

Outcome-based education curriculum implementation in arabic language education: A comparative study from a constructive alignment perspective

Agung Setiyawan^{✉1}, Haerul Ahyar² Fitri Zakiyah³

^{1,2}Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia

³Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study comparatively examines the implementation of an Outcome-Based Education (OBE) curriculum in Arabic Language Education programs at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta and Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, focusing on constructive alignment among curriculum components and implementation dynamics across different institutional contexts.

Method/design/approach – A qualitative multiple case study design was employed, with Arabic Language Education programs as the units of analysis. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), observations, and document analysis, and analyzed using thematic analysis with source and method triangulation.

Findings – The findings indicate that both programs have adopted OBE principles in the formulation of program learning outcomes, course learning outcomes, course plans, and assessment practices. However, distinct implementation patterns were identified. UIN Sunan Kalijaga applies an academic-reflective approach grounded in scholarly culture and lecturer collaboration, whereas Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta adopts a systemic-digital approach supported by the SIM-OBE system for monitoring learning outcomes. Digital systems enhance traceability and evaluation of learning outcomes, although consistent constructive alignment across outcomes, learning strategies, and assessment remains a challenge in both institutions. Lecturer workload and administrative complexity emerged as key constraints affecting classroom-level implementation.

Implikasi/batasan penelitian – This study contributes theoretically by offering a comparative perspective on OBE implementation in Islamic higher education, emphasizing the integration of academic-reflective and systemic-digital approaches. Practically, the findings inform program managers in developing sustainable strategies for strengthening OBE implementation. The study is limited to two institutional cases, which may restrict broader generalization

Originality/value – By integrating constructive alignment with institutional context analysis, the study enriches the discourse on outcome-based curriculum development in Islamic higher education.

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CONTACT:  agung.setiyawan@uin-suka.ac.id

Introduction

The paradigm shift in higher education in the twenty-first century requires universities to produce graduates who are not only theoretically competent but also equipped with practical skills, critical thinking abilities, creativity, and adaptability to social change and industry demands (Harden, 2007; Biggs & Tang, 2011). In the context of Arabic Language Education, the demands of twenty-first-century education extend beyond linguistic proficiency to include pedagogical competence, communicative ability, reflective capacity, and technological literacy that enable graduates to adapt to the dynamics of language learning in the digital era (Richards, 2017). Therefore, the Arabic Language Education curriculum must be systematically designed to ensure the achievement of professional competencies among prospective Arabic language educators that are relevant to academic, social, and labor market needs (Alwasilah, 2014).

Within the context of higher education, the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) approach has emerged as a strategic response to these challenges. This approach emphasizes systematic alignment (constructive alignment) among learning outcomes, instructional strategies, and assessment, ensuring that all curriculum components operate coherently toward the predetermined learning outcomes (Biggs & Tang, 2011). OBE prioritizes the formulation of learning outcomes as the starting point of curriculum planning, followed by the design of learning experiences that support the achievement of these outcomes, and the implementation of assessment to measure the attainment of graduate learning outcomes (Spady, 1994; Killen, 2007). This model is consistent with the backward design approach, which views intended learning outcomes as the foundation of all instructional planning (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

In higher education, the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) approach has emerged as a strategy to address these challenges. This approach requires systematic alignment (constructive alignment) among learning outcomes, instructional strategies, and assessment, ensuring that all curriculum components operate coherently toward the intended learning outcomes (Biggs & Tang, 2011). OBE emphasizes the formulation of learning outcomes as the starting point of curriculum planning, followed by the design of learning experiences that support the achievement of these outcomes, and the implementation of assessment to measure the attainment of graduate learning outcomes (Spady, 1994; Killen, 2007). This model is consistent with the backward design approach, which positions intended outcomes as the foundation of all instructional planning (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

In Indonesia, the implementation of OBE has been reinforced through national regulations, including the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (Kerangka Kualifikasi Nasional Indonesia/KKNI) and the National Standards for Higher Education (Standar Nasional Pendidikan Tinggi/SN-Dikti). These policies stipulate that each study program must formulate Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) aligned with the KKNI levels and stakeholder needs. Furthermore, the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy provides students with flexibility to achieve PLOs through diverse learning experiences, both on- and off-campus (Directorate General of Higher Education, 2020; Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2023). Nevertheless, learning flexibility within the MBKM framework requires a robust OBE-based curriculum, as the absence of clearly aligned learning outcomes may lead to fragmented learning experiences and challenges in

ensuring accountability in measuring graduate learning outcomes (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005; Biggs & Tang, 2011).

