

A Critical Review of Studies on Qur'anic Balaghah Module Development

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ABSTRACT

The development of instructional modules for *Qur'anic Balaghah* has often been characterised by pedagogical stagnation, whereby traditional content is reformulated without substantive innovation or critical reorientation. As a result, many instructional approaches fail to foster meaningful rhetorical appreciation, leaving students with only a surface-level engagement with the Qur'an's linguistic and aesthetic complexity. Despite the growing body of literature on *Balaghah* pedagogy, systematic and critical evaluation of the conceptual foundations and instructional effectiveness of these modules remains limited. This conceptual review examines a range of published studies on *Qur'anic Balaghah* module development, focusing on their pedagogical frameworks, design assumptions, and evaluative practices. The analysis identifies three recurring conceptual concerns: inadequacies in content conceptualisation, inconsistencies in the application of pedagogical theory, and a persistent lack of robust empirical validation of instructional effectiveness. These findings underscore the need for a comprehensive re-evaluation of existing pedagogical approaches to *Qur'anic Balaghah*, in order to ensure that its rhetorical depth and interpretative potential are meaningfully accessible to learners.

Keywords: Qur'anic Balaghah, Module Critique, Pedagogical Design, Rhetoric Studies, Islamic Education.

INTRODUCTION

The aesthetic richness of *Qur'anic Balaghah*, which denotes the rhetorical excellence and linguistic subtlety of the revealed text, has long been recognised as a central element in understanding the meanings and messages of the Qur'an. Nevertheless, engagement with this rhetorical dimension often remains misaligned with the pedagogical approaches employed in formal educational settings, particularly at the tertiary level. Teaching and learning experiences indicate that discussions on the aesthetic qualities and persuasive force of the Qur'an are frequently confined to technical grammatical rules, with limited integration of broader and more meaningful discursive contexts. This situation reflects a significant pedagogical gap between the richness of the Qur'anic text and the effectiveness of instructional strategies adopted for university students.

This shortcoming is not merely methodological in nature; it also carries implications for students' religious understanding and mastery. As a core discipline within Islamic studies, *Balaghah* should function as a medium for cultivating analytical competence, linguistic appreciation, and critical engagement with the Qur'an's linguistically miraculous (*i'jaz*) structures. However, existing efforts in instructional module development have yet to fully realise these objectives. Although numerous modules have been designed with the intention of strengthening students' proficiency, many tend to prioritise conceptual memorisation and the isolated identification of rhetorical devices, while offering insufficient scope for contextualised and critical analysis.

The primary issue in this context does not lie in the absence of curriculum development initiatives, but rather in the persistent reliance on traditional pedagogical frameworks and the lack of innovative approaches grounded in the actual needs of university learners. Furthermore, the assumption that any form of module development will automatically enhance learning effectiveness has constrained rigorous critical evaluation of these modules' strengths and limitations. Consequently, a relatively large body of studies has emerged in quantitative terms, yet remains limited in self-reflexive analysis and pedagogical impact. In light of this, there is an increasingly urgent need to reassess approaches to teaching *Qur'anic Balaghah* in a systematic and critically informed manner,

particularly to ensure their alignment with the cognitive level and academic demands of students at the university level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review focuses on previous studies related to the development of *Qur'anic Balaghah* modules with the aim of identifying prevailing methodological approaches as well as dominant teaching and learning practices that have shaped the field. While existing literature demonstrates strong continuity with the classical tradition of Balaghah, critical engagement with its conceptual frameworks and pedagogical implications remains limited. The following discussion systematically examines the constraints of earlier studies in order to establish a conceptual foundation for the development of more reflective and contextually grounded *Qur'anic Balaghah* modules.

Development of Qur'anic Balaghah Modules

Academic discourse on the development of *Qur'anic Balaghah* modules reveals a relatively static trajectory, characterised by an excessive emphasis on incremental improvements without critically interrogating the field's underlying assumptions (Baharum et al., 2023). Early works such as Badawi (1979) played a foundational role in formalising the classical tripartite division of Balaghah into '*ilm al-ma'ani*', '*ilm al-bayan*', and '*ilm al-badi'*'. Despite their enduring influence, these texts also laid the groundwork for subsequent pedagogical approaches that have often been adopted uncritically.

By the late twentieth century, module development efforts largely focused on simplifying classical content to enhance student accessibility (Al-Jundi, 1999). However, such simplification frequently came at the expense of rhetorical depth, as complex literary analysis was reduced to the mere classification of stylistic devices. An overemphasis on content delivery, rather than the cultivation of interpretative skills, has thus emerged as a recurring pattern within the literature.

