

Inequality of Arabic Subjects in the General Education Curriculum in Indonesia

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Abstract

The objectives of this study are 1) to describe the fact of inequality of Arabic subjects in the curriculum as a compulsory subject at the upper secondary education level, 2) to determine the inequality factors of Arabic subjects in the general education curriculum, and 3) to determine the implications of inequality in Arabic as the main subject. Graduates of general education who proceed to Islamic religious universities often encounter challenges in mastering Arabic. This may occur due to the absence of Arabic language subjects during their high school years, compounded by Arabic not being a mandatory component of the general education curriculum. This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research method. Data collection techniques include literature studies, and data analysis used are content analysis. The findings indicate that Arabic is not designated as a core subject in the national education curriculum for secondary education, highlighting the unequal treatment of Arabic within the Indonesian education system. This disparity's repercussion is evident in the challenges encountered by high school graduates when pursuing Arabic studies at Islamic Religious Colleges, stemming from struggles in grasping the fundamentals of the Arabic language. Arabic language learning in general education is only an elective subject in private schools affiliated with religious organizations. This results in students facing challenges in acquiring knowledge in Arabic and grappling with the complexities of learning Islam, particularly for Muslim students.

Keywords: Arabic; inequality; general education curriculum

Introduction

Arabic in the general education curriculum in Indonesia until now is not listed as a main or compulsory subject in public schools which are schools under the auspices¹. The position of Arabic in the curriculum is only as an elective subject². This illustrates the contrast between Arabic studies and other foreign languages like English, which have traditionally been incorporated into the general education curriculum as core subjects or institutional requirements. Arabic and English have an important role and also have the same role in Indonesia, namely as a means to understand and develop science and technology³. The management of educational institutions in Indonesia is managed by several ministries, but the main reference to the education curriculum must be based on the curriculum set by the Ministry of Education and Culture⁴. For example, if the independent curriculum is implemented by the Minister of Education and Culture, then all educational institutions under all ministries in Indonesia must follow the curriculum. However, when compared to educational institutions under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, there are some differences in the pattern and design of learning, considering that educational institutions under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs have more religious lessons than general studies⁵. Nevertheless, both groups of educational institutions have the same goal and carry out the mandate of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which seeks to form students who believe and fear God Almighty, are responsible, democratic, and have expertise in their respective scientific fields⁶.

Arabic has an important role in communication in the international world, considering Arabic is one of the international languages of the six official

¹ Muhaemin Latif and Erwin Hafid, "Multicultural Attitudes in An Islamic Boarding School of South Sulawesi, Indonesia," *Cogent Education* 8, no. 1 (2021): 1968736, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2021.1968736>.

² Mohammad Kosim et al., "The Dynamics of Islamic Education Policies in Indonesia," *Cogent Education* 10, no. 1 (2023): 2172930, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2023.2172930>.

³ Mahyudin Ritonga, Sri Wahyuni, and Hendri Novigator, "The Future of Arabic Language Learning for Non-Muslims as an Actualization of Wasathiyah Islam in Indonesia," *F1000Research* 12 (2023): 27, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.125760.1>.

⁴ Ritonga Mahyudin et al., "Arabic Language Learning Reconstruction as a Response to Strengthen Al-Islam Studies at Higher Education," *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)* 10, no. 1 (2021): 355–63, <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v10i1.20747>.

⁵ Toto Edidarmo, Achmad Fudhaili, and Muhammad Rizal Mahfuzo, "The Power of Spiritual Motivation: A Conceptual and Theoretical Review of Arabic Language Learning," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 7, no. 1 May (2023): 315–44, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v7i1.5629>.

⁶ Deden Ibnu Aqil, "Building Religious Characters Through a Biological Perspective," *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education* 2, no. 2 (2018): 167–76, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v2i2.29>.

languages used in the United Nations⁷. In addition, Arabic is also used as an official language in the Middle East and is spoken by more than 300 million people in the world⁸. Then Arabic is also a religious language used not only in Indonesia but throughout the world, especially Muslims who number more than 1.5 billion in the world⁹. This serves as the primary foundation that the government should take into account when contemplating the mandatory inclusion of Arabic language instruction at the high school level.

The dichotomy between general education and religious education in the education system in Indonesia is a factor in the emergence of inequality in Arabic as a core subject. Arabic learning is in fact in general educational institutions but the number is still very small because it is only limited to elective subjects (local content).¹⁰ As a very positive comparison, the religious education curriculum at the Ministry of Religious Affairs has consistently determined Arabic and English as institutional subjects from the beginning. Both foreign languages are considered very important because they are the language of international communication and a means of developing science and technology. Arabic is very popular in religious educational institutions because it is the basis for understanding Arabic texts¹¹. Nonetheless, Law Number 20 of 2003 regarding the education system does not incorporate or mandate Arabic language instruction as a core subject. It only stipulates English, Indonesian, religious education, and civic education as compulsory subjects. As a consequence, there is an imbalance regarding the status of Arabic as a core subject, particularly at the upper secondary education level¹². The impact is to produce students who cannot understand science in Arabic and are less tolerant. Arabic language learning at religious educational institutions in Indonesia produces alumni who are tolerant, pious, love the homeland and are far from

⁷ Ridwan Haruna, "The Urgency of Arabic in Understanding Islamic Shari'a," *Al-Syakhsbiyyah: Journal of Islamic Family Law and Humanity* 1, no. 2 (2019): 183–200, <https://doi.org/10.35673/as-hki.v1i2.489>.

