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Test Before You Teach: an Integrative Tri-Foundation Framework for Selecting Islamic Religious Education Learning Models

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ABSTRACT

Teachers of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) often choose learning models for technical convenience, while the aims of education, the way learners learn, and legal obligations are rarely tested together. This article develops an integrative tri-foundation framework that combines philosophical, psychological, and juridical foundations to test PAI learning models in schools and madrasahs. The study used a qualitative library-research design with conceptual-analytical content analysis. The corpus comprised selected Qur'anic verses, two statutory instruments, one curriculum decree, two primary theoretical works (al-Attas and Vygotsky), and 17 journal articles. These 17 articles are the entire journal corpus retained after screening: nine supply arguments and eight supply background. The analysis moved through reduction, coding in a principle-implication matrix, synthesis, and an analytical case test. The case test applied the framework to three lesson profiles that the author constructed on the same topic, grade, time, and objective, so its results are illustrative, not classroom evidence. Three findings emerged. First, ta'dib places the aim and measure of success of PAI in adab, not in content mastery alone. Second, fitrah and social constructivism explain that learners learn actively through guidance and interaction, within a clear boundary between revealed content and pedagogical ijtihad. Third, national law requires dialogical learning that fits developmental stages, yet Article 7(1) of Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007 attaches administrative sanctions only to the provisions it lists, and these exclude the pedagogical principles. The synthesis yields four tests with explicit evidence rules and a five-phase lesson sequence. No constructed profile met every test. The lecture profile covered the curriculum but offered no dialogue and no assessment of conduct, while the active profiles needed explicit phases of meaning-making and value affirmation. Expert judgment, design-based research, and quasi-experiments should validate the framework before classroom use.

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education, Learning Model, Ta'Dib, Social Constructivism, Education Regulation

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a wider task than delivering religious information. Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007 defines religious education as education that provides knowledge and also shapes the attitudes, personality, and skills of learners in practicing their religion (Government of Indonesia, 2007, Art. 1(1)). The same regulation gives religious education the function of forming learners who are faithful, devout, and morally upright, and who can maintain harmony within and between religious communities (Government of Indonesia, 2007, Art. 2(1)). Under this definition, choosing a learning model is a normative decision, not only a technical one. A model that trains memory alone does not meet the definition, because it leaves attitudes and personality untouched.

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Practice does not always match this definition. Ariansyah (2023) found that in some cases PAI still proceeds through indoctrination, so learners receive a black-and-white understanding of religion without being prompted to think critically. A recent review describes PAI as still dominated by knowledge transfer, which makes it less meaningful to learners (Putri et al., 2025). On the policy side, Nikmah et al. (2020) identified two problems: limited lesson time, which they put at two lesson hours a week in general schools, and a management dilemma, because religious education sits under the Minister of Religious Affairs although it belongs to the national education system. Together they show that teachers and madrasah leaders choose learning models under layered pressure.

The time constraint becomes a concrete decision for a teacher. The following example is the author's illustration; only the figure of two lesson hours a week comes from Nikmah et al. (2020). Suppose a teacher has two lesson hours a week for a unit on tolerance. If half of each meeting goes to group dialogue, the remaining time barely covers the explanation of the verses. Assessing conduct, for example through a two-week behaviour journal, must then move outside class time or be dropped. The teacher has to decide which duty to reduce: covering the curriculum, opening dialogue, or assessing conduct. The framework in this article aims to make that decision explicit and reasoned.

Earlier studies have addressed part of this pressure from four directions. The philosophical direction is represented by Rasyidi (2017), who strengthened the foundation of PAI through the ontology, epistemology, and axiology of Islamic knowledge. Al-Attas defined Islamic education as ta'dib, the process of recognizing the proper place of everything so that a person of adab emerges (Al-Attas, 1980). Ahmed (2018) examined this idea as an indigenous philosophy of education and reported the criticisms made against it, while Husni & Hayden (2024) built an epistemology of education that starts from tawhid. The psychological direction appears in Septemiarti (2023), who mapped fitrah as an innate potential that develops through education, and in Ariansyah (2023), who linked Vygotsky's constructivism to PAI learning. The curricular direction appears in Sitika et al. (2025). The legal direction appears in the policy analysis of Nikmah et al. (2020).

This review shows one pattern. In the 17 journal articles examined here, each direction stands alone and stops at conceptual explanation. This statement describes the corpus of this study, not the whole field. Studies on ta'dib set a direction but do not convert it into criteria for choosing a model. Studies on constructivism explain how learners learn but do not test its limits against revealed content and legal duties. Policy analyses record obligations and obstacles but do not translate them into design considerations. The closest study is Sitika et al. (2025), who describe four foundations of the PAI curriculum and state that they guide educational aims and learning methods. The difference is specific. Sitika et al. (2025) work at the level of curriculum development and do not supply criteria that a teacher can apply to a single lesson plan. This article converts three of the foundations into tests with evidence rules for that purpose. Samsulbassar et al. (2020) link fitrah to the aims of national education, but they connect two elements and do not reach the level of learning models. As a result, in the literature examined here, a teacher who must choose among lecturing, problem-based learning, and cooperative learning finds no instrument that combines aims, learning processes, and legal compliance.