State Islamic Universities, as part of Indonesia's public Islamic higher education institutions (Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri/PTKIN), are also encouraged to align their curricula with the OBE paradigm. UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta has actively organized workshops and seminars and developed OBE-based curriculum guidelines since 2023. These initiatives aim to strengthen Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs), as well as instructional tools, to meet national standards and global demands. Meanwhile, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta has conducted curriculum reviews and developed draft OBE-based curricula across several faculties, with a particular focus on integrating KKNI-aligned learning outcomes and competency-based assessment. These two institutions represent distinct models of Islamic higher education governance, which may lead to variations in strategies, academic cultures, and mechanisms for implementing OBE-based curricula within Arabic Language Education programs.

Numerous studies have reported on OBE implementation practices in higher education; however, many still frame implementation primarily as a technical or administrative process rather than as a complex phenomenon of curriculum change. From the perspective of educational change theory, curriculum policy implementation is a social process involving actors' interpretations, meaning negotiation, resistance, adaptation, and institutional contextual dynamics (Fullan, 2016). Without such a theoretical framework, implementation studies risk being reduced to descriptive accounts of institutional practices, rather than analytical explanations of how and why curricular change occurs.

Previous studies have highlighted the implementation of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) across various higher education contexts in Indonesia. A case study by Kushari and Septiadi (2022) in the Civil Engineering Program at Universitas Islam Indonesia demonstrated that OBE implementation can be facilitated by developing an information system to assess learning outcomes. This system supports more structured monitoring of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs). However, the study primarily emphasized technical aspects of information management and provided limited discussion of pedagogical dimensions or differences in OBE implementation across institutions. Asbari and Nurhayati (2024) reported that OBE implementation in Indonesian higher education contributes to clearer learning structures and strengthened student competencies, particularly when learning outcomes are explicitly formulated and integrated with assessment. Nevertheless, their study adopted a general perspective and did not specifically address language education or the context of State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN).

Meanwhile, Negara et al. (2024) emphasized that OBE-based curricula integrated with character values were effective in improving the quality of higher education, particularly within Hindu religious higher education institutions. Despite these contributions, the study was limited to a single institution and focused specifically on character development, offering limited comparative insight across institutions with different backgrounds. In the domain of vocational education, Gea and Koto (2024) found, through a meta-analysis, that OBE-based curricula enhance students' practical competencies and learning motivation, particularly in skill-oriented courses. These findings reinforce the effectiveness of OBE in promoting tangible competency attainment. However, this study focused on vocational education and does not directly reflect the challenges faced by religious higher education institutions (PTKIN). In addition, Allo et al. (2024) examined the

application of OBE principles in the curriculum of an English Language Education program in Toraja. Their study found that OBE principles encouraged the development of curricula that are more responsive to student needs and external stakeholders. Nevertheless, the study focused on curriculum design at the program level and did not address institutional or policy factors influencing OBE implementation.

A study more closely aligned with the context of the present research was conducted by Chotimah et al. (2025) on the implementation of an OBE-based curriculum in the Arabic Language and Literature Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. The findings revealed that both lecturers and students encountered several challenges, including limited understanding of OBE concepts, difficulties in aligning Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) with the Semester Learning Plan (Rencana Pembelajaran Semester/RPS), and challenges in implementing competency-based assessment. Although relevant, the study was limited to a single program and did not provide comparative insights with other State Islamic Universities, leaving substantial room to explore inter-institutional variation. In contrast to the single-institution focus of the aforementioned study, the present research adopts a cross-institutional comparative perspective, enabling a more in-depth analysis of how institutional contexts shape the mechanisms and quality of OBE implementation in Arabic Language Education.