⁸ Hasan Abidin, "Assistance in Strengthening Arabic Language Class XI MA Darul Faizin Catak Gayam Mojowarno," *Friday Education: Journal of Community Service* 4, no. 3 (2023): 134–39, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32764/abdimaspen.v4i3.4373>.

⁹ Muhammad Husni Shidqi and Adam Mudinillah, "Arabic Language Learning by Utilizing the Language Environment for Students in Higher Education," *Journal of Education and Development* 9, no. 3 (2021): 170–76, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37081/ed.v9i3.2807>.

¹⁰ Najwa M Aown, "A Place for Informal Learning in Teaching about Religion: The Story of an Experienced Non-Muslim Teacher and Her Learning about Islam," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 27, no. 8 (2011): 1255–64, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2011.07.005>.

¹¹ Alexander R Arifianto, "Islamic Campus Preaching Organizations in Indonesia: Promoters of Moderation or Radicalism?," *Asian Security* 15, no. 3 (2019): 323–42, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2018.1461086>.

¹² Pipit Widiatmaka, "Strategi Guru Dalam Membangun Karakter Nasionalisme Pada Generasi Milenial Di Era Digital," *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter* 13, no. 2 (2022).

terrorism and radicalism¹³. However, the current obstacle is that many graduates from upper secondary education then continue their studies at Islamic Religious Colleges. Even some alumni from high schools choose the Arabic Language Education Study Program (PBA) with the main reason of wanting to learn Arabic and love Arabic¹⁴.

A prior study undertaken by Pratama et al. in 2022 examined the learning challenges faced by graduates of public schools in the Arabic language education program at Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Madani Yogyakarta. The results showed that the obstacles experienced by public school graduates when learning Arabic in the Arabic Language Education Study Program were vocabulary **problems**, rule problems, word structure and not confidence¹⁵. The next research was conducted by Masnah and Ibrahim in 2023 on the analysis of Arabic learning difficulties for high school and vocational school graduate students in the Arabic Language Education study program, at the University of Muhammadiyah Makassar. The results showed that students who graduated from high school and vocational schools found it difficult to learn Arabic because of a lack of knowledge and basics about Arabic. In addition, the difference in GPA scores between high school and vocational graduates with Islamic boarding schools is very significant¹⁶.

This study diverges from previous research endeavours; while Pratama et al.'s research focuses on the challenges encountered by public school graduates pursuing studies in the Arabic language education program, the current study critiques the absence of Arabic subjects within the general education curriculum. Then the research conducted by Masnah and Ibrahim emphasized the lack of knowledge of high school and vocational graduates in learning Arabic in higher education while this study emphasized the criticism of the general education curriculum that did not contain Arabic subjects

This study has several objectives, namely 1) to describe the fact of inequality of Arabic subjects in the curriculum as compulsory subjects at the

¹³ Ismatu Ropi, "Comparative Religion, Tolerance and Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia," in *Islam, Education and Radicalism in Indonesia* (Routledge, 2023), 181–95.

¹⁴ Dewi Chamidah, Abdullah Sarif, and Syafiyatul Ma'udah, "Language Differences in the Quran and Their Implications for Arabic Teaching in Indonesia," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 7, no. 2 November (2023): 505–24, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v7i2.8376>.

¹⁵ Pratama, Nanda, Muhammad Syafii Tampubolon, and Khanafi Khanafi. "Learning Problems of Public School Graduate Students in the Arabic Language Education Study Program at Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Madani Yogyakarta." *JIPSI: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education and Science* 1, no. 2 November (2022): 117–24. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.59944/jipsi.v1i2.45>.

¹⁶ Masnan, Sulaeman, and Muhammad Ibrahim. "Analysis of Difficulties Learning Arabic for High School & Vocational School Graduates in PBA Study Program FAI Unismuh Makassar." *ULIL ALBAB: Multidisciplinary Scientific Journal* 2, no. 6 (2023): 2615–25. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.56799/jim.v2i6.1685>.

upper secondary education level, 2) to determine the inequality factors of Arabic subjects in the general education curriculum, and 3) to determine the implications of inequality in Arabic subjects as the main subject.