Integration of Teaching and Learning Theories

Beginning in the early 2000s, several studies attempted to integrate modern pedagogical theories, such as constructivism and communicative language teaching, into *Balaghah* instruction (Al-Qarni, 2008). In theory, these approaches promise more active and student-centred learning environments. In practice, however, many studies fail to provide concrete illustrations of how the inherently textual and abstract nature of *Balaghah* can be meaningfully taught through such frameworks (Musyafa'ah et al., 2024). A pronounced gap between theory and practical implementation persists, suggesting that the adoption of contemporary pedagogical terminology often remains superficial rather than genuinely transformative.

More recent trends highlight the integration of technology into *Balaghah* modules, including the use of online platforms, multimedia resources, and interactive exercises (Ahmad & Abdullah, 2017). While technology offers logistical and instructional advantages, it does not inherently resolve fundamental pedagogical challenges. Modules that are weak in pedagogical design continue to fall short of learning objectives even when delivered through digital means. Moreover, existing literature rarely evaluates empirically whether technological integration leads to deeper comprehension of Qur'anic rhetoric or merely produces an appearance of innovation.

A substantial proportion of studies in this field adopt a descriptive orientation, focusing on module development processes such as needs analysis, material selection, and assessment design, without interrogating the foundational assumptions underlying these processes (Mohd Zain & Nik Mustapha, 2019). Module effectiveness is often measured through student satisfaction levels, thereby reinforcing conservative methodological approaches that replicate established procedures without critical evaluation.

Despite recurring calls for innovation, most proposed reforms remain minimal in scope. The reluctance to move beyond the classical tripartite structure of Balaghah, coupled with the failure to connect it meaningfully to broader processes of meaning-making and aesthetic interpretation, constitutes a major limitation. Balaghah is frequently detached from its relationship with *tafsir* and *usul al-fiqh* (Arafah et al., 2025), thereby diminishing its function as a dynamic interpretative tool (Al-Ghazali, 1998). This contextual isolation undermines the relevance of Balaghah in fostering a holistic understanding of the Qur'an.

Lack of Longitudinal Studies

Finally, the scarcity of longitudinal studies assessing the long-term impact of *Balaghah* modules is particularly notable. Although numerous modules have been developed and subjected to preliminary evaluation, very few studies examine the sustained development of students' skills, such as critical thinking and appreciation of Qur'anic rhetoric, over extended periods (Fahmi et al., 2025). This contrasts sharply with the field of general education, where rigorous longitudinal assessment has long been established (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In the absence of such data, the actual effectiveness of pedagogical interventions in *Qur'anic Balaghah* remains difficult to ascertain.

Overall, the field requires a decisive shift from descriptive reporting towards evidence-based critical evaluation. Without such a shift, the development of *Qur'anic Balaghah* modules risks remaining a repetitive academic exercise, yielding limited and unsustainable educational impact.

METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the methodological approach adopted to achieve the objectives of the study, with particular emphasis on critically examining the existing literature on the development of *Qur'anic Balaghah* modules.

Research Design

This study adopts a fully conceptual approach grounded in systematic library-based research. The selection of this methodology is motivated by the need to produce a comprehensive intellectual synthesis of existing scholarship on *Qur'anic Balaghah* module development. Accordingly, the study does not involve empirical data collection methods such as questionnaires or interviews. Instead, it focuses on constructing a robust theoretical framework through critical engagement with scholarly texts.

Data Collection Strategy

Research materials were obtained through an extensive search of major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and university repositories. Keywords used in the search process included "Qur'anic Balaghah module," "rhetoric instruction," "Islamic education pedagogy," and "Arabic eloquence curriculum." Source selection was conducted using purposive sampling, based on intellectual relevance and the potential of the texts to support in-depth critical analysis.

Document Selection Criteria

The study focuses on works that present module designs, pedagogical frameworks, or evaluations of the effectiveness of *Balaghah* instruction. Particular attention is given to studies that reveal, either explicitly or implicitly, conceptual weaknesses related to theoretical justification, pedagogical implementation, or underlying assumptions. This approach enables a more meaningful examination of both the strengths and limitations of the existing literature.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was conducted in several stages. The initial stage involved screening abstracts and introductory sections to exclude studies that were purely descriptive and lacked theoretical grounding or critical reflection. Selected documents—including journal articles, book chapters, and theses—were then subjected to iterative and in-depth analysis. Each text was examined according to four primary dimensions:

- a) the pedagogical theories employed, whether explicitly stated or implicitly embedded
- b) the methodologies used for module development and evaluation
- c) the conceptualisation of Balaghah reflected in the modules
- d) the claims of effectiveness and innovation presented

Particular emphasis was placed on identifying inconsistencies between stated learning objectives and actual module content, as well as misalignments between theoretical foundations and practical application. In addition, the analysis assessed whether the pedagogical approaches employed were genuinely innovative and contextually appropriate within the Islamic intellectual tradition, or merely repetitions of existing practices. This analytical process facilitated the identification of recurring conceptual weaknesses and intellectual gaps in the field of Qur'anic *Balaghah* instruction.