This article fills that gap. It builds an integrative tri-foundation framework as a testing

instrument for PAI learning models in schools and madrasahs. Three research questions guide the analysis. (1) How does a philosophical foundation based on ta'dib set the aims and success criteria of PAI learning? (2) How does a psychological foundation based on fitrah and social constructivism explain how learners learn, and where are its limits? (3) How does a juridical foundation bind the choice of learning models, and how can the three foundations be synthesized into test items and lesson phases?

The novelty of this article lies in three contributions. Conceptually, it turns three foundations that are usually discussed separately into one testing instrument. Analytically, it shows that, within Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007, the provisions governing PAI learning do not carry equal enforcement force. Practically, it derives four tests with explicit evidence rules and a five-phase lesson sequence that teachers can adapt.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This study used a qualitative approach with a conceptual-analytical library-research design. The design fits the research aim, which is to build a framework and examine its coherence, not to measure the effect of a classroom treatment. The study did not involve human participants. Its data sources were documents in three groups, listed in Table 1. The first group consisted of normative documents: selected Qur'anic verses, Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007, and the curriculum decree that sets the learning outcomes for PAI. The second group consisted of two primary theoretical works: al-Attas's account of education in Islam and Vygotsky's work on higher psychological processes. The third group consisted of 17 journal articles. These articles form the entire journal corpus of the study, and all of them are cited in the analysis.

The documents played two roles. Argument sources supplied a principle, a legal duty, or a classroom finding that entered the coding matrix and shaped a test or a rating. Background sources placed the argument in the literature, recorded criticism, or served as the comparison study, but no test depends on them. The Qur'anic verses were not fixed in advance. Qur'an 30:30 came from the fitrah literature in the corpus (Septemiarti, 2023). Qur'an 16:78 was added by the author during analysis because it names hearing, sight, and the heart as the faculties through which learning occurs. Both verses serve as argument sources for the psychological foundation. Qur'an 16:125 was added during analysis as an analogy for pedagogical communication, so it serves as background and supports no test. Qur'an 49:13 and 109:6 were added for the case test because the constructed lesson concerns tolerance and the boundary of creed.

Table 1 Documents Coded in the Analysis and Their Roles

Group	Document	Role	Use in the analysis
Normative	Qur'an 30:30; 16:78	Argument	Psychological foundation (fitrah); test U2
Normative	Qur'an 16:125; 49:13; 109:6	Background	Communication analogy; content of the constructed lesson
Normative	Law No. 20 of 2003, Art. 12(1)(a), 37(1), 40(2)(a)	Argument	Juridical foundation; tests U3a and U3b
Normative	Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007, Art. 1(1), 2, 3, 4, 5, 7(1)	Argument	All foundations; tests U1 to U3; reading of Art. 7(1)

Group	Document	Role	Use in the analysis
Normative	Decree of the Head of BSKAP No. 032/H/KR/2024 (Phase D learning outcomes)	Argument	Curriculum objective in the case test (U3a)
Primary theory	Al-Attas (1980)	Argument	Philosophical foundation; tests U1a and U1b
Primary theory	Vygotsky (1978); Wood et al. (1976)	Argument	Psychological foundation; test U2
Journal (argument, 9)	Rasyidi (2017); Firdausi et al. (2026)	Argument	Philosophical foundation; principle of integration
	Septemiarti (2023); Samsulbassar et al. (2020); Ariansyah (2023)	Argument	Psychological foundation; test U2
	Datuzuhriah et al. (2026); Husna et al. (2026)	Argument	Classroom findings on feasibility and obstacles
	Nikmah et al. (2020)	Argument	Lesson time and management under Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007
Journal (background, 8)	Ahmed (2018); Husni & Hayden (2024); Jali & Ruslan (2024); Huringiin et al. (2022); Puspitasari & Yuliana (2022)	Background	Context and criticism of al-Attas
	Parnawi (2023); Putri et al. (2025)	Background	Context on constructivism in PAI
	Sitika et al. (2025)	Background	Closest comparison study

Source: Author's corpus. Wood et al. (1976) is a journal article counted among the 17 and grouped with the primary theory as an anchor.

Data were collected through documentation. The author searched four sources. In the Garuda portal, the terms were "landasan filosofis pendidikan agama Islam," "fitrah pendidikan Islam," "konstruktivisme pendidikan agama Islam," and "PP 55 tahun 2007." In Google Scholar, the terms were "philosophical foundation of Islamic religious education," "fitrah Islamic education," "constructivism Islamic religious education," and "al-Attas ta'dib." DOI lookups confirmed records already found, and the national legal database was searched by regulation number. The searches were completed in October 2026. The exact day of the last search was not recorded. With the filter limited to 2016–2026, the Garuda searches returned 19 documents for "landasan filosofis pendidikan agama Islam," 114 for "fitrah pendidikan Islam," 30 for "konstruktivisme pendidikan agama Islam," and 1,061 for "PP 55 tahun 2007." With the same filter, the Google Scholar searches returned 17,500 documents for "philosophical foundation of Islamic religious education," 16,800 for "fitrah Islamic education," 17,100 for "constructivism Islamic religious education," and 6,850 for "al-Attas ta'dib." Four inclusion criteria applied: (a) the document is accessible through the publisher's page or a DOI; (b) its bibliographic details are complete; (c) its content relates directly to one of the three foundations; and (d) it is a journal article or an official state document. Criterion (d) has two stated exceptions. The Qur'an is used as a normative text, and the books by Al-Attas (1980) and Vygotsky (1978) are used as primary theoretical anchors. Journal articles were limited to 2016–2026, again with one stated exception. Wood et al. (1976) was retained because it introduced the idea later called scaffolding. It is treated as a theoretical anchor with Vygotsky (1978) and is not used as evidence about current PAI practice. Screening moved from titles and abstracts to full texts. An article was retained when it met all four criteria and contributed a