Inequity denotes disparity or unfairness leading to discrimination, thereby implying an imbalance¹⁷. The inequality of Arabic subjects in the curriculum raises various problems, especially the output of participants who do not know or speak Arabic so it is difficult to understand science or references that use Arabic¹⁸. Arabic in general is a science tool that can be used as an instrument in understanding and developing Arabic sources of knowledge such as the holy book of the Qur'an, the book of hadith and the book of Turats in various fields of knowledge¹⁹. Hence, it is evident that integrating Arabic language learning into the general educational curriculum, particularly at the high school level, holds significant importance as it can enhance academic prowess and broaden perspectives across diverse domains of knowledge²⁰. Arabic in linguistic aspects is divided into two, namely Fusha Arabic and Ammiyyah, Fusha is the original Arabic language used in the early days of Islam. Ammiyyah is an Arabic language that has changed in terms of vocabulary and structure²¹. Arabic is a language that brings the representation of Islam into the world of education²². The study of Arabic strengthens every Muslim to practice prayers and other religious values. The implementation of Islamic religious values is supported by Arabic language learning factors²³.

¹⁷ Nadila Dwi Adika and Farida Rahmawati, "Analysis of Gender Inequality Indicators and Their Relevance to Inclusive Economic Growth in Indonesia," *Ecoplan* 4, no. 2 (2021): 151–62.

¹⁸ Rosdiana Rosdiana et al., "Analysis of Non-Formal Education Curriculum Implementation Problems at LKP Pistar Medan," *Journal of Out-of-School Education* 15, no. 2 (2021): 71–79.

¹⁹ Saouma BouJaoude and Razan Nouredine, "Analysis of Science Textbooks as Cultural Supportive Tools: The Case of Arab Countries," *International Journal of Science Education* 42, no. 7 (2020): 1108–23, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/09500693.2020.1748252>.

²⁰ Abdulrahman Essa Al Lily et al., "Distance Education as a Response to Pandemics: Coronavirus and Arab Culture," *Technology in Society* 63 (2020): 101317, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2020.101317>.

²¹ Zahra K Mohammed and Nada A Z Abdullah, "Survey For Arabic Part of Speech Tagging Based on Machine Learning," *Iraqi Journal of Science*, 2022, 2676–85, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24996/ij.s.2022.63.6.33>.

²² Buhori Muslim et al., "The Arabic Language Contribution to The Istimbāt in Islamic Law of Acehese Scholars," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 6, no. 1 (2022): 224–43, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v6i1.11732>.

²³ Mahyudin Ritonga, Hendro Widodo, and Talqis Nurdianto, "Arabic Language Learning Reconstruction as a Response to Strengthen Al-Islam Studies at Higher Education," *Studies at Higher Education (January 23, 2021). International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)* 10, no. 1 (2021): 355–63, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v10i1.20747>.

The educational curriculum is interpreted as a set of learning systems consisting of regulatory plans, guidelines, objectives, and content of learning activities²⁴. The educational curriculum is a learning structure that is followed by students in the learning system²⁵. Creating a curriculum in an effective learning system needs to be followed by an understanding of the basic skills of learners²⁶. The educational curriculum is not only a learning material, but an overall experience that is expected to develop students' competence. The competencies in question are knowledge (cognitive), attitudes (affective), and skills (psychomotor).²⁷ Nevertheless, from a critical pedagogical point of view, the curriculum is inseparable from power and public interest, where education policies are uneven and neutral²⁸. In this context, the educational curriculum becomes a product that is dynamic, contextual and relative. Therefore, the curriculum is understood as a discursive practice that configures the learning experience²⁹.

This study uses a qualitative approach and the research method used is a descriptive method because it seeks to describe the fact of inequality of Arabic subjects in the curriculum as compulsory subjects at the upper secondary education level, factors of inequality of Arabic subjects in the general education curriculum, and the implications of inequality of Arabic subjects as the main subject. The data collection technique in this study is a literature study so the data sources come from journal articles, proceedings, research reports, books, dissertations, theses, online news, magazines, laws and regulations and so on.

Data analysis in this study used content analysis. Content analysis is a way to study indirectly related behaviour or phenomena through books, journal

²⁴ Johannes König et al., "General Pedagogical Knowledge, Pedagogical Adaptivity in Written Lesson Plans, and Instructional Practice among Preservice Teachers," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 52, no. 6 (2020): 800–822, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2020.1752804>.

²⁵ Brian Whalley et al., "Towards Flexible Personalized Learning and the Future Educational System in the Fourth Industrial Revolution in the Wake of Covid-19," *Higher Education Pedagogies* 6, no. 1 (2021): 79–99, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/23752696.2021.1883458>.

²⁶ Rashmi Shivni et al., "Establishing a Baseline of Science Communication Skills in an Undergraduate Environmental Science Course," *International Journal of STEM Education* 8, no. 1 (2021): 1–15, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-021-00304-0>.

²⁷ Gordon, William R, Taylor II, Oliva Rosemarye, and F Peter. *Developing the Curriculum: Improved Outcomes through Systems Approaches*. London: Pearson Education Limited, 2019.