Methodological Justification

The strength of this approach lies in its capacity to generate nuanced, critically informed interpretations without reliance on statistical analysis. Through the deconstruction and reconstruction of existing academic arguments, the study develops a more critical theoretical synthesis that has the potential to contribute to methodological improvement in the teaching of *Qur'anic Balaghah*, in a manner that is both effective and evidence-informed.

RESULTS

The critical analysis of existing studies on the development of *Qur'anic Balaghah* modules reveals several concerning conceptual patterns. These patterns do not merely reflect technical shortcomings; rather, they point to fundamental misunderstandings regarding the nature of teaching and learning rhetorical competence.

First, a pronounced pedagogical limitation is evident. Most modules place excessive emphasis on direct content delivery, such as definitions, examples, and classifications of *Balaghah*, based on the assumption that content exposure alone is sufficient to develop understanding. This approach overlooks the fact that rhetorical appreciation requires the cultivation of interpretative sensitivity and cognitive flexibility, which cannot be achieved through memorisation alone. Consequently, excessive content load and static modes of delivery often diminish students' engagement with the aesthetic richness of Qur'anic language.

Second, there is a notable misalignment in the application of pedagogical theory. Many modules demonstrate an incoherent blending of educational theories without clear justification. Some claim to adopt student-centred approaches while continuing to rely heavily on one-directional lectures and memory-based assessments. Such contradictions indicate the absence of a clearly articulated educational philosophy, resulting in modules with ambiguous pedagogical direction.

Third, *Balaghah* is frequently detached from the broader revelatory and literary contexts of the Qur'an. It is commonly taught as an isolated entity, divorced from historical background, dialogical structure, and intertextual dimensions. Rhetorical devices are presented as discrete grammatical or stylistic phenomena, rather than as meaning-driven choices embedded within the discourse of revelation. This approach negates the interpretative function of *Balaghah* and diminishes its potential as a tool for understanding both meaning and rhetorical intentionality in the Qur'an.

Fourth, weaknesses in assessment mechanisms are evident. Assessment practices in most modules are largely confined to testing recall and the identification of rhetorical forms, with little attention given to students' ability to analyse, interpret, or critically apply *Balaghah* principles. This creates a clear gap between intended learning objectives and actual learning outcomes.

Fifth, there is a lack of robust empirical validation. A substantial number of modules are developed and implemented without systematic empirical evaluation of their effectiveness. Assessment is often limited to student satisfaction surveys, which do not adequately capture deep learning or the development of genuine rhetorical competence. The absence of effective feedback loops allows weak pedagogical assumptions to persist unchallenged and be repeatedly reproduced.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the development of *Qur'anic Balaghah* modules is confronted with serious structural challenges that directly affect students' learning experiences. The pedagogical limitations identified are not merely issues of instructional technique; rather, they reflect a fundamental misunderstanding

of *Balaghah* as an art of meaning, intentionality, and rhetorical effect, rather than a mere compilation of technical linguistic terms. When *Balaghah* is reduced to formal linguistic rules, students are prevented from engaging deeply with the aesthetic and semantic dimensions of the Qur'an.

The misalignment of pedagogical theories further undermines the academic credibility of the modules developed. The fragmented adoption of educational theories without integration into a coherent educational philosophy results in inconsistent learning experiences. This condition likely contributes to low levels of student engagement, as there is no clear pedagogical vision guiding the teaching and learning process. These findings suggest the need for a more critical and balanced dialogue between the Islamic intellectual tradition and contemporary educational sciences.

The detachment of *Balaghah* from the revelatory context represents a significant intellectual and spiritual loss. *Balaghah* should function as an interpretative bridge linking text, context, and meaning. When these elements are separated, students lose the ability to understand the rationale behind the Qur'an's rhetorical choices and their effects on meaning and message. This detachment directly constrains the development of critical thinking and *ijtihad*-oriented reasoning within the framework of revelation.

Assessment practices that remain confined to lower-order cognitive skills further exacerbate these issues. When assessment focuses only on what is easily measurable, the resulting learning outcomes tend to be superficial. This situation necessitates a fundamental restructuring of assessment strategies to align more closely with the authentic objectives of *Balaghah* instruction, namely the cultivation of interpretative sensitivity, critical thinking, and aesthetic appreciation.