principle, a legal reading, a classroom finding, or necessary context to one of the three foundations. These figures are raw search hits, and three features explain why they narrowed to 17 articles. First, the hits overlapped across terms and sources. Second, both engines match a term anywhere in a record, and Google Scholar also lists theses, books, citations, and unpublished files, so most hits mentioned a term only in passing or were not journal articles and failed criterion (c) or (d). Third, records that failed criteria (a) and (b) were removed, and the last step kept only articles that added a principle, legal reading, or finding not yet in the corpus. The author did not record how many records were removed at each stage. Seventeen articles met this rule, and Table 1 lists each of them with its role. Sources whose details could not be confirmed on the publisher's page were excluded. The bibliographic details of all 17 articles were checked again against their publisher records in November 2026, and the article numbers in the regulations were checked against the official texts.

Content analysis followed four steps. Reduction selected the passages relevant to each foundation. Coding placed each passage in a matrix with five columns: source and locator, passage, coded principle, design implication, and the test it informs. Synthesis compared principles across foundations and recorded points of agreement and tension. An analytical case test then applied the tests to three constructed lesson profiles. Table 2 shows an extract of the matrix for developmental fit, the principle behind test U2.

Table 2 Extract from the Coding Matrix: Developmental Fit

Source and locator	Passage	Coded principle	Design implication	Test
Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007, Art. 5(2)	Religious education is taught according to the learners' stage of psychological development.	Developmental fit is a legal principle	The plan names the grade and sets task complexity for that grade	U2: grade-appropriate complexity
Vygotsky (1978)	The zone of proximal development is the distance between independent performance and performance under adult guidance or with more capable peers.	Support targets what learners can do only with help	The plan checks prior knowledge before the main task and sets the level of support from the result	U2: prior-knowledge check; graded support
Wood et al. (1976)	The tutor controls the elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner's capacity.	Support is staged and later withdrawn	The plan states which parts of the task the teacher or peers support and when support ends	U2: staged support
Datuzuhriah et al. (2026)	The teacher reports differences in students' academic abilities as an obstacle.	Ability differences constrain group work (feasibility)	The plan anticipates mixed-ability grouping	Condition on U2, not a principle

Source: Author's coding matrix (extract).

The extract shows how the matrix produces a test instead of restating a source. The regulation states that developmental fit is required. The theoretical works specify what developmental fit looks like in a lesson: a check of prior knowledge, followed by support that is staged and then withdrawn. The classroom finding adds a condition of feasibility. Test U2

therefore asks for observable evidence in a lesson plan, not for agreement with a theory.

When sources served different purposes or pointed in different directions, the analysis applied one rule. Each type of source governs one kind of question. Legal provisions decide what is obligatory. Theoretical works decide why a principle holds and what it requires in a lesson. Classroom findings decide feasibility and the conditions under which a principle can be met, but they do not overturn a principle. A conflict was first classified as a question of obligation, justification, or feasibility, and the source type that governs that question settled it. A feasibility problem that could not be settled was recorded as a condition attached to a rating, not as a reason to change the rating. Each decision was logged with its sources in an analytic memo.

One disputed decision illustrates the rule: whether a lecture that covers the curriculum satisfies the juridical test. The legal provisions point in two directions. Article 37(1) of Law No. 20 of 2003 and Article 5(1) of Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007 require curriculum delivery, which a lecture can achieve. Article 40(2)(a) of Law No. 20 of 2003 and Article 5(7) of the regulation require a dialogical and interactive atmosphere, which a lecture alone does not create. The theoretical argument supports the second requirement, because Vygotsky (1978) locates development in guided interaction and Al-Attas (1980) ties success to adab rather than recall. The classroom findings add a feasibility problem: lesson time is short (Nikmah et al., 2020), and students report limited time for discussion (Datuzuhriah et al., 2026). Under the rule, the legal sources settled the legal question, and they contain both duties. The juridical test was therefore split into curriculum coverage (U3a) and dialogical opportunity (U3b). A lecture can meet U3a and still fail U3b. The time constraint was recorded as a condition and did not change either rating. To protect credibility, the study also triangulated legal, theoretical, and empirical sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The section presents the findings in the order of the research questions. It first discusses the three foundations, then synthesizes them, tests the synthesis on three learning models, and finally discusses tensions, applications, and implications.

Philosophical Foundation: Ta'Dib as the Source of Aims and Success Criteria

The philosophical foundation answers two questions: why PAI is taught and what kind of knowledge it should build. Rasyidi (2017) approached these questions through three pillars drawn from Muhammad Jawwad Ridla: the ontology, epistemology, and axiology of Islamic knowledge. Ontology explains the nature of the human being and of the reality studied. Epistemology explains the sources and methods of knowing. Axiology explains values and final aims. These pillars give structure, but they do not name a single concept that binds them.