Based on the review of prior studies, although research on the implementation of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) in Indonesian higher education has expanded in recent years, most studies continue to focus on single case studies or specific aspects of OBE, such as curriculum design, assessment systems, or lecturer readiness, without providing cross-institutional comparative analysis. Moreover, studies that explicitly compare OBE implementation between State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri/PTKIN) and Private Islamic Higher Education Institutions (Perguruan Tinggi Swasta Islam/PTSI) remain scarce, particularly within the context of Arabic Language Education. Differences in governance structures, academic cultures, and support systems across these institutional types may generate significant variation in OBE implementation strategies and quality. This limitation indicates a clear research gap in understanding how institutional contexts influence the effectiveness of outcome-based curriculum implementation.

Based on this research gap, the present study offers originality by providing a comparative analysis of OBE-based curriculum implementation in two Islamic higher education institutions with distinct institutional characteristics: UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, as a State Islamic Higher Education Institution (PTKIN), and Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, as a Private Islamic Higher Education Institution. The novelty of this study lies not only in its institutional comparison but also in its identification of two primary mechanisms of OBE implementation: an approach grounded in academic culture and scholarly reflection, and an approach based on digital systems and centralized governance. Through this analysis, the study contributes theoretically by enriching perspectives on OBE implementation by positioning institutional context as a key variable, and practically by offering strategic recommendations for Arabic Language Education programs to integrate academic-reflective and systemic-digital approaches to sustainably strengthen alignment among learning outcomes, instructional processes, and assessment. Accordingly, this study does not conceptualize OBE implementation as a

merely administrative activity, but rather as a curriculum change process involving structural, cultural, and educational actor dimensions (Fullan, 2016).

The research questions of this study are as follows: How are OBE-based curricula planned and implemented in the Arabic Language Education programs at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta and Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta? To what extent has constructive alignment been achieved among the components of the OBE curriculum—namely Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs), Semester Learning Plans (Rencana Pembelajaran Semester/RPS), and assessment systems—within the two programs? What supporting and inhibiting factors influence the implementation of OBE-based curricula at each institution, viewed from the perspectives of policy, human resources, academic culture, and learning support systems? What similarities and differences characterize OBE implementation mechanisms between State Islamic and Private Islamic higher education institutions in the context of Arabic Language Education, and what best practices can be derived from this comparison?

Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach using a multiple case study design, which aims to identify similarities and differences in phenomena across two or more distinct social contexts through in-depth analysis of qualitative data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The multiple case study focused on the implementation of an Outcome-Based Education (OBE) curriculum in two different settings: UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta and Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. Yin (2018) argues that multiple case studies enable researchers to obtain a comprehensive understanding while conducting cross-case comparative analysis. Accordingly, this study not only provides a contextual explanation of OBE implementation but also identifies similarities and differences in practices across institutions.

The selection of the two institutions was conducted purposively, considering differences in institutional characteristics, curriculum management systems, and levels of learning technology adoption. These institutions were therefore regarded as representative cases for capturing variation in the implementation of OBE-based curricula in Arabic Language Education (Patton, 2015). Research participants were selected based on the following criteria: (1) direct involvement in the design or implementation of the OBE-based curriculum in the Arabic Language Education program, (2) a minimum of three years of experience in academic management or teaching, and (3) familiarity with institutional curriculum policies (Guest et al., 2013). The participants included heads of study programs responsible for OBE curriculum implementation and curriculum development lecturers involved in the formulation of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs), and Semester Learning Plans (RPS).

The data used in this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected using the following techniques: (1) semi-structured interviews to explore the perceptions, strategies, and experiences of curriculum actors (heads of study programs and lecturers); (2) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to elicit collective experiences, strategies, and challenges in OBE implementation; and (3) non-participant observations of curriculum implementation practices. Secondary data were collected through documentation techniques, including: (1) university curriculum guideline documents; (2) Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs); (3) Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs); (4) Semester Learning Plans (Rencana Pembelajaran Semester/RPS); and (5) reports of curriculum workshops and

training programs. Observations and document analysis were employed to verify the alignment between curriculum planning and OBE implementation practices.

