Developing Arabic Textbooks
What and How?

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Abstract. Arabic textbooks are one of the main pillars in a learning process. Having such a vital role, Arabic textbooks are very important and strategic to improve the quality of learning both in terms of process and learning outcome. Similar to a multi-media room, textbooks are both the hardware and software. A multimedia room will not be complete if it is not equipped with sophisticated and adequate hardware and software. So far, the preparation of Arabic textbooks has been done conventionally. To produce Arabic textbooks that are feasible and can be scientifically accounted for, it is necessary to stage the preparation of scientific Arabic textbooks. This paper conceptually describes the stages of preparing Arabic textbooks that meet the following scientific elements: (a) planning, (b) early stage development, (c) validation, (d) first revision, (e) field test, (f) second revision, (g) the final product, (h) implementation, and (i) regular review of Arabic textbooks.

Keywords: Arabic textbooks · principles of developing textbooks · stages in compiling textbooks

1 Introduction

Textbooks are an integral part that cannot be separated in a learning system. The existence of textbooks in the learning system is functional and strategic. The functional and strategic position of textbooks is in its position as guidance for teachers to teach and guidance for students to learn, even for remedial teaching. Al-Hudaiby, et al. [1] confirms that textbooks are one of the main and first means that function to transfer knowledge, skills, and attitudes to students. Like a multimedia room building, textbooks serve as the hardware and software. A multimedia room building won't be ideal without sophisticated and adequate hardware and software.

Textbooks play an important role in the teaching and learning activities. Learning process cannot be separated from textbooks. For this reason, the use of textbooks in the learning system is not only limited to schools and formal classes, but also to informal classes. The tradition of learning in traditional Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, which has an informal learning system, cannot be separated from the use of textbooks which in *pesantren* terminology are called the yellow book (classical textbooks containing Islamic religious material) with various fields of study. This fact proves that whatever the learning model or system is, the existence of textbooks is no longer optional but obligatory or mandatory.

Findings suggested in previous studies confirm that the use of textbooks affects the quality of learning. For example, the study by Schiefelbein and Ferrell in Chile shows that subject matter or textbooks have a significant influence on student achievement among families with low economic status (Heyneman in [2]). Fitriah [3] in her research and development study shows that the Basic Physics 1 textbook based on a direct learning model that is integrated with imtak and local wisdom is able to improve student learning outcomes. The results of Sikorova's [4] research in Junior High Schools in the Czech Republic indicate that the existence of textbooks serves as a basic resource for curriculum materials. According to Westbury, as quoted by Sikorova [4], textbooks as a basic tool for teaching and learning. Furthermore, Sikorova [4] explained that the role of textbooks as a basic teaching tool mainly lies in their use as a source for student/student activities. Most teachers organize assignments and exercises and ask questions based on the content of the textbook. They use textbooks mainly for practice and assessment. To a lesser extent, textbooks serve as a basis for discussion and to motivate students.

The problem is that several Arabic textbooks lack good sequences and gradations according to the ability and educational level of students. Ainin [5] found that Arabic textbook material for *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* students was more complex and more difficult than Arabic textbook material for *Madrasah Aliyah* students both in terms of structural complexity, language style, and choice of vocabulary. Even though the education level of *Madrasah Aliyah* is higher than *Madrasah Tsanawiyah*. Psychologically, Arabic teaching materials that are too difficult for students have an impact on the affective filter that filters language input and the Arabic input that is exposed does not produce Arabic language competence for students. In addition, they lack the passion to learn Arabic. On the other hand, the process of preparing textbooks, especially Arabic textbooks is conventional which does not reflect scientific procedures.

Related to the problems mentioned above, this article attempts to provide a conceptual idea as a solution to solve the problem. The present paper mainly discusses the nature of textbooks and how to compile a good Arabic textbook based on scientific procedures.

2   The Nature of Textbooks

The definition of textbooks is often confused with teaching materials. Both are substantially and functionally related to the content learned in school. However, both qualitatively and quantitatively have several differences. First, the scope of teaching materials is wider than textbooks. Most textbooks are limited to the usual teaching materials in the form of printed books. However, teaching materials may include topics that are packaged in various forms, for example in the form of printed books, student worksheets, modules, films, videos, VCDs, radio, photos, pictures, models, interactive CDs, YouTube, and other types of multimedia [6]. Thus, teaching materials are generally broader than textbooks.

The definition of textbooks has been put forward by many experts. Sabri, as quoted by Al-Hudaiby et al. [1], stated that textbooks in a general sense are printed and bound documents consisting of various pages containing information, data, images, or illustrations related to certain themes or fields. Tarigan [7] defines textbooks or textbooks as textbooks intended for students at a certain level of education (SD, SMP, SMA). Westbury, as quoted by Sikorova [4] suggests that the notion of textbooks is traditionally

limited by three general functions, namely (a) as a source of knowledge communicated in schools, (b) as a basic instrument for curriculum organization, and (c) as a basic tool for teaching and learning.