Al-Attas supplies that concept. In his account, the Islamic education system rests on key concepts such as religion (din), the human being (insan), knowledge ('ilm), wisdom (hikmah), justice ('adl), and adab, and the process of education in the Islamic sense is best named ta'dib (Al-Attas, 1980). Jali & Ruslan (2024) study the concept of adab in al-Attas specifically. Ahmed (2018) reads ta'dib as an indigenous philosophy of education that has drawn criticism, and Husni & Hayden (2024) construct an epistemology of education that starts from tawhid, arranges the curriculum according to the structure of Islamic knowledge, and respects human

beings equally.

The difference among three educational terms matters for model choice. In the author's reading, if learning is understood only as ta'lim, success shifts to the amount of content mastered. If it is understood only as tarbiyah, the emphasis falls on nurturing growth without a firm statement of the final aim. Ta'dib joins both, because adab requires knowledge and also the recognition of its proper place in life (Al-Attas, 1980). By this concept, the success of PAI includes conduct and wise action, not only test scores. This criterion agrees with the legal definition of religious education, which names attitudes, personality, and skills (Government of Indonesia, 2007, Art. 1(1)).

Al-Attas's critique of the secularization of knowledge sharpens the epistemological side. Firdausi et al. (2026) show that the critique does not reject reason or scientific achievement. It targets a secular worldview that separates knowledge from revelation, moral orientation, and the acknowledgment of God. Huringiin et al. (2022) present the Islamization of contemporary science as the most vocal form of al-Attas's critique of secularism, and Puspitasari & Yuliana (2022) connect it to the combination of religious and general sciences in the Islamic education curriculum. A chosen model must connect knowledge with meaning and moral responsibility, not present it as neutral information.

From this line of argument, the author derives three design principles. The first is meaning orientation: each unit begins by stating its meaning and purpose, not by listing content. The second is adab as a learning outcome: assessment covers attitudes and conduct. The third is integration of knowledge: PAI content is linked to learners' lived realities and to other fields of knowledge. These principles are not the only possible derivations. The tradition of Islamic educational philosophy holds other formulations, and Ahmed (2018) himself records criticisms of al-Attas. This article chooses ta'dib because, in the author's reading, the concept links ontology, epistemology, and axiology in one formulation. Other researchers can test the same framework with a different philosophical anchor.

Psychological Foundation: Fitrah, Social Interaction, and the Limits of Constructivism

If the philosophical foundation answers "why," the psychological foundation answers "how learners learn." Sitika et al. (2025) place the psychological foundation within the foundations of the curriculum that direct its aims and methods. In an Islamic perspective, this foundation is rooted in fitrah. The Qur'an states that human beings were created according to the fitrah of God (Qur'an 30:30), and that God gave hearing, sight, and hearts to human beings who are born knowing nothing (Qur'an 16:78). Septemiarti (2023) describes fitrah as an innate potential with physical, spiritual, and psychological dimensions, and this potential develops through education. Samsulbassar et al. (2020) add that teachers who understand fitrah can more easily help achieve the aims of national education. Learners are therefore not empty vessels. They bring potentials that teachers must facilitate.

Vygotsky's social constructivism offers tools for translating this view into lesson design. The zone of proximal development describes the distance between what a learner can do alone and what the learner can do with guidance from an adult or in collaboration with a more capable peer (Vygotsky, 1978). Wood et al. (1976) described how a tutor supports a learner by controlling the parts of a task that lie beyond the learner's present ability, a process later called scaffolding. Ariansyah (2023) showed the relevance of this view for PAI. The

teacher acts as a mediator who helps learners grasp religious concepts through interaction and discussion, and language works as a tool for mediating understanding. That study is a literature review. It shows conceptual fit, not effectiveness.

The empirical evidence available in the corpus is limited and small in scale. Datuzuhriah et al. (2026) reported a case study in one primary school with one PAI teacher and five students (Datuzuhriah et al., 2026). Group discussion, case studies, simulations, and problem-based learning on the topic of lawful and unlawful matters were reported to raise students' motivation, understanding, and independence, according to the informants' perceptions. The authors acknowledge that the design does not measure learning outcomes quantitatively and does not allow generalization. Parnawi (2023) and Husna et al. (2026) also discuss constructivist methods in PAI, in relation to critical and religious thinking and to prayer learning. The direction of these findings is consistent, but the strength of the evidence remains modest.

The Islamic tradition also offers a communication framework that agrees with this approach. The Qur'an instructs believers to call to the way of the Lord with wisdom, good counsel, and the best form of dialogue (Qur'an 16:125). In the author's reading, these three elements can be read as principles of pedagogical communication: adapt the message to the learner's readiness, deliver values in a way that touches the learner, and open space for respectful questioning. The verse speaks about calling to the faith, not about classrooms. The pedagogical reading is therefore an analogy that needs justification. Even so, it helps explain why dialogical learning is not foreign to the sources of the religion.

Constructivism must not be read as relativism about doctrine. Some PAI content, such as the core of creed and the rulings of worship, comes from revelation, and learners do not reconstruct it. What learners construct is the understanding, the internalization, and the application of that content. This boundary becomes the fourth test in the framework. Level of schooling also matters. Learners in primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary schools differ in developmental stage, so teachers adjust the level of assistance, the complexity of problems, and the form of collaboration. Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007 makes a similar demand (Government of Indonesia, 2007, Art. 5(2)).

