



Development of Islamic Religious Education Based on Independent Curriculum in Madrasah Aliyah

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Abstract: This study analyzes the implementation of the independent curriculum in Islamic religious education and the challenges in its implementation. This study was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Walisongo 2 Banyuwangi Probolinggo; the researcher chose this research location because it has relevance to the research topic, supports the availability of the data needed, and provides easy access and support from related parties. The approach used in this study is qualitative. The data collection technique used is interviews with one of the sources, namely the Islamic religious education teacher and the deputy head of the curriculum, using the data analysis method (descriptive), then presenting the data and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of the independent curriculum has several strategies for implementing Islamic religious education at Madrasah Aliyah Walisongo 2 Banyuwangi, including student evaluation, teacher training such as seminars, technical guidance, workshops, and MGMP activities (subject teacher deliberations), Implementing an Inclusive Learning Approach, Increasing Parental Involvement. Then, the strategic steps to solve the challenges of modern education while maintaining religious values in students' lives; the implications of this study are changes to the curriculum for Islamic religious education so that it becomes a foundation in the learning process to use contemporary methods.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana penerapan kurikulum merdeka saat di implementasikan pada pendidikan agama islam dan tantangan dalam penerapannya, penelitian ini di lakukan di madrasah aliyah walisongo 2 banyuwangi probolinggo, peneliti memilih tempat penelitian ini karena memiliki relevansi dengan topik penelitian, mendukung ketersediaan data yang di butuhkan serta memberikan kemudahan akses dan dukungan dari pihak terkait. Pendekatan yang di gunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah kualitatif, Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan yakni melalui wawancara salah satu narasumber yaitu guru pendidikan agama islam dan wakil kepala kurikulum dengan metode analisis data (deskriptif), kemudian melakukan penyajian data dan menarik kesimpulan, Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan kurikulum merdeka terdapat beberapa strategi dalam mengimplementasikan pada pendidikan agama islam di madrasah aliyah walisongo 2 banyuwangi yaitu antara lain evaluasi terhadap siswa, pelatihan guru seperti seminar, bimtek (bimbingan teknis), workshop dan kegiatan MGMP (musyawarah guru mata pelajaran). Melakukan Pendekatan Pembelajaran yang Inklusif, Meningkatkan Keterlibatan Orang Tua. maka langkah strategis solusi terhadap tantangan pendidikan modern sekaligus menjaga nilai-nilai agama dalam kehidupan siswa, implikasi penelitian ini yaitu perubahan kurikulum terhadap pendidikan agama islam, sehingga menjadi landasan dalam proses pembelajaran untuk menggunakan metode kontemporer.

A. Introduction

Changes in the curriculum are based on the increasingly dynamic development of the era that brings new challenges in meeting the needs of society, especially in producing superior and competent graduates in various fields. One effective way to realize this is to implement a curriculum-based approach. The curriculum has a vital role as a guideline in designing a learning process that is focused and relevant to the needs of the times (Li et al., 2024). In the context of education, the curriculum is designed to suit the needs of students and the demands of the world of work and society (Kumar & Rewari, 2022). This curriculum-based learning process allows teaching materials and methods to be adjusted to the level of student competence so that their potential can be developed optimally (Hatija et al., 2025). With this approach, each student gains knowledge, practical skills, and values relevant to facing real-life challenges (Rohm et al., 2021). Therefore, an effectively designed curriculum can integrate local, national, and global needs so that the graduates have academic abilities and practical competencies ready to compete at various levels. This approach provides space for innovation and creativity, ensuring that each student gets an equal opportunity to develop according to their potential (Ingaldi et al., 2023).

As the challenges and problems that arise due to changing times become increasingly complex, a more holistic and integrated approach is needed to create a quality education system. In facing various obstacles the government faces, such as limited resources, changing community needs, and the challenges of globalization, collaboration between various parties is essential (Dou et al., 2023). Cooperation between the government and the community, including parents or guardians of students, educational institutions, and the business world, is much needed to advance education. The role of parents or guardians of students is an important element in supporting learning at home so that students get a conducive environment for learning. As the central place for the learning process, educational institutions must continue to innovate in providing relevant and quality education (Xu et al., 2022).

In this case, curriculum development is one of the main aspects that must be considered (Akala, 2021). The curriculum needs to be continuously updated and adjusted to remain relevant to student's needs and the development of the times. This curriculum change covers various aspects, such as adjusting the material's content, learning methods, teaching models, evaluation systems, and the basic concepts of the curriculum itself (Supriani et al., 2022). With a more flexible, relevant, and quality approach, the curriculum can effectively maximize students' potential. Education can produce competent, innovative, and adaptive individuals in the modern era with a focused curriculum supported by cooperation between various parties. Through this effort, it is hoped that education can continue to develop as the primary foundation for building highly competitive students.