²⁸ Khaeroni, Khaeroni and Sabri Sabri, *Implementation of the Independent Campus Learning Policy in Study Programs* (Banten: Media Madani, 2021).

²⁹ Norali Boulan, "The Recovery of Praxis in the Curricular Development of Teacher Training. The Case of the Province of Buenos Aires," *Praxis Educativa* 16 (2021), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5212/PraxEduc.v.16.16583.041>.

articles, music or songs, pictures and so on³⁰. Fraenkel and Wallen explained that the procedures in using content analysis are 1) determining objectives, 2) defining terms, 3) classifying content to be analyzed, 4) finding relevant data, 5) establishing relationships of data concepts related to research objectives, 6) drawing samples, and 7) categorizing³¹.

The research procedures in this study, namely 1) determine the objectives of the research studied, namely the inequality of Arabic subjects in the education curriculum in Indonesia, 2) define, namely the definition of inequality, Arabic, and educational curriculum, 3) classify the analyzed content, namely about the inequality of Arabic subjects in the education curriculum, 4) sort out relevant data related to inequality of subjects Arabic lessons and educational curriculum, 5) establish a relationship between the inequality of Arabic subjects and compulsory subjects contained in the education curriculum 6) draw samples related to policies or regulations related to the education curriculum in general education, especially in high schools 7) categorize to be analyzed, especially the inequality of Arabic subjects and compulsory subjects in the education curriculum in Indonesia, especially in high school, and 8) conduct analysis, and 9) draw conclusions.

Findings and Discussion

The Fact of Inequality of Arabic as a Compulsory Subject in Public Education Institutions

Arabic is an international language that is explicitly classified as an elective subject in the education curriculum system in Indonesia and only English is used as the main subject. Though Arabic has the same position as an international language that functions as a science of tools and science. In addition, the majority of students in general education institutions in Indonesia are Muslims or Muslims³². Arabic from a religious perspective (Islam) should be made a compulsory subject in general education institutions because Arabic is an integral part of Muslims in Indonesia and is aligned with English as the main subject in the general education curriculum³³.

³⁰ Milya Sari and Asmendri Asmendri, "Library Research in Science Education Research," *Natural Science: Journal of Science and Science Education Research* 6, no. 1 (2020): 41–53, <https://doi.org/10.15548/nsc.v6i1.1555>.

³¹ All the end of the earth.

³² Yunita Dwi Pramesti, Fahmi Gunawan, and Muhammad Yunus Anis, "Translating Arabic–Indonesian Captions on TikTok Social Media," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 7, no. 1 (2023): 181–202, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v7i1.6619>.

³³ Ahmad Nurcholis et al., "Strategies to Improve the Quality of Arabic Language Education at the Public Service Entity (BLU) State Islamic Higher Education," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 7, no. 1 (2023): 241–56, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v7i1.5707>.

In Law Number 20 of 2003 regarding the National Education System, particularly in Article 31 paragraph (1), it stipulates that the primary and secondary education curriculum must encompass religious studies, civic education, languages, mathematics, social studies, natural sciences, arts and culture, physical and spiritual education, vocational skills, and regional content³⁴. Then in paragraph (2) it is also explained that the higher education curriculum must contain religious education, civic education, and language. The regulation does not mention Arabic, which has a very important role in the development of science. This highlights the disparity in the treatment of Arabic language subjects compared to other subjects, resulting in students lacking proficiency in Arabic, particularly those progressing to the university level. On the other hand, article 35 of Law Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education also does not mention that Arabic is a compulsory subject, but the compulsory subjects are religion, Pancasila, citizenship and Indonesian³⁵.

The position of Arabic as an elective subject is a problem because the implementation of learning is very dependent on several things, namely first, the number of interested students must be enough for one class. Secondly, the availability of teachers of Arabic subjects. If only Arabic teachers are available while there are not enough interested students, then the selection of Arabic as a local content or elective subject cannot be done. On the contrary, the number of students interested is sufficient but there are no teachers, so the selection of Arabic as a local content cannot be carried out. This requirement is seldom met, resulting in Arabic being scarcely chosen as an elective subject in mainstream education. The schools that carry out Arabic language learning are generally private schools affiliated with religious organizations such as Islamic High School, Muhammadiyah High School and Nahdhatul Ulama High School. Thus, learning Arabic as local or elective content is a very weak position in the general education curriculum.

Learning Arabic as an important lesson for students in secondary general education institutions nationally is not implemented. Please note that graduates from Senior High School (SMA) then continue their studies at Islamic Universities which have certainly implemented Arabic learning nationally. As a result, general education alumni are less able to adapt to Arabic courses because it is new knowledge and feels unfamiliar to them. Thus, there exists a disparity between high school graduates and graduates of Islamic educational institutions

³⁴ Pipit Widiatmaka and Arief Adi Purwoko, "Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan Sebagai Wahana Untuk Membangun Karakter Toleransi Di Perguruan Tinggi," *WASKITA: Jurnal Pendidikan Nilai Dan Pembangunan Karakter* 5, no. 1 (2021): 171–86, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.waskita.2021.005.02.8>.