Juridical Foundation: Normative Obligations That Bind Model Choice

The juridical foundation answers what the law requires, guarantees, and limits. Law No. 20 of 2003 contains three provisions that bear directly on PAI learning. Article 12(1)(a) gives every learner the right to receive religious education according to the religion he or she follows, taught by an educator of the same religion (Government of Indonesia, 2003, Art. 12(1)(a)). Article 37 requires that the curriculum include religious education (Government of Indonesia, 2003, Art. 37(1)). Article 40(2)(a) obliges educators to create an educational atmosphere that is meaningful, enjoyable, creative, dynamic, and dialogical (Government of Indonesia, 2003, Art. 40(2)(a)). The last provision matters because it makes dialogical learning a duty of the educator, not a pedagogical preference.

Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007 details the principles of implementation in Article 5. The religious education curriculum must follow the National Education Standards. Religious education must fit the developmental stage of learners, build honesty, trustworthiness, discipline, independence, and responsibility, foster critical, innovative, and

dynamic attitudes, and be delivered in an interactive, inspiring, enjoyable, challenging manner that encourages creativity and independence (Government of Indonesia, 2007, Art. 5(1), (2), (5), (6), (7)). National regulation thus already contains psychological and pedagogical principles that agree with social constructivism. The tri-foundation framework is not imposed from outside.

Article 7(1) of Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007 provides administrative sanctions, from a warning to closure, for educational units that do not comply with Article 3(1), Article 4(2) to (7), and Article 5(1), and only after guidance by the government (Government of Indonesia, 2007, Art. 7(1)). These provisions cover the duty to provide religious education, learners' right to religious education and related facilities, and conformity of the curriculum with the National Education Standards. Article 5(2) to (9), which contains the principles of developmental fit and interactive learning, is not on that list. The article draws one inference only: this regulation does not itself attach a sanction to those principles. It makes no claim about how they may be enforced under other instruments. The duty in Article 40(2)(a) of Law No. 20 of 2003 binds educators directly, and other instruments, such as Law No. 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, also regulate teachers' duties; this study did not analyze them. Within this regulation, an argument for active and collaborative models cannot rest on the sanction in Article 7(1). It must rest on the aims of religious education that the same regulation states, namely the formation of attitudes and personality, and on duties set elsewhere.

For madrasahs, the management of religious education lies with the Minister of Religious Affairs (Government of Indonesia, 2007, Art. 3(2)), and Nikmah et al. (2020) identified this management dilemma as one source of implementation problems. The practical consequence appears in technical references. Ministerial decrees detail the madrasah curriculum, and they change over time. Teachers and madrasah leaders must therefore consult the decree currently in force before they fix a model and an assessment form.

Synthesis: Three Foundations, Four Tests, and Five Phases

The three foundations answer different questions and lock into one another. The philosophical foundation sets the direction. The psychological foundation sets the path. The juridical foundation sets legitimacy and limits. Sitika et al. (2025) state that each curriculum foundation guides aims and methods. This article takes the next step: it brings the three together in one testing instrument. Without the philosophical foundation, an active model becomes a technique without a purpose. Without the psychological foundation, the formation of adab can slide into indoctrination, as Ariansyah (2023) warned. Without the juridical foundation, innovation risks leaving curriculum duties and learners' rights behind. Table 3 summarizes the mapping, and Figure 1 shows how the foundations lead to the tests and to the lesson sequence.

Table 3 Tri-Foundation Framework for Testing Pai Learning Models

Foundation	Key question	Main principles	Test for a learning model
Philosophical	Why is PAI taught, and what knowledge does it build?	Meaning orientation (ta'dib); adab as learning outcome; integration of knowledge	U1a. Does the plan state the meaning and purpose of the lesson for learners' lives? U1b. Does it assess attitudes and conduct, not only recall?

Foundation	Key question	Main principles	Test for a learning model
Psychological	How do learners learn and develop?	Fitrah as potential; social interaction and the zone of proximal development; developmental stage	U2. Does the model engage learners actively, provide stepwise support, and fit the school level?
Juridical	What does the law require, guarantee, and limit?	Right to religious education; curriculum aligned with national standards; meaningful and dialogical atmosphere; authority over management	U3a. Does the plan address a stated curriculum objective and respect learners' rights? U3b. Does it include at least one dialogical learning opportunity?
Cross-foundation	Where is the boundary between revealed content and pedagogical ijtihad?	Distinction between fixed and open content	U4. Does the model keep that boundary: dialogue on understanding for fixed content, room for weighing views on open content?

Source: Author's analysis based on Rasyidi (2017), Al-Attas (1980), Vygotsky (1978), Law No. 20 of 2003, and Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007.