Data analysis was conducted in a sequential manner using thematic analysis techniques (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process involved: (1) transcription and organization of data from interviews, FGDs, and observations; (2) initial coding to identify categories related to OBE planning, implementation, and evaluation; (3) clustering of major themes; (4) data triangulation across interviews, documents, and observations; and (5) cross-case comparison to examine similarities and differences in OBE implementation across the two Arabic Language Education programs. To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed: (1) member checking to confirm data and interpretations with participants; (2) source triangulation by comparing interview, observation, and document data; (3) maintaining an audit trail to document the research process for transparency and traceability systematically; and (4) peer debriefing through discussions with curriculum experts to obtain critical feedback (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles of qualitative research, including informed consent, confidentiality of participant identities, and the use of data solely for academic and scholarly purposes (Orb et al., 2001; Israel & Hay, 2006).

Result

This section presents the research findings from a thematic analysis of interviews, observations, and curriculum document data. The findings are organized into four main themes: (1) planning and formulation of OBE-based learning outcomes, (2) strategies for instructional implementation and assessment, (3) system support and curriculum governance, and (4) challenges in implementing the OBE curriculum in the Arabic Language Education programs at both institutions.

1. Planning and Implementation of the OBE-Based Curriculum

Addressing the first research question, the findings indicate that the OBE-based curriculum planning process in both programs began with the formulation of graduate profiles and Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), referring to the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KKNI), the National Standards for Higher Education (SN-Dikti), and stakeholder needs. At the Arabic Language Education program of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, curriculum planning was developed through an academic-reflective approach involving intensive scholarly discourse, workshops, and lecturer collaboration. This process emphasized the internalization of OBE concepts through collective understanding and pedagogical reflection. As informant NH stated, "The formulation of PLOs was discussed extensively in lecturer forums, not merely following a template, but ensuring their relevance to the competencies of prospective Arabic language teachers".

In contrast, at the Arabic Language Education program of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, informant FZ explained, "At UMY, the PLOs are already provided within the system, so lecturers simply align their courses with the existing indicators." This indicates that curriculum planning was conducted through a systematic and structured mechanism under the supervision of the university's Directorate of Education. The formulation of PLOs, their translation into Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs), and the development of Semester Learning Plans (RPS) were carried out in a standardized manner

and integrated into the SIM-OBE digital system. At the instructional implementation stage, both institutions adopted student-centered learning approaches and employed active learning methods and authentic assessment. However, differences were evident in the degree of uniformity and control over implementation.

Overall, the findings indicate that the formulation of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) at UIN Sunan Kalijaga was conducted through a reflective and collegial academic process, emphasizing substantive scholarly discussion and alignment with graduate profiles. In contrast, at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, PLO formulation was more strongly driven by structured institutional policies implemented through quality assurance mechanisms and the use of a digital curriculum platform.

2. Alignment of Curriculum Components (Constructive Alignment)

Addressing the second research question, the findings indicate that constructive alignment among Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs), Semester Learning Plans (Rencana Pembelajaran Semester/RPS), and assessment systems has been seriously pursued by both programs. Observations revealed that several lecturers at both institutions have linked learning activities to course-level learning outcomes, although the degree of consistency varies across lecturers and courses. Curriculum documents at both institutions were designed in accordance with OBE principles, with PLOs translated into CLOs, implemented through RPS, and measured using authentic assessment. Nevertheless, the realization of such alignment has not yet been fully optimal.

At UIN Sunan Kalijaga, lecturer flexibility and autonomy in managing learning processes encourage pedagogical innovation but also result in variations in the quality of alignment across courses. Meanwhile, at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, the use of the SIM-OBE system strengthens consistency and traceability of alignment among curriculum components, although in some cases it reduces lecturers' flexibility. These findings suggest that alignment has been structurally established but still requires reinforcement through consistency and continuous evaluation.

3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in OBE Implementation

Addressing the third research question, this study found that the main supporting factors for OBE implementation at both institutions include the presence of clear institutional policies, managerial support, and lecturers' commitment to developing outcome-based learning. The findings indicate that institutional system support for OBE implementation at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta is more integrated through quality assurance policies and digital systems, whereas at UIN Sunan Kalijaga, support relies more heavily on academic initiatives at the program level and collegial agreements among lecturers.