³⁵ Muhammad Hendri Nuryadi and Pipit Widiatmaka, "Democracy Education As A Vehicle to Anticipate the Development of SARA Politics in Elections," *Jurnal Paedagogy* 11, no. 1 (2024): 61–70, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.33394/jp.v11i1.9805>.

regarding their proficiency in Arabic language. This issue certainly poses challenges for Arabic instructors in Islamic universities. Therefore, maintaining inequality is unnecessary. By elevating Arabic to the status of a core subject akin to English, it can be anticipated that students from general education backgrounds, especially those attending Islamic colleges, will no longer encounter hindrances in mastering the Arabic language. They consider the inequality to be unfortunate and detrimental because Arabic is an important lesson

The inequality of Arabic subjects in the educational curriculum becomes a problem in the implementation of education, especially the output of the educational process, namely the competence of students is not optimal³⁶. Implementation of education that does not accommodate Arabic language learning. The Arabic learning model can be an alternative to educational development. Learning is ideally realized with the form of accommodation and participation of educational institutions³⁷. Such learning inequality is a process that not only provides differentiation in other subjects but is also a deprivation of rights owned by learners³⁸. Thus, inequality in learning provides space for discrimination against the process of educational development³⁹.

Even though Arabic is spoken internationally, Arabic has a wealth of standardized expressions with morphological complexity⁴⁰. Arabic as a language is intrinsically challenging, as is the presence of multi-dialects, and flexible and ambiguous syntax. This complexity is an aspect of the Arabic language that is difficult to understand properly⁴¹. It further asserts that Arabic encompasses intricate and structured linguistic expressions prevalent in literature, proverbs, and the Qur'an⁴². Nevertheless, Arabic is a language with deep meaning. The

³⁶ Srifariyati, "Qualifications of Qur'an Hadith Teachers in Madrasas," *Madaniyah* 5, no. 2 (2015): 271–95.

³⁷ Ismail Suardi Wekke, "Arabic Teaching and Learning: A Model from Indonesian Muslim Minority," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 191 (2015): 286–90, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.04.236>.

³⁸ Muallim Wijaya, "Management of Arabic Language Learning Synergy of Theory and Practice," *Al-Tanzim: Journal of Islamic Education Management* 1, no. 1 (2017): 1–18, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v1i1.24>.

³⁹ Abdul Azis, "Integrating the Value of Peace in Arabic Language Learning," *Shautut Tarbiyah* 18, no. 1 (2012): 12–28.

⁴⁰ Adnen Mahmoud and Mounir Zrigui, "BLSTM-API: Bi-LSTM Recurrent Neural Network-Based Approach for Arabic Paraphrase Identification," *Arabian Journal for Science and Engineering* 46, no. 4 (2021): 4163–74, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s13369-020-05320-w>.

⁴¹ Ariadi Muliansyah and R Umi Baroroh, "Maharah Kitabah Grammatical Interference and Its Causes in UIN Sunan Kalijaga Graduate Students," *Arabiyatuna: Arabic Journal* 4, no. 1 (2020): 37–48, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v4i1.1289>.

⁴² Duwairi, Rehab, and Ftoon Abushaqra. "Syntactic-and Morphology-Based Text Augmentation Framework for Arabic Sentiment Analysis." *PeerJ Computer Science* 7 (2021): e469.

meaning of Arabic is associated with the religion of Islam as part of the language of the Qur'an which contributes to the formation of religiosity⁴³. In this regard, understanding Arabic is not only concerned with international communication but also provides a deep understanding of Islamic values⁴⁴.

Curriculum change is important for the education system. This can answer educational needs and adjust learning dynamic.⁴⁵ Curriculum changes are based on the results of analysis, evaluation, prediction and various challenges faced internally and externally. In this case, three factors influence curriculum change, namely 1) freedom from colonialist rule. There is an awareness of the incompatibility of the education system with national ideals⁴⁶, 2) the rapid development of science identifies old theories that are still used, so it requires a new approach⁴⁷, and 3) population growth also has implications for the quantity of students who need education⁴⁸. Therefore, factors that influence curriculum change are seen as inter-integrated with educational development⁴⁹.

Factors of Arabic Inequality in the General Education Curriculum

Factors of inequality in Arabic in general education institutions as the main subject so far include; is the impact of the education system in Indonesia, namely the dichotomy between general education and religious education. Arabic tends to be understood as part of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subject so it is considered unnecessary to include its name (Arabic) as the core

<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj-cs.469>.

⁴³ Kamaluddin Abu Nawas, Abdul Rasyid Masri, and Alim Syariati, "Indonesian Islamic Students' Fear of Demographic Changes: The Nexus of Arabic Education, Religiosity, and Political Preferences," *Religions* 13, no. 4 (2022): 320, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040320>.