Facts prove that the curriculum has developed over time; the Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP), which is the result of previous education, has been developed, and then K13 was created to perfect learning (Setiawan & Ahla, 2023). It has now changed to an independent curriculum or identical to independent learning. With this, through the

independent curriculum policy, the government introduces a new approach to education that is student-centered, project-based, and contextual. This curriculum allows teachers to create learning based on student needs and developments (Nurhayati et al., 2022). From the perspective of Islamic Religious Education, this approach provides an excellent opportunity to integrate Islamic values with contemporary issues, such as tolerance, digital ethics, and environmental sustainability.

The aspects that are very influential in education, namely teachers, curriculum, methods, objectives, the government as the holder of the highest power or as the person in charge, and the educational administration system, influence the field of education. To achieve education that is by the goals set, all of these aspects are links that need to be strengthened (Assegaf et al., 2022). The goals of education in Indonesia have changed significantly over time. Globalization is happening in every country, especially in the 21st century, to achieve national education goals, namely creating humans who can compete globally.

Responding to global competitiveness that demands greater abilities, the independent curriculum offers new hope from the previous curriculum (Prihatini & Sugiarti, 2022). Humans need to have three competencies to function in the 21st century: The ability to think, act, and live in the world (Rasskazova et al., 2020). The ability to solve problems and use creative reasoning are two aspects of thinking competence: Performance competence, for example, interaction, teamwork, digital literacy, and technology. Life competence is initiative, self-control, global awareness, and shared responsibility. One of the most important factors in human transformation is education. Because, with proper processing and development, humans have good potential. A competent teacher is more than just a facilitator, a provider of teaching materials, and a motivator; but can develop and explore the most significant potential for students, as the responsibility of educators is to maximize student potential (Chiu et al., 2023).

Madrasah Aliyah Walisongo 2 Banyuwangi has implemented an independent curriculum since 2022, but it is still limited to grades 10 and 11, while grade 12 continues to use the 2013 curriculum now; this transition is indeed common, especially in educational institutions that want to ensure gradual readiness. According to Mrs. Ririn Mashuro, SPd.I, explained that the implementation of the independent curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Walisongo 2 Banyuwangi has been quite effective even though there are limitations, one of the obstacles is the policy of prohibiting bringing cellphones to school because the decision to prohibit it is to minimize its negative impacts. However, cell phones can be a handy tool in learning to find additional references about the material being studied besides the LKS we use.

According to previous research by Hidayatullah et al (2021), the curriculum is the most important element in educational management. The curriculum can be constructed independently and imaginatively to become the brain behind the operationalization of the institution—an independent and achievement-based curriculum as a form of educational autonomy. The design and development model of an independent curriculum based on

achievement is the main topic of this study. The goal is to find a concept and design of a stand-alone achievement-based curriculum for boarding schools. This study uses a case study methodology and a qualitative approach. Based on the study results, the Al-Hikmah Boarding School curriculum was developed using the best competency requirements for graduates who are faithful, Muslim, and academic (Hidayatullah et al., 2021).

In line with the research conducted by Muhammad Latif Nawawi, he said that the speed and strategy of teaching can also be influenced by a curriculum that is by the learning needs of instructors. This study explains how the Independent Curriculum is implemented at Bustanul' Ulum Anak Tuha High School in PAI Learning in the Society 5.0 Era. This study uses a qualitative approach to examine the problems discussed through descriptive data collection. Lofland, quoted by Lexy J. Moleong, emphasized that the primary data in qualitative research comes from actions obtained from research subjects. In addition, additional data such as documents or other sources are also used to complement and strengthen the research results. This study collected data through three main techniques: observation, documentation, and interviews. The data that has been collected was then analyzed through three stages, namely data presentation, data condensation, and data inference. The results of this study indicate that the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) learning approach or strategy is a practical, innovative method for learning Islamic Religious Education. The CTL approach emphasizes the connection between subject matter and students' daily lives, thus making the learning process more relevant. In its implementation, educators combine various methods, strategies, approaches, and learning techniques to create a fun, interactive, and productive learning atmosphere. Through this approach, students find it easier to understand the subject matter and feel more involved in the learning process. This approach can increase student interest, encouraging them to think critically (Nawawi et al., 2023).

This study differs from previous studies in several ways. The difference lies in its focus, which is more directed at implementing Islamic religious education based on the independent curriculum, and the challenges in its implementation at Walisongo 2 Banyuwanyar Islamic High School. Educators must be able to operate technology to keep up with the times. Therefore, educational institutions should provide adequate media to achieve learning goals.

The purpose of this study is to analyze then examine how the implementation of the independent curriculum when implemented in Islamic religious education and the challenges in its implementation so that it is expected to contribute to the development of Islamic education science, as well as become a guideline for teachers and administrators of Madrasah Aliyah Walisongo 2 Banyuwanyar Probolinggo in implementing the Independent Curriculum effectively.

B. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach (Denny & Weckesser, 2022), which means that this study emphasizes an in-depth understanding of the phenomena being studied

rather than numerical or statistical data. This approach explores the informants' meanings, experiences, and views. In data collection, this study uses interviews as the primary technique, where the informants interviewed are the deputy head of curriculum and Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Walisongo 2 Banyuwangi.