In more detail, comprehensively, and broadly, the notion of textbooks or textbooks is stated in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education, No. 11 of 2005 [8]. The Article 1 states that textbooks (textbooks) are mandatory reference books to be used in schools that contain learning materials in the context of increasing faith and piety, character and personality, ability to master science and technology, sensitivity and aesthetic ability, physical potential and health are compiled based on national education standards. From the various definitions of textbooks, it can be stated the elements that mark the meaning of textbooks, namely (a) textbooks are certain textbooks, (b) used at certain levels, (c) arranged systematically, (d) usually refers to the curriculum or learning objectives. In the context of learning Arabic in schools/madrasas, the definition of Arabic textbooks can be limited to textbooks containing Arabic content with Arabic elements or components and skills used at certain levels and classes and arranged systematically with reference to the curriculum or specific purpose.

As the main pillar in the learning system, textbooks are useful for various parties. Charalambous [9] states that most experts and educators state that textbooks are useful. The benefits of textbooks can be seen from the side of the teacher and from the side of the students. From the teacher's point of view, textbooks are useful as a guide for the implementation of learning, improvement and enrichment of material, the basis for assessment, efficiency of teaching time, the basis for developing training., as inputs that produce outputs in the form of competencies, attitudes, and knowledge, develop social attitudes, develop a literacy culture, motivate learning, and stimulate the creativity of students.

Seen from the perspective of learning Arabic, Al-Hudaiby et al. [1] explains that the contribution or benefits of Arabic textbooks is to improve the quality of learning, namely (a) to improve Arabic skills and its components, (b) strengthening cultural awareness for Arabic language teachers (local culture, Arabic culture, Islamic culture, international culture, and culture in general), (c) improve the concept of Arabic language or Arabic linguistics (the concept of *Nahwu*, *Sharf*, *Balaghah* or Arabic stylistics, and the concept of Arabic literature), (d) maintain clarity of thought in society, (e) improve thinking skills, (f) fulfil the elements of elements of life skills and 21st century skills (critical thinking, communicative, collaborative, and creative). In the view of Wagner [10], 21st century abilities include (a) critical thinking and problem-solving skills, (b) collaboration and leadership, (c) agility and adaptability, (d) initiative and entrepreneurial spirit, (e) the ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing, (f) the ability to access and analyse information, and (g) have curiosity and imagination.

Cunningsworth [11] thoroughly describes the multiple roles of textbooks in language learning, particularly English Language Teaching (ELT). The multi-role textbooks in question are (a) sources of presentation materials (oral and written), (b) sources of activities for students who practice and sources of communicative interactions, (c) sources of reference (references) for learners of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation (pronunciation), and others, (d) a source of stimulus and ideas for language activities in class, (e) as a syllabus (which reflects the learning objectives that have been determined), (f) a

source for learning and independent work, (g) helping teachers who are inexperienced and lack of self-confidence.

On the one hand, the existence of textbooks or textbooks provides various advantages or benefits for students, for teachers, and can also be useful for parents of students (students' parents), even for the learning system itself. However, on the other hand, the existence of textbooks or textbooks has a weakness. However, the benefits of textbooks outweigh the disadvantages.

According to Charalambous [9], the limitation or weakness of textbooks is the de-skilling of teachers or eliminating the skills of teachers (Course books de-skilling teachers). Citing the opinion of Richards, Charalambous [9] suggests that using textbooks strictly so that turning learning into a very controlled process (a very controlled process) can eliminate teacher skills (de-skills teacher). This opinion implies that textbooks are not the only source of learning, textbooks are not the only ultimate weapon to solve learning problems or guarantee the success of learning outcomes.

The opinion above also implies that in carrying out learning, it is not enough to rely only on one textbook and that it should consider other learning resources. The substance of the textbook can be said to be the main substance (principal) which of course requires enrichment through access to other learning resources. In this digital era, learning resources or textbooks in digital form are so easily accessible. For this reason, there is no reason for teachers or students not to use information technology as a vehicle to access various relevant learning resources. Even so, a selective and protective attitude is needed in accessing learning resources, because not all learning resources or textbooks uploaded meet academic requirements.

Another negative side of the mere reliance on textbooks is that it is possible to reduce the creativity and independence of teachers in carrying out the material. The availability of textbooks often makes teachers in a position to feel comfortable, relaxed, satisfied with the material in the textbooks. Psychological conditions like this make teachers less encouraged to face challenges to explore new things related to the material being taught. Sometimes the teacher is satisfied with the material contained in the textbook.

On the other hand, the existence of textbooks can sometimes have an impact on the teacher's position as a mediocre teacher and good teacher. Mediocre teachers are the type of teachers who are characterized by monotonous learning, mostly stare at books and read more, always sit or stand in front of the class, and absolute their opinions. Teachers who are of the good teacher type are the type of teachers who are characterized by lecture activities, their teaching style tends to be teacher-centered [12].