⁴⁴ Ambo Pera Aprizal, "The Urgency of Arabic Language Learning in Islamic Education," *Journal of Teacher Education* 2, no. 2 (2021), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47783/jurpendigu.v2i2.232>.

⁴⁵ Edy Suparjan, "Changes in the Curriculum of History Education in Senior High School (1994-2013)," *JISIP (Journal of Social Sciences and Education)* 4, no. 3 (2020), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.36312/jisip.v4i3.1283>.

⁴⁶ Murray Print, *Curriculum Development and Design* (NSW Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1993).

⁴⁷ Fareed Mohamed Nawastheen, "Educational and Curriculum Changes in Sri Lanka: In Light of Literature," *Muallim Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2019, 342–61, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.33306/mjssh/43>.

⁴⁸ Camille Kandiko Howson and Martyn Kingsbury, "Curriculum Change as Transformational Learning," *Teaching in Higher Education*, 2021, 1–20, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2021.1940923>.

⁴⁹ Muhammedi Muhammedi, "Curriculum Change in Indonesia: A Critical Study of Efforts to Find the Ideal Islamic Education Curriculum," *Journal Raudhah* 4, no. 1 (2016), <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.30829/raudhah.v4i1.61>.

teaching subject in the curriculum⁵⁰. Hence, relegating Arabic instruction solely to Islamic studies teachers is deemed insufficient. Additionally, Arabic is perceived as a language with a high level of complexity, characterized by intricate rules and structures, thus resulting in diminished motivation and interest among learners⁵¹. Finally, the teacher factor, meaning that professional Arabic teachers in public education institutions are not available, which is the reason for the inequality of Arabic as the main subject⁵².

Arabic language learning has until now become an important study at universities in various countries on five continents. On the European continent, for example in Germany there is an Arabic study center developed by Prof. Ecchehart⁵³. Germany is one of the countries that has a minority Muslim population. They are of the view that Arabic is an important language of science to understand for German citizens to interact with Arabic-speaking citizens of the Middle East. So Arabic for them is the science of communication tools, not just the language of religion.

The inequality of Arabic as the main subject in public education institutions in Indonesia is illogical and regrettable. It is a discriminatory policy because it is more concerned with other foreign languages than Arabic which is needed by Indonesian students and society. Arabic language learning is the right of all learners regardless of religion as non-Muslim children such as Jews and Christians learn Arabic in Arab countries and others⁵⁴. Arabic is recognized as a tool of science and part of Islamic civilization, so public education institutions under the Ministry of Education and Culture should be the same as religious educational institutions under the Ministry of Religion. The two ministries actually both carry out Arabic language learning as the main subject (institution) because students both need Arabic language learning, both as a tool science and as a skill. When viewed from the aspect of religious identity, the majority of public school students are Muslims.

⁵⁰ Muhammad Afthon Ulin Nuha and Nurul Musyafa'ah, "Implementation of Quality Management Curriculum in Arabic Learning," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 6, no. 2 November (2022): 417–38, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v6i2.5137>.

⁵¹ Idham Khalid Erlina and Ahmad Bukhari Muslim, "Integration of Prismatic Science and Development of Arabic Education Master Curriculum," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 6, no. 2 November (2022): 591–612, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v6i2.5024>.

⁵² Mohammad Jailani and Hendro Widodo, "Implementation of the Use of Neuroscience-Based Arabic Learning Media on Students: A Case Study at Vocational High School Muhammadiyah 3 Yogyakarta," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 5, no. 2 November (2021): 267–88, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v5i2.3136>.

⁵³ Nurshuhadah Zuhaidi and Hakim Zainal, "History of The Development of Arabic Grammar in The Western World by Orientalists in 16th-19th Century," *Abqari Journal* 25, no. 1 (2021): 63–79, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.33102/abqari.vol24no2.361>.

⁵⁴ Nur Hezbollah and Zaqiatul Mardiah, "The Problem of Teaching Arabic in Madrasah Aliyah in Jakarta," *Journal of Al-Azhar Indonesia Humanities Series* 2, no. 3 (2015): 189–98, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.36722/sh.v2i3.145>.

Arabic language instruction has been extensively, widely, and systematically implemented within religious educational institutions (madrasas). However, its presence in public educational institutions is not as widespread, primarily due to various factors. The importance of learning Arabic in schools⁵⁵, part of mastering foreign languages is one of the competencies that are indispensable for the future of students, including science, technology, and mathematics. Especially in an era of development that increasingly requires students to be able to adapt to global situations. Therefore, it is not logical if general education students only master Indonesian or English alone. Arabic is one of the most important foreign languages taught to students in public schools. However, there are still challenges that need to be overcome regarding Arabic language learning in this school, including the lack of teaching staff and also the determination of the appropriate curriculum.