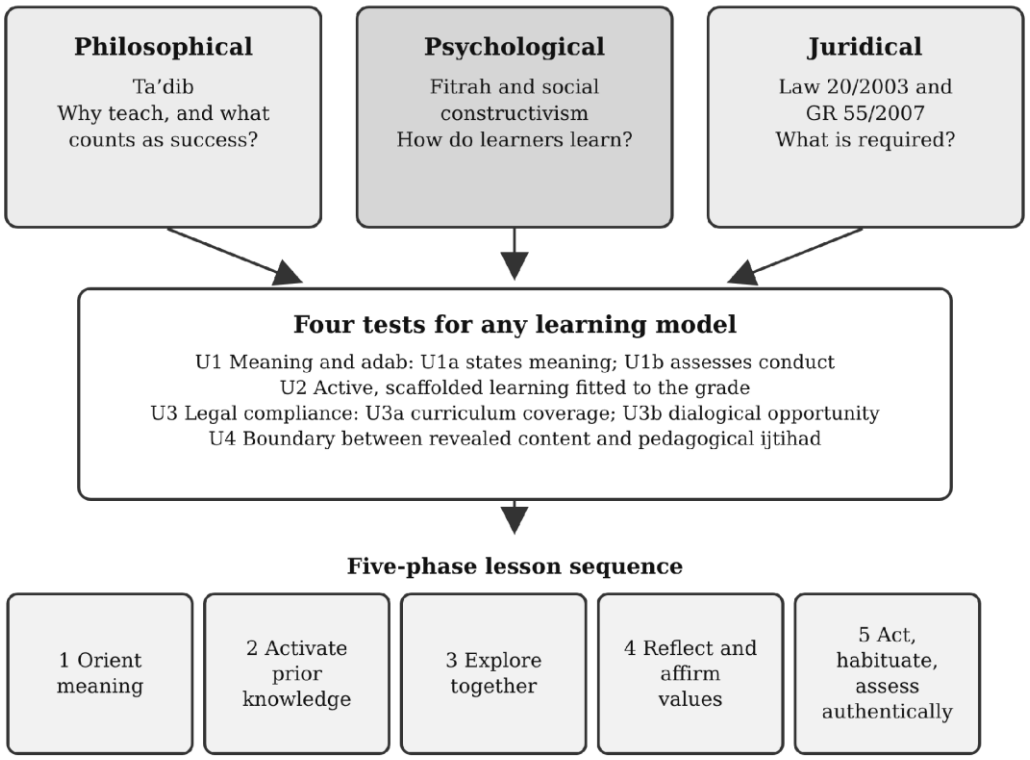

Figure 1 Tri-Foundation Framework for Testing Pai Learning Models (Author'S Construction)

The tests need evidence rules so that two reviewers who read the same lesson plan reach the same judgment. Table 4 states what a reviewer should find in a lesson plan for each test and how to rate it. Two tests are split because each joins decisions that can fail separately. U1 joins the statement of a lesson's purpose and the assessment of conduct. A teacher can state the meaning of a lesson and still assess only recall, or assess behaviour without explaining why it matters. Neither half compensates for the other. A stated purpose without an assessment of

conduct leaves success measured by recall, and an assessment of conduct without a stated meaning reduces adab to compliance. U1 is therefore rated as partly met when only one half is present. U3 joins curriculum coverage and the dialogical atmosphere that Law No. 20 of 2003 requires. A lesson can satisfy one and miss the other, so the two halves are recorded separately, and a mixed result is reported as such.

Table 4 Evidence Rules for the Four Tests

Test	Evidence a reviewer should find in the lesson plan	Rating rule
U1a Meaning	A statement at the start of the lesson of its purpose and its meaning for learners' lives (Phase 1)	Met if present and linked to the objective; otherwise not met
U1b Adab assessment	An instrument that assesses attitudes or conduct, such as a rubric, an observation sheet, or a behaviour journal (Phase 5)	Met if present; not met if only recall is assessed
U1 overall	Both U1a and U1b	Met if both are met; partly met if one is met; not met if neither
U2 Learning process	A check of prior knowledge, at least one task in which learners act on the content, support staged by the teacher or peers, and complexity set for the grade	Met if all four are present; partly met if an active task is present without the check or staged support; not met if learners only listen and copy
U3a Curriculum coverage	A lesson objective traceable to the official learning outcome; religious education in the learner's own religion, taught by an educator of the same religion	Met or not met
U3b Dialogical opportunity	At least one activity in which learners ask, explain, or respond to one another or to the teacher beyond recall	Met or not met
U3 overall	U3a and U3b recorded separately	If U3a is met and U3b is not, record "U3 partly met: curriculum covered, dialogue absent." The lesson may be taught, but it does not yet fulfil Law No. 20 of 2003, Art. 40(2)(a); the teacher adds a dialogical segment in the same or the next meeting
U4 Boundary	Identification of fixed and open content, and a step in which the teacher checks learners' conclusions on fixed content against the sources (Phase 4)	Met if both are present; met by restriction if fixed content is never opened to discussion; conditional if discussion touches fixed content without a checking step

Source: Author's analysis. A conditional rating becomes met when the specified phase is added.

From the four tests, the author derives five lesson phases that can be used across active models. Table 5 lists each phase, its core activity, the foundation it serves, and its normative anchor. The five phases are a conceptual synthesis by the author. No empirical test supports them yet, so readers should treat them as design hypotheses.