Finally, the absence of robust empirical validation points to a lack of academic accountability. Without credible evidence, claims of innovation remain largely rhetorical and fail to contribute meaningfully to the advancement of the field. Future research must therefore integrate systematic and continuous evaluations of instructional effectiveness in order to support sustainable and evidence-informed progress in *Qur'anic Balaghah* education.

Proposed Conceptual Framework

Based on the findings and discussion presented above, this study proposes a concise conceptual framework for the effective development of *Qur'anic Balaghah* modules. The framework comprises four interrelated components, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for the Qur'anic Balaghah Module

<p>1. Conceptual Foundation Balaghah is understood as an interpretative tool rooted in the revelatory context, historical background, and aesthetic dimensions of the Qur'an.</p>
<p>2. Pedagogical Design The integration of coherent and contextually grounded educational theories, oriented towards active and reflective learning.</p>
<p>3. Assessment Strategies Assessment practices emphasising analysis, interpretation, an application, rather than rote memorisation.</p>
<p>4. Continuous Empirical Evaluation Ongoing validation of module effectiveness through both short-term and long-term learning data.</p>

This framework offers a more holistic and integrated direction for *Qur'anic Balaghah* instruction, with the potential to transform it from a fragmented academic exercise into a meaningful, high-impact learning experience

CONCLUSION

The preceding critique has clearly exposed the conceptual weaknesses that continue to constrain efforts in developing *Qur'anic Balaghah* modules. The findings indicate that while existing pedagogical approaches are often well intentioned, their effectiveness is undermined by intellectual stagnation and a failure to reassess the

underlying assumptions that shape instructional design. The issues identified do not merely call for incremental improvement; rather, they necessitate a comprehensive re-evaluation of how *Balaghah* is taught in the classroom. Current approaches frequently distance students from the authenticity of the revelatory text and place insufficient emphasis on the rhetorical beauty of the Qur'an, instead confining instruction to static academic rules. This condition demands principled and timely intervention to prevent persistent shortcomings in learning outcomes.

The continued reliance on incoherent theoretical frameworks, coupled with the lack of robust empirical evidence to substantiate module effectiveness, raises serious concerns regarding the academic validity of current development efforts. In the absence of a clear pedagogical philosophy and data-driven validation, module development risks becoming a routine exercise that consumes resources and student effort without yielding meaningful learning gains. Accordingly, this study underscores the need to move beyond predominantly descriptive research towards approaches that are more critical, reflective, and evidence-based. Modules should not merely be developed, but must be subjected to rigorous analysis, empirical testing, and systematic evaluation of their impact on actual learning.

In this regard, future research should move beyond proposing new modules and instead undertake long-term research projects that develop *Qur'anic Balaghah* modules grounded in a synthesis of classical rhetorical theory and robust constructivist pedagogical principles. Each stage of design, implementation, and evaluation—particularly the long-term effects on students' analytical skills and rhetorical appreciation—should be examined systematically. Such research must also develop valid and reliable assessment instruments capable of measuring deep understanding, rather than mere recall or identification of technical terms. Moreover, *Balaghah* must be recontextualised within a broader hermeneutical framework, enabling students to recognise its function as a living and meaningful interpretative tool.

Neglecting these foundational issues risks perpetuating weak pedagogical cycles that deny future generations access to the true rhetorical power of the Qur'an. The implications extend beyond the academic domain, as they directly affect levels of religious literacy, critical thinking capacity, and the intellectual vitality of the Islamic scholarly tradition. Failure to act not only results in ineffective instructional modules, but also jeopardises the development of a deeper and more meaningful engagement with the Divine Word itself.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Implications for Curriculum Developers

This study calls upon curriculum developers to undertake a comprehensive re-evaluation of the structure and content of *Qur'anic Balaghah* modules. Curricula should be constructed upon a coherent conceptual framework that integrates the revelatory context, interpretative processes, and linguistic aesthetics, and is supported by assessment strategies that evaluate students' analytical and interpretative capacities.

Implications for Educators

For educators, the findings highlight the need for more rigorous and reflective pedagogical training. *Balaghah* instructors must be equipped with a strong grounding in educational theory, as well as the ability to translate such theory into meaningful teaching practices that prioritise active and student-centred learning.

Implications for Islamic Education Policymakers

For policymakers, this study suggests the necessity of clear guidelines for curriculum and module development that emphasise academic accountability and evidence-based evaluation of effectiveness. Support for longitudinal research and pedagogical innovation grounded in both the Islamic intellectual tradition and contemporary educational sciences is essential to ensure that Islamic education remains relevant, high-quality, and impactful.

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