Conversely, the inhibiting factors in implementing the OBE curriculum in the Arabic Language Education programs at both sites encompass three primary aspects: (1) lecturers' conceptual understanding of OBE and constructive alignment, (2) administrative workload related to the preparation of instructional documents, and (3) limited sustained mentoring at the faculty and university levels. In addition, constraints related to practical facilities and variations in student readiness also affect the effectiveness of OBE implementation, particularly for performance-based learning outcomes.

4. Similarities, Differences, and Best Practices in OBE Implementation

Addressing the fourth research question, the cross-case analysis indicates that the primary similarity between the two institutions lies in their strong commitment to OBE

implementation and their shared orientation toward graduate learning outcomes. The key differences lie in the mechanisms of implementation: UIN Sunan Kalijaga develops OBE through an academic culture-based, scholarly, reflective approach, whereas Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta implements OBE through a digital system-based, centralized governance approach.

Based on this comparison, the study formulates best practices for integrating academic-reflective and systemic-digital approaches. The academic-reflective approach contributes to pedagogical depth and instructional innovation, while the systemic-digital approach ensures consistency, traceability, and continuous evaluation of learning outcomes. The integration of these two approaches has the potential to serve as a model for strengthening OBE curriculum implementation in Arabic Language Education within Islamic higher education.

Table 1

Cross-Case Comparison of OBE-Based Curriculum Implementation

Analytical Dimension	Arabic Language Education Program, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta	Arabic Language Education Program, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta	Analytical Findings (Cross-Case Insights)
Institutional Context	State Islamic university with a strong academic tradition and an integrative-interconnective scholarly paradigm	Private Islamic university with centralized academic governance and an entrepreneurial university orientation	Institutional context shapes the character of OBE implementation: academic-reflective vs. systemic-managerial
Orientation of OBE Implementation	Academic-reflective, grounded in scholarly discourse and lecturer collaboration	Systemic-digital, driven by university policies and information systems	OBE functions as a pedagogical framework at UIN and a governance framework at UMY
Curriculum Planning (PLOs & Graduate Profile)	Developed through academic forums, workshops, and stakeholder input	Developed through a structured process with facilitation from the Directorate of Education	Both programs meet OBE standards, but decision-making mechanisms differ
Alignment of PLOs to CLOs	Relatively flexible, influenced by lecturer autonomy and creativity	More standardized through systems and alignment forums	Flexibility fosters innovation but entails a risk of inconsistency
Development of Semester Learning Plans (RPS)	OBE-based, with varying quality across lecturers	OBE-based and uploaded within the SIM-OBE system	Digital systems enhance uniformity but may limit pedagogical variation

Analytical Dimension	Arabic Language Education Program, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta	Arabic Language Education Program, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta	Analytical Findings (Cross-Case Insights)
Instructional Strategies	Student-centered learning, project-based learning, microteaching	Active learning, project-based learning, digital integration	Similar emphasis on active learning, differing levels of implementation control
Learning Assessment	Authentic assessment using rubrics, though not yet standardized	System-integrated authentic assessment with more consistent rubrics	The main challenge lies in rubric consistency in both institutions
Monitoring of Learning Outcomes	Periodic evaluation through reports and academic meetings	Continuous monitoring through SIM-OBE (real-time tracking)	Digitalization strengthens traceability and continuous quality improvement
Role of Technology	Learning Management Systems (LMS) and Academic Information Systems as supporting tools	SIM-OBE as the primary enabler of OBE implementation	Technology determines monitoring effectiveness rather than pedagogical quality alone
Role of Lecturers	Primary actors in OBE implementation	Actors in implementation as well as system operators	OBE increases lecturer workload in both contexts
Dominant Supporting Factors	Adaptive academic culture and lecturer competence	Centralized governance, digital systems, and intensive mentoring	Structural support accelerates OBE implementation
Main Inhibiting Factors	Inconsistency across lecturers and limited practical facilities	Lecturer workload and administrative complexity	Lecturer workload is a structural issue across cases
OBE Implementation Model	Academically driven OBE model	System- and regulation-driven OBE model	No single ideal model; the two approaches are complementary
Strategic Implications	Strengthening monitoring systems and minimum standardization is required	Enhancing lecturers' pedagogical flexibility is needed	Integrating reflective and systemic approaches constitutes an ideal model