Table 5 Five Lesson Phases and Their Foundations

Phase	Core activity	Foundation and test	Normative anchor
1. Orient meaning	The teacher states the meaning, the aim, and the link between the content and learners' lives	Philosophical (U1a)	Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007, Art. 2(2)
2. Activate prior knowledge	The teacher maps what learners already know to set the level of support	Psychological (U2)	Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007, Art. 5(2)
3. Explore together	Groups examine a problem or a source while the teacher mediates	Psychological and juridical (U2, U3b)	Law No. 20 of 2003, Art. 40(2)(a); Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007, Art. 5(7)
4. Reflect and affirm values	The teacher links findings to revealed sources and corrects mistaken understanding	Philosophical and cross-foundation (U1a, U4)	Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007, Art. 5(3)
5. Act, habituate, and assess authentically	Learners practice the value; assessment covers knowledge, attitudes, and conduct	Philosophical and juridical (U1b, U3a)	Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007, Art. 1(1) and Art. 5(5)

Source: Author's analysis.

Analytical Case Test of Three Constructed Lesson Profiles

To check the discriminating power of the framework, the author applied the tests to three constructed lesson profiles. The profiles are illustrations built by the author, not observed lessons, and the ratings rest on the evidence rules in Table 4, not on classroom data. All three profiles share the same topic, age group, time, and objective, so differences in the ratings come from the model alone. The topic is tolerance, taken from the Qur'an and Hadith element of Phase D, which states that learners understand verses and hadith on faith, piety, tolerance, love of the homeland, the spirit of learning, and patience in facing trials (Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan, 2024). The learners are in Grade 8 of lower secondary school or madrasah tsanawiyah, aged about 13 to 14. Each profile uses one meeting of 120 minutes, that is, three lesson periods of 40 minutes. The shared objective is that learners explain the message of Qur'an 49:13 on knowing one another, distinguish tolerance in social relations from compromise in creed with reference to Qur'an 109:6, and plan one tolerant action toward classmates of different backgrounds. The first part of this objective is traceable to the Phase D outcome. The second and third parts are the author's elaboration. Table 6 describes the steps of each profile.

Table 6 Three Constructed Lesson Profiles on the Same Topic, Grade, Time, and Objective

Step	Profile A: Rote-based lecture	Profile B: Problem-based learning	Profile C: Cooperative learning (jigsaw)
Opening (10 min)	The teacher greets the class, takes attendance, and announces the topic.	The teacher presents a problem: the class must organize a joint class event, and some learners ask whether they may help classmates of other religions prepare it.	The teacher forms home groups of four and gives each member one subtopic.

Step	Profile A: Rote-based lecture	Profile B: Problem-based learning	Profile C: Cooperative learning (jigsaw)
Core 1 (A: 40 min; B, C: 35 min)	The teacher reads Qur'an 49:13 and 109:6, translates them, and explains their meaning.	Groups list what they need to know and read the two verses with a short summary of their interpretation.	Expert groups study one subtopic each: Qur'an 49:13; Qur'an 109:6; examples of tolerance in the Prophet's life; the limits of tolerance in creed.
Core 2 (40 min)	Learners copy the verses and translations and memorize them. The teacher checks memorization.	Groups draft a plan for the event and present it. Other groups ask questions.	Experts return to their home groups and teach their subtopic. The teacher moves between groups.
Closing (A: 30 min; B, C: 35 min)	Written quiz on the translations and on the definition of tolerance.	The teacher comments on the plans. A rubric scores the quality of each group's plan.	Individual quiz on the four subtopics. Group scores are recognized.

Source: Author's construction for illustration; not observed lessons.

Table 7 applies the same evidence rule to every profile. Each rating names the step in Table 6 that supplies or lacks the evidence.

Table 7 Ratings of the Three Constructed Profiles

Test	Profile A: Lecture	Profile B: Problem-based	Profile C: Jigsaw
U1a Meaning	Not met: the opening announces the topic but not its meaning for learners	Not met: the problem links to life, but no purpose is stated; conditional on Phase 1	Not met: no purpose is stated; conditional on Phase 1
U1b Adab assessment	Not met: the quiz assesses recall	Not met: the rubric scores the plan, not conduct; conditional on Phase 5	Not met: the quiz assesses recall; conditional on Phase 5
U2 Learning process	Not met: learners listen, copy, and memorize	Partly met: active group work and questions; no prior-knowledge check	Partly met: peers support one another; no prior-knowledge check
U3a Curriculum coverage	Met: Core 1 explains the verses on tolerance named in the Phase D outcome	Met: Core 1 reads the same verses	Met: expert subtopics 1 and 2 cover the same verses
U3b Dialogical opportunity	Not met: no activity asks learners to explain or respond	Met: groups present and answer questions	Met: learners teach and question one another
U4 Boundary	Met by restriction: fixed content is not opened to discussion	Conditional: the problem touches the limit of creed, and no step checks conclusions; met with Phase 4	Conditional: peers teach the limits of creed without a check; met with Phase 4

Source: Author's analysis using the evidence rules in Table 4. The table does not report classroom data.

Three results follow. First, all three profiles meet curriculum coverage (U3a), because each contains a step that explains the verses on tolerance named in the Phase D outcome. The lecture's rating on U3a therefore rests on the same evidence as the ratings of the other profiles. Second, the profiles differ on dialogue. The lecture covers the curriculum but offers no dialogical opportunity, so its juridical result is recorded as "U3 partly met: curriculum covered, dialogue absent." Third, the active profiles fail U1 and are conditional on U4 for the same reason: they lack a phase that states meaning, a step that checks conclusions on fixed content, and an assessment of conduct. Their ratings are conditional because adding a specified phase

changes them. The lecture's weaknesses on U1b, U2, and U3b are not conditional in this sense, because they require replacing core steps, not adding a phase.

