vocabulary Recognition: Using picture cards that include vocabulary in Arabic to help children recognize words and their meanings. 2. Stories and Songs: Children listen to simple stories in Arabic and songs that introduce basic vocabulary. This develops their listening skills, as well as introducing intonation and Arabic pronunciation.
Speaking	1. Simple Conversation: The teacher encourages children to speak in Arabic through simple conversations, such as naming objects, colors, numbers, or daily activities in Arabic. 2. Drama and Role Play: Uses role play where children can practice Arabic in situations similar to real life.

Reading	1. Hijaiyah Letters: Using Montessori teaching aids, such as Hijaiyah letter cards with shapes and textures, to help children recognize Arabic letters directly. 2. Gradual Reading Instruction: Children are taught to recognize letters and letter combinations first, then learn to combine the letters into words and sentences which is simple.
Writing	1. Drawing and Writing Arabic Letters: Children are provided with materials that allow them to write Arabic letters in a fun way, e.g. through sand or a blackboard with markers, which develops fine motor skills. 2. Independent Writing Activity: After recognizing letters, children are invited to write simple words in Arabic, related to objects around them.

4. Evaluation and Follow-up

Evaluation at Raudhatul Athfal An-Nidham is conducted systematically to ensure that the Arabic language learning process is effective, in accordance with Montessori principles, and can optimize the language development of pre-school children. Evaluation and follow-up carried out include:

- a. Evaluation of curriculum development management which includes evaluation of the learning process, evaluation of learning outcomes, and feedback from parents and teachers.
- b. Follow-up in curriculum development that includes revising and refining learning materials, improving teacher skills, increasing the use of learning media, and collaborating with parents.
- c. Long-term monitoring and adjustment by conducting annual evaluations or conducting classroom action research for teachers.

Evaluation is done by observing children's language development through various activities, such as conversation, letter recognition, and writing. Teachers record children's progress individually and use the results of the evaluation to plan further activities that are more suited to the needs of each child. In addition, evaluations are also conducted to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum and determine if there are aspects that need to be improved or adapted to the child's development.

CONCLUSION

From the description above, it can be understood that the management of Montessori-based Arabic curriculum development in RA An-Nidham Sumenep involves a careful, well-organized planning process with implementation based on direct experience, as well as ongoing evaluation. The integration of Montessori principles with Islamic values in the curriculum shows great potential in early childhood education, especially in Arabic language learning. This research is expected to provide insight into the management of Montessori-based Arabic curriculum development in Islamic educational institutions, as well as a reference for early childhood education practitioners and researchers who want to develop a similar curriculum in the future.

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