Discussion

This discussion section aims to interpret the research findings by situating them within the theoretical frameworks of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), constructive alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2011), and curriculum change theory (Fullan, 2016). Accordingly, the discussion not only explains what occurs in the implementation of the OBE curriculum in Arabic Language Education programs but also examines why such differences emerge across distinct institutional contexts.

1. OBE Implementation as a Curriculum Change Process in Two Institutional Contexts

Based on the cross-case analysis, this study demonstrates that OBE-based curriculum implementation across the two institutions does not merely reflect differences in technical mechanisms but also distinct patterns of curriculum change. In the Arabic Language Education program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga, OBE-related change evolves through bottom-up and cultural mechanisms, characterized by scholarly discourse, pedagogical reflection, and lecturer autonomy in interpreting learning outcomes. This pattern indicates the predominance of change in the beliefs and practices dimension, as articulated by Fullan (2016).

In contrast, in the Arabic Language Education program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, OBE implementation develops through top-down and structural mechanisms, with an emphasis on document standardization, the SIM-OBE digital system, and managerial control. This pattern reflects a strong shift in the structural and procedural change dimension; however, it has not been uniformly accompanied by changes in lecturers' pedagogical beliefs.

Table 2

Forms of OBE Implementation Change Across Two Institutional Contexts

Change Theory Dimension (Fullan)	UIN Sunan Kalijaga	Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UMY)
Curriculum structure	Gradual change	Rapid change
Instructional practices	Innovative and varied	Uniform and standardized
Lecturers' beliefs	Relatively internalized	Not yet evenly internalized
Control mechanisms	Academic-reflective	Systemic-digital
Direction of change	Organic	Mechanistic

From the perspective of the OBE framework, this study finds that OBE implementation in both institutions involves selective adaptation. At UIN Sunan Kalijaga, the dimensions of pedagogical flexibility and scholarly reflection are strengthened, while aspects of standardization and traceability of learning outcomes are relatively reduced. Conversely, at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, dimensions of monitoring, traceability, and data-driven evaluation are reinforced through the SIM-OBE system, whereas opportunities for lecturers' pedagogical reflection tend to be constrained. These findings indicate that OBE is not implemented uniformly or comprehensively, but rather through a process of contextual reinterpretation, resulting in different forms of OBE aligned with each institution's academic culture and governance structure.

The findings further demonstrate that, at a conceptual level, OBE-based curriculum implementation in the Arabic Language Education programs at UIN Sunan Kalijaga

Yogyakarta and Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta is aligned with the core principles of OBE, particularly in positioning learning outcomes as the foundation for planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning. This supports the arguments of Spady (1994) and Biggs and Tang (2011), who emphasize that OBE requires systematic alignment among learning outcomes, learning experiences, and assessment (constructive alignment). Moreover, from the perspective of curriculum change, implementation is not a linear process but rather contextual and negotiated, as articulated in Change Theory (Fullan, 2016).

Nevertheless, this study reveals that the depth and consistency of OBE implementation in the two institutions remain situated at different spectrums. The Arabic Language Education program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga tends to develop OBE through an academic-reflective approach grounded in scholarly culture, whereas the program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta emphasizes a systemic-digital approach, with SIM-OBE serving as a key instrument for monitoring learning outcome attainment. These differences reinforce the findings of Damit et al. (2021), which suggest that variations in OBE implementation success are strongly influenced by institutional readiness, support systems, and curriculum governance at the institutional level.

2. Formulation of Graduate Learning Outcomes (CPL) and Constructive Alignment

The findings reveal that differences in approaches to formulating graduate learning outcomes (CPL) reflect varying levels of internalization of the principles of constructive alignment. Within the framework proposed by Biggs and Tang (2011), constructive alignment requires coherent alignment among intended learning outcomes, learning activities, and assessment strategies. The reflective-collegial approach found at UIN Sunan Kalijaga indicates lecturers' efforts to construct such alignment through sustained academic discourse and collective reflection. In contrast, the systemic-digital approach adopted by Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta emphasizes alignment through institutional mechanisms and standardized quality assurance instruments.