Indonesian children should learn Arabic because it is widely used in the world in various fields. Arabic can help children's future by opening up opportunities for them to connect with hundreds of millions of Arabic speakers around the world. Arabic is the fifth most spoken language in the world, with more than 200 million *native speakers* and more than 400 million other users spread around the world. Arabic is important for international relations and global politics, especially for children who want to pursue careers in politics and international relations⁵⁶. Arabic is one of the six official languages of *the United Nations* (UN). The development of Arabic language learning is also important in the need for diplomacy at several international events. Arabic is needed by Indonesian students⁵⁷, compared to other foreign languages because the need for Arabic language skills is increasing. Today, many jobs in various industries require Arabic language skills⁵⁸. So Arabic lessons for students can prepare them with skills that will be useful to survive in the world of work.

Learning Arabic can introduce other cultures to students⁵⁹. Furthermore, it instills a sense of tolerance in children from a young age, especially pertinent in the face of increasing incidents of racism, radicalism, and interreligious crimes. By imparting Arabic language and culture, it signifies a more robust

⁵⁵ Fitria Sartika, Elni Desriwita, and Mahyudin Ritonga, "Utilization of Learning Media in Improving PAI Motivation and Learning Outcomes in Schools and Madrasahs," *Humanika* 20, no. 2 (2020): 115–28, <https://doi.org/10.21831/hum.v20i2.32598>.

⁵⁶ Nana Herdiana Abdurrahman, "Character Education in Islamic Boarding School-Based SMA Amanah," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 2, no. 2 (2016): 287–305, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v2i2.791>.

⁵⁷ Ahmad Izzan, *Arabic Learning Methodology, Cet. 4* (Bandung: Humaniora, 2011).

⁵⁸ Azman Ismail, "The Importance of Understanding Ma'na in Arabic," *Journal of Adabiya* 20, no. 2 (2020): 57–71.

⁵⁹ Nasrul Umam and Utami Budiayati, "Early Childhood Arabic Language Learning Based on Character Values," *Color Journal* 4, no. 1 (2020): 46–64.

preparation for the nation's future⁶⁰. What needs to be emphasized in learning Arabic in schools is that teachers must be able to make Arabic fun through the application of learning methods and media. Arabic is recognized as a language that is quite difficult to learn⁶¹, teachers can try to outsmart it by slightly modifying the teaching method. For example, by making games, group work, and other ways of teaching that are not boring. Teachers can teach children the use of Arabic first in everyday life⁶². After that gradually introduced the letters in Arabic. This way children will more easily recognize the letters in the vocabulary they have often used. Because Arabic is still quite rarely taught in public schools in Indonesia⁶³, the curriculum used is still diverse. Not infrequently, Arabic teachers themselves have to compile a learning curriculum in the classroom. The curriculum made by the teacher is not wrong, but sometimes the material taught is not by the times, because it is too focused on theory or because it never updates the curriculum.

Implications of Inequality in Arabic as a Key Subject.

Curriculum changes are important for the education system, the curriculum applied in the education system in Indonesia today is the independent curriculum. The curriculum will come into effect in 2022, after the issuance of the Decree of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Number 56 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for Curriculum Implementation in the Context of Learning Recovery. Curriculum changes can answer educational needs and adjust a learning dynamic.⁶⁴ Curriculum changes are based on the results of analysis, evaluation, prediction and various challenges faced internally and externally. Three factors influence curriculum change, namely 1) freedom from colonialist rule. There is an awareness of the incompatibility of the education system with national ideals⁶⁵, 2) the rapid development of science identifies old theories that are still used, so it requires a

⁶⁰ Teuku Sanwil et al., *Arabic Language Learning for Elementary / MI Students* (Aceh: Muhammad Zaini Publisher Foundation, 2021).

⁶¹ Syarifah Hanum and Rahmawati Rahmawati, "Implementation of a Functional Approach in Arabic Language Learning through Community Language Learning Methods," *LISANUNA: Journal of Arabic Language and Learning* 9, no. 2 (2020): 327–37, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.22373/lis.v9i2.6750>.

⁶² Andi Arif Pamessangi, "Optimizing Children's Early Intelligence Potential in Learning Arabic," *Tunas Cendekia: Journal of Early Childhood Islamic Education Study Program* 3, no. 2 (2020): 151–59, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24256/tunas%20cendekia.v3i2.1295>.

⁶³ Umam Mufti and Hendro Widodo, "Kurikulum ISMUBA Di SD Muhammadiyah Banguntapan," *Journal of Islamic Education and Innovation* 2, no. 1 (2021): 85–92.

⁶⁴ Suparjan, "Changes in the Curriculum of History Education in High School (1994-2013)."

⁶⁵ Print, *Curriculum Development and Design*.

new approach⁶⁶, and 3) population growth also has implications for the number of students who need education⁶⁷. Therefore, factors that influence curriculum change are seen as inter-integrated with educational development⁶⁸.