Applying the five phases of Table 5 to Profile B shows the difference. The teacher states the meaning of the lesson in the opening (Phase 1), checks what learners already know about tolerance (Phase 2), keeps the group work (Phase 3), checks group conclusions against Qur'an 109:6 (Phase 4), and asks learners to keep a two-week behaviour journal (Phase 5). With the group work shortened to make room, every rating for Profile B becomes met, although the journal extends beyond the meeting. Lecturing need not be discarded. It remains useful for procedural content and for core memorization, provided it is not the only mode of teaching.

Tensions Between Foundations and How to Handle Them

Integrating the three foundations is not free of tension. The first tension lies between constructivist spirit and the authority of revelation. Criticism of indoctrination calls for room to ask and reason, while the philosophical foundation holds that the highest source of truth is not reconstructed. The way out is to distinguish levels of content. For fixed matters of creed and worship, dialogue aims at understanding and internalization. For matters open to ijtihad and contextual application, learners receive room to weigh several views respectfully.

The second tension lies between freedom of exploration and limited time. Datuzuhriah et al. (2026) reported limited discussion time, limited facilities, and differences in students' ability as obstacles, and Nikmah et al. (2020) noted the narrow time allocation for PAI in schools. The regulation opens one path: educational units may add religious education content in the form of material, lesson hours, and depth (Government of Indonesia, 2007, Art. 5(8)–(9)). Teachers can also choose depth selectively. Not every competence needs problem-based learning, and procedural competences can be handled through demonstration and guided practice.

The third tension concerns teacher readiness. Active models ask teachers to shift from deliverers of content to facilitators. This shift needs training and institutional support. Without both, symbolic adoption becomes a risk, in which the packaging changes but the pattern of interaction does not. This risk comes from the author's reasoning and no study in this corpus supports it, so it needs empirical testing.

Application in Schools and Madrasahs

The three foundations apply equally to schools and madrasahs, but conditions of application differ. In general schools, PAI teachers can combine the exploration phase with structured assignments outside contact hours and extend the habituation phase into school culture activities.In madrasahs, religious education is often divided into several subjects, which gives more room for thematic integration. Where memorization and lecturing are strong traditions, active approaches should complement those traditions, not replace them. In both types of institution, the learner's developmental stage is a deciding variable, so the same model needs different complexity and support across primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary levels.

Implications, Limitations, and Directions for Future Research

Theoretically, discussing the foundations of PAI is more useful when the foundations serve as a test of models, not only as three separate descriptions. The finding that, within

Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007, the pedagogical principles carry no sanction of their own adds a distinction to the juridical study of PAI, between duties that this regulation enforces and principles that it states without a sanction.

Practically, the four tests and their evidence rules can serve as a checklist for teachers before they choose a model. Principals and madrasah heads can use them in academic supervision and teacher training. Curriculum developers can use the five phases as a flexible syntax for several models. For policy, decision makers should review PAI lesson time and include guidance on dialogical learning in derivative regulations and teacher development.

The study has six limitations. The framework is conceptual and untested in classrooms, and the case test uses lesson profiles constructed by the author. The corpus is limited to verifiable sources in Indonesian and English, so classical Arabic literature is not covered. The author did not keep a complete search log, so the exact day of the last search and the number of records removed at each screening stage cannot be reported. The framework rests on one philosophical tradition, ta'dib, and one learning theory, social constructivism. The reading of enforcement force is confined to Article 7(1) of Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007, does not cover other instruments, and has not been reviewed by legal experts. The curriculum objective in the case test follows the learning outcomes decree of 2024, which may be revised. Future research should validate the framework and its evidence rules through expert judgment, for example a Delphi technique with an inter-rater check on real lesson plans; test the five phases through design-based research and quasi-experiments; try other philosophical anchors; and map the derivative regulations of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to build an integrative framework that tests PAI learning models against philosophical, psychological, and juridical foundations. The analysis shows that the choice of a model cannot be settled by comparing techniques, because it requires three checks at once: on aims, on how learners learn, and on legal duties. Ta'dib shifts the measure of success from the amount of content to the soundness of attitude and action. Fitrah and social constructivism explain that this measure is reached only when learners are engaged and guided within the boundary of revealed content. National law states the same aim, but Article 7(1) of Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007 attaches sanctions to the duty to provide religious education, learners' rights, and curriculum conformity, not to the interactive-learning principles; enforcement under other instruments was not examined. The synthesis yields four tests with evidence rules and five lesson phases. In a case test on three constructed profiles with the same topic, grade, time, and objective, no profile met every test. The lecture covered the curriculum but offered no dialogue and no assessment of conduct, while the active profiles needed explicit phases of meaning-making and value affirmation to stay faithful to revelation. The contribution is an analytical instrument that links foundations to model choice. Its claims remain conceptual until expert judgment, design-based research, and quasi-experiments validate the framework.

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The author declares that informed consent was not required because this research did not involve human participants.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

L.M.R.R. conceptualized the research idea, collected and analyzed the documents, developed the framework, drafted the manuscript, and approved the final version. The author confirms having read and approved the final version of this manuscript. The percentage contribution for the conceptualization, drafting, and revision of this paper is as follows: L.M.R.R.: 70%, L.H. : 30 %, totaling 100%.

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