From the perspective of curriculum planning, these findings are consistent with Negara et al. (2024), who argue that the formulation of CPL that integrates stakeholder needs and institutional values enhances the relevance of OBE-based curricula. However, this study extends previous research by demonstrating that even when CPL are appropriately formulated, the central challenge lies in translating CPL into course learning outcomes (CPMK) and implementing them consistently across courses. This condition aligns with the findings of Chotimah et al. (2025) regarding the Arabic Language Education program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, where lecturers experienced difficulties aligning CPMK, course syllabi (RPS), and outcome-based assessment practices.

Furthermore, this study's results corroborate those of Kushari and Septiadi (2022), who emphasize the critical role of information systems in supporting OBE implementation. The SIM-OBE system at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta functions not only as an administrative platform but also as a quality control mechanism and a basis for academic decision-making. Nevertheless, this study provides additional insight by showing that the presence of a digital system alone does not automatically ensure effective OBE implementation, as it must be accompanied by lecturer readiness, shared conceptual understanding, and strong pedagogical commitment.

3. Learning and Assessment Implementation

The variation in learning and assessment practices identified in this study indicates that the principles of backward design have not yet been fully and uniformly internalized

across the two institutions. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) emphasize that backward design positions learning outcomes as the starting point for instructional planning. The findings of this study suggest that when OBE is primarily understood as an administrative requirement, the relationship between learning activities and learning outcomes tends to be procedural rather than pedagogical.

In the context of learning and assessment, these findings are consistent with the meta-analysis conducted by Gea and Koto (2024), which demonstrates that OBE is effective in promoting active learning and enhancing students' practical competencies. This is reflected in the implementation of project-based learning, microteaching, and authentic assessment in both programs. However, this study also reveals that consistency in rubric-based assessment remains a persistent challenge, particularly due to differences in lecturers' experience and workload. This finding reinforces Harden's (2007) argument that assessment constitutes the most complex component of OBE and often represents a critical weakness in its practical implementation.

4. System Support and Change Theory

Differences in system support and governance of OBE-based curricula can be explained through the educational change theory proposed by Fullan (2016). Fullan emphasizes that the success of curriculum change is not determined solely by policy design, but also by an institution's capacity to cultivate a culture of change. The systemic-digital approach observed at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta reflects a structured, top-down pattern of change, whereas the academic-reflective approach at UIN Sunan Kalijaga represents a form of change based in the academic community.

The challenges of OBE implementation in Arabic Language Education cannot be separated from the disciplinary characteristics of language studies, which require a balance between linguistic mastery, pedagogical competence, and communicative skills. Unlike the exact sciences, language learning is highly dependent on reflective practice and classroom interaction. Consequently, an overly procedural approach to OBE may risk constraining lecturers' pedagogical flexibility in language education contexts.

The inhibiting factors identified in this study—such as the high administrative burden of OBE implementation, uneven levels of lecturers' conceptual understanding, and limited time availability—are consistent with the findings of Allo et al. (2024), who highlight that the effectiveness of OBE implementation is strongly influenced by organizational change management. From Kotter's (2012) perspective, OBE implementation can be understood as a systemic change process that requires effective leadership, strong communication of vision, and continuous capacity building of human resources. Without a structured change management approach, OBE risks being reduced to mere administrative compliance without generating significant improvements in learning quality.

From a comparative perspective, this study contributes to the OBE literature by demonstrating that best practices in OBE implementation in Islamic higher education are neither singular nor uniform. The academically reflective approach, grounded in disciplinary scholarship (as exemplified by UIN Sunan Kalijaga), and the systemically digital approach, grounded in managerial governance (as exemplified by Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta), each possesses distinct strengths and limitations. Integrating these two approaches holds the potential to produce a more comprehensive, adaptive, and sustainable model of OBE implementation, particularly within Arabic Language Education programs at public and private Islamic higher education institutions.