In more detail, Richard [13] suggests the limitations of textbooks or textbooks as follows:

a)   Textbooks may contain inauthentic language: Textbooks sometimes present inauthentic language because text, dialogue and other aspects of content tend to be written specifically to include teaching points and often do not represent actual language usage.
b)   Content distortion occurs. Textbooks often present an idealized worldview or fail to represent real problems. In order to make the textbook acceptable in a variety of contexts, controversial topics are avoided.

c) Sometimes textbooks do not reflect the needs of students. Textbooks are often written for a global market that does not reflect the interests and needs of learners who should require adaptation.

d) From a financial perspective, the price of textbooks or textbooks is sometimes a financial burden for students.

3 Developing Arabic Textbooks

Textbooks, especially Arabic textbooks, are books that are used in a learning system with conditions with values, knowledge, and competence. For this reason, there are principles that must be considered in the preparation of textbooks. The principles in question are ethical morals, referring to the curriculum, paying attention to the students' environment, paying attention to the objective conditions of the school, the interests and needs of students, the level of students' abilities, and paying attention to the gradation of the material.

In addition to paying attention to the principles of preparing textbooks, the important thing is how to arrange textbooks, especially Arabic textbooks that are good and feasible to use in the learning process. So far, the preparation of textbooks has been done conventionally, not fulfilling scientific procedures. Through scientific procedures, textbooks, especially Arabic textbooks produced have high feasibility, validity, and effectiveness.

The question is how to compile an Arabic textbook that complies with scientific procedures. Related to this, there are several scientific procedures that can be adopted, for example the Research & Development (R&D) model proposed by Borg and Gall [14] which consists of 10 stages as follows: (1) research and information collecting, (2) planning, (3) develop preliminary form product, (4) preliminary field testing, (5) main product revision, (6) main field testing, (7), operasional product, (8) operasional field testing, (9) final product revision, and (10), dissemination and implementation. The ADDIE model stands for Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate [15]. Other models include the model proposed by Al-Hudaiby et al. [1].

Of the three models, the author focuses on the preparation of Arabic textbooks proposed by Al-Hudaiby et al. [1]. This is because the Al-Hudaiby model is more directly related to Arabic textbooks, in addition, in this model there are textbook review activities that are developed continuously or periodically. The following are the steps for preparing Arabic textbooks.

1) Planning

At this stage, the author of the Arabic textbook makes plans and prepares the profile of the textbook to be developed. The things planned are for example learning achievements or learning outcomes to be achieved by students, elements of skills, systematic organization of teaching materials, approaches to be used in organizing material, forms of exercise, tools and equipment that must be prepared.

2) Early Stage Development

At this early stage of development, the authors of Arabic textbooks compiled a draft according to what was planned. This draft already contains the content in its entirety.

3) Expert Validation

After the draft is compiled, the next step is expert testing in order to obtain information about the feasibility or validity of the developed Arabic textbook. The number of experts or validators should ideally be more than two people in order to obtain a comprehensive and representative assessment result.

4) Revision 1

After the validator provides input, the next step is to revise the textbook based on input from experts or validators. In this context, the authors of Arabic textbooks identify inputs from validators, especially those related to their weaknesses and shortcomings, which are then improved and refined.

5) Field Test

After the revision, the next step is to conduct a field test. This field test is carried out by assessing the feasibility of the user (for example, an Arabic teacher and possibly also asking for an assessment from students). The field test is also related to the use of Arabic textbooks in Arabic learning activities in the classroom. From the field test in this class, it can be seen the level of effectiveness of the Arabic language textbooks that are compiled.

6) Revision 2

Based on input from the field test, at this stage of revision 2, the authors revise or correct existing deficiencies and errors, both in terms of language, systematic presentation, readability of the material, forms of exercise, and others.

7) Final Product (Arabic Language Textbook)

After being revised and the quality of the Arabic language textbook is deemed to have met the feasibility and effectiveness aspects, the next step is the preparation of the Arabic language textbook as the final product.

8) Implementation of Arabic Textbooks

This implementation stage is a stage in which Arabic textbooks that have gone through the field test and revision 2 stages are used in Arabic class at school. The level of use of these textbooks can be in the scope of schools, regions or nationally depending on the quantity and quality of the expert tests and field tests that are carried out.

9) Review of Arabic Textbooks Periodically

This periodic review is a peculiarity of the textbook preparation procedure proposed by Al-Hudaiby et al. [1]. Even according to Al-Hudaiby et al. [1], the most important thing after implementing Arabic textbooks in the field (in learning activities) is to review *BABA* periodically (*muraja'ah dauriyah*). Review activities must be carried out objectively and carried out by competent and broadly experienced parties.

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