The most obvious and noticeable implication is when alumni of General Education (SMA) continue their education at Islamic Religious Universities (PTKI) which carry out Arabic language learning both as an institutional and expertise subject. Many inputs for Islamic higher education institutions (PTKI) originate from general education backgrounds before they are dispersed among various study programs, including the Arabic Language Education (PBA) program. Many general education (SMA) alumni are interested in continuing their studies at Islamic Universities. You can imagine how difficult the challenges of the Arabic learning system at PTKI are, especially for the input of general education alumni⁶⁹. Arabic as the main subject in general education is believed to be able to help the government in reducing the illiteracy rate of the Qur'an. Basic knowledge and skills of Arabic are needed by students in general education because as the majority of Muslims, they are very intensely related to Arabic literacy such as the holy book of the Qur'an, the book of hadith and other books that discuss Arabic⁷⁰.

In religious educational institutions (madrasas) and private Islamic schools, Arabic is an important subject and has professional teachers, especially those who teach Arabic. Public schools with mostly Muslim students should be able to learn Arabic because it is an integral part of religious science. If the shortage of teachers is one of the reasons for the inequality of Arabic as the main subject, it is not appropriate because all Islamic Religious Universities (PTKI), both public and private, from S-1, S-2 and S-3 annually produce Arabic scholars who number hundreds or even thousands nationally. Arabic today seems to be increasingly in demand learned in Indonesia, both for pragmatic purposes such as education, economy, politics, and culture as well as for

⁶⁶ Fareed Mohamed Nawastheen, "Educational and Curriculum Changes in Sri Lanka: In Light of Literature," *Muallim Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2019, 342–61, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.33306/mjssh/43>.

⁶⁷ Kandiko Howson and Kingsbury, "Curriculum Change as Transformational Learning."

⁶⁸ Muhammedi Muhammedi, "Curriculum Change in Indonesia: A Critical Study of Efforts to Find the Ideal Islamic Education Curriculum," *Journal Raudhah* 4, no. 1 (2016), <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.30829/raudhah.v4i1.61>.

⁶⁹ Rahadian Kurniawan, Musda Asmara, and Hardivizon Hardivizon, "Arabic Language and the Concept of I'jaz Al-Qur'an (Critique of Louwis 'Awad's Thought)," *Arabiyatuna: Arabic Journal* 5, no. 1 May (2021): 161–72, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v5i1.2622>.

⁷⁰ Zakiyah Arifa and Umar Al Faruq, "Mapping the Research Theme and Method: A Corpus Based Approach to Abstract of Arabic Education Undergraduate Program," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 5, no. 1 (2021): 81–94, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v5i1.2073>.

religious purposes⁷¹. Although there are many enthusiasts, there is no legal basis that requires Arabic as a compulsory subject in general education, in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System and Law Number 12 of 2012 concerning higher education also does not include that Arabic is a compulsory or main subject.

Arabic is studied in Indonesia in religious forms and patterns because the majority of Indonesia's population is Muslim⁷². Indonesia holds the distinction of being the most populous Muslim-majority nation globally⁷³. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, Learning Arabic is compulsory because it is a part of Islam that cannot be separated from Muslims⁷⁴. Arabic is a science for the development of knowledge and deepening of religious knowledge.

Conclusion

The inequality of Arabic as the main subject in general education, especially at the high school level, can occur because Arabic is considered part of Islamic Religious Education. On the other hand, the education curriculum seeks to maintain the dichotomy of the education system in Indonesia with more general lessons and very few religious lessons, and the religious education system with more religious content and fewer general lessons. The implications of inequality in Arabic as the main subject in general education institutions experienced by students of Islamic Religious Universities will also continue to occur. When viewed the position of Arabic in Indonesia which is already an integral part that cannot be separated from citizens, it is appropriate for Arabic to be a core lesson at all types and levels of education including general education institutions. It is proven that religious educational institutions (Islamic Schools, Madrasas, Islamic Boarding Schools and Islamic colleges) which since the beginning of the curriculum have made Arabic the main subject have succeeded in strengthening the realization of output by the goals of national education, namely the formation of students who are faithful, pious, responsible and democratic.

⁷¹ Enjang Burhanudin Yusuf, "Implementation of Arabic Curriculum in Islamic Higher Education (PTAI) in Indonesia," *Tarling: Journal of Language Education* 1, no. 1 (2017): 42–61, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24090/tarling.v1i1.1121>.

⁷² Hasnil Oktavera, "Arabic Language Learning as an Effort to Build Santri Character in Islamic Boarding Schools," *Scientific Journal Iqra'* 13, no. 1 (2019): 38–47, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.30984/jii.v13i1.935>.

⁷³ Zakiya Darajat, "Muhammadiyah and NU: Guardians of Islamic Moderatism in Indonesia," *Hayula: Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2017): 79–94, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21009/hayula.001.1.05>.

⁷⁴ Dhaiuddin, "Motivation to Learn Arabic for Farmer Children (Case Study of Farmer Children, Sawang District, North Aceh Regency, Aceh Province)," in *Proceedings of the National Conference on Arabic* (Malang: State University of Malang, 2015), 102–12.

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