Based on the research findings, the implementation of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) in Arabic Language Education within Islamic higher education does not follow a single universal model. Instead, OBE implementation forms a spectrum of change shaped by institutional contexts. At one end of the spectrum lies a reflective-cultural OBE model, while at the other lies a systemic-managerial OBE model. This conceptualization extends Change Theory (Fullan) by demonstrating that the success of curriculum change is determined not merely by the intensity of change, but by the balance between structural transformation and cultural transformation. Accordingly, this study contributes to the development of OBE-based curriculum implementation theory by incorporating the institutional context dimension in Islamic higher education.

Thus, this study not only confirms previous research's findings but also makes a theoretical contribution by expanding the understanding of OBE implementation in the context of Arabic Language Education. First, this study identifies two spectrums of OBE implementation, namely the academic-reflective approach and the systemic-digital approach. Second, it demonstrates that OBE's success depends not only on curriculum design but also on academic culture and institutional governance. Third, this study enriches the discourse on change theory by showing that curriculum change in Arabic Language Education is contextual and cannot be standardized across institutions.

The findings of this study carry important practical implications for administrators of Arabic Language Education programs, particularly in designing OBE implementation strategies that balance systemic demands with academic freedom. Arabic language lecturers require sustained professional support to translate learning outcomes into meaningful teaching and assessment practices effectively. At the same time, institutions must ensure that quality assurance systems function as pedagogical facilitators rather than merely as instruments of administrative control.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) curriculum in Arabic Language Education programs at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta and Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta has demonstrated significant progress at both the curriculum planning and instructional implementation stages. Both programs have developed Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs), Semester Learning Plans, and assessment systems that are aligned with OBE principles and national policies, including the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KKNI), National Standards for Higher Education (SN-Dikti), and the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy.

Nevertheless, this study reveals notable differences in the characteristics of OBE implementation between the two institutions. The Arabic Language Education program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga places greater emphasis on an academic-reflective approach grounded in scholarly culture and lecturer collaboration, whereas the program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta adopts a systemic and digital approach supported by the SIM-OBE platform and centralized curriculum governance. These differences indicate that the success of OBE implementation is determined not only by curriculum design, but also by institutional context and the availability of supporting systems.

This study further concludes that the primary challenges in OBE implementation at both programs lie in the consistency of lecturers' conceptual understanding, high academic workload, and the limited integration of comprehensive and continuous evaluation

mechanisms. Therefore, strengthening lecturers' capacity, simplifying administrative burdens, and developing data-driven monitoring systems are strategic necessities to ensure the optimal achievement of graduate learning outcomes.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the OBE literature by offering a comparative analysis of Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia. This context has received limited scholarly attention. From a practical standpoint, the findings may serve as a reference for similar academic programs in developing OBE-based curricula that not only comply with regulatory standards but also effectively enhance the quality of graduates in Arabic Language Education. Future research is recommended to quantitatively examine the impact of OBE implementation on graduate competency attainment and its relationship with graduates' performance in the labor market.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

All authors are fully responsible for the entire research process and the preparation of this manuscript. The first author was responsible for developing the research concept, designing the study, and conducting field data collection. The second and third authors were involved in data collection and analysis and contributed to the preparation of the manuscript draft.

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Data availability statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are derived from curriculum documents from two institutions, namely UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta and Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, as well as from interview and focus group discussion (FGD) data obtained from informants involved in curriculum implementation at both institutions.

Declaration of interests statement

The authors declare that there are no financial interests, personal relationships, institutional affiliations, or other potential conflicts of interest that could have influenced the research design, data analysis, interpretation of results, or the writing of this article.

Additional information

This study forms part of an academic initiative aligned with the research roadmap of the Arabic Language Education Program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta and reflects LPPM's institutional support for enhancing research productivity and publication output within the academic community of UIN Sunan Kalijaga. The authors welcome scholarly discussion, critical feedback, and academic collaboration in the field of Arabic language education curriculum. Further information regarding this study and related publications may be obtained by contacting the corresponding author as indicated in this article.

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