This interview aims to obtain information directly related to the research topic. After the data is collected, the researcher conducts descriptive data analysis, which means the data is processed and explained systematically based on specific patterns or themes. Furthermore, the analyzed data is presented in a more structured form so that it is easy to understand before finally drawing conclusions based on the research findings. The following are the stages of the research.

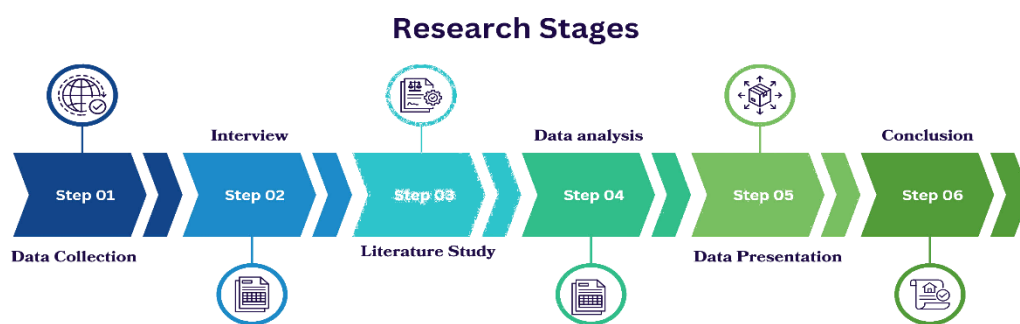


Figure 1. Stages of Qualitative Research

C. Result and Discussion

Result

Islamic education, at its core, seeks to propagate the teachings of Islam among believers by the will of Allah and His Messenger, thereby nurturing the intrinsic human dimension present in every individual across all spheres of life. Historically, Muslims have drawn upon exemplary models to structure an educational system firmly rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah, which serve as Islam's primary sources (Susandi & Pohan, 2024).

Islamic religious education (PAI) is designed to equip learners with the knowledge to comprehend, appreciate, and live by Islamic teachings while fostering taqwa (piety) and noble character as guided by the Qur'an and Hadith. PAI aims to cultivate an Islamic identity within students through a blend of guidance, instruction, practice, and practical experience. As Muhaimin (2020) emphasizes, PAI encompasses physical and spiritual mentorship aligned with Islamic principles, representing a systematic effort by educators to shape the Muslim personality of each student.

When we merge the concepts of "Curriculum" and "Islamic Religious Education (PAI)," we arrive at an educational framework tailored to develop students' abilities to understand, reflect upon, and apply Islamic teachings in their everyday lives. Asep Saefudin, as cited in Nabilah et al. (2023), defines the curriculum as a coherent plan and

organization of learning processes and desired outcomes, encompassing all teaching and learning activities and the strategic optimization of educational resources.

Implementing PAI under the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) includes enhancing students' critical thinking skills, delivering relevant and applicable content to contemporary contexts, stimulating creativity, and honing practical competencies. The overarching goal is to create learning experiences that are active, meaningful, and practice-oriented.

According to Mrs. Ririn Mashuro, S.Pd.I., an Islamic Religious Education teacher at Madrasah Aliyah Walisongo 2 Banyuwangi, the Independent Curriculum aligns closely with PAI's objectives. Both aim to produce learners who excel academically while demonstrating strong moral character, religious commitment, and virtuous conduct. The Independent Curriculum's emphasis on character building, flexible learning paths, and socio-emotional intelligence development provides robust support for achieving PAI's goals.

Through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), PAI teachers can weave Islamic values into various activities. For example, P5 initiatives may foster social awareness, promote responsibility via environmental stewardship programs, and instill tolerance and religious moderation in students' daily conduct. The curriculum's thematic and contextual approach makes PAI material more relatable to students' real-life experiences, encouraging more profound and practical understanding.

Nonetheless, rolling out the Independent Curriculum in PAI faces challenges such as limited teaching facilities, uneven teacher preparedness for the new curriculum, and the need to adapt pedagogical methods to diverse student proficiency levels. Addressing these challenges requires bolstered support: provision of adequate learning media, ongoing professional development for teachers, and collaboration among schools, families, and communities. When implemented effectively, the Independent Curriculum can serve as a sturdy foundation for PAI, fostering a generation of students who possess not only profound religious knowledge but also the ability to embody Islamic values in their daily lives—ultimately producing individuals who are faithful, pious, and of exemplary character.

1. Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out systematically using a qualitative approach; the results of searching for articles discussing the implementation of the curriculum in Islamic religious education are keywords, namely Islamic religious education, madrasah aliyah, and independent curriculum. Researchers use several strategies, namely evaluating the needs and characteristics of students, educators participating in training activities such as workshops, technical guidance, seminars, and MGMP (Subject Teacher Deliberation), carrying out an inclusive learning approach, and increasing parental involvement. The use of these strategies can be a solution to the challenges experienced by teachers and students. It can improve the development of Islamic religious education through the foundation of an independent curriculum.

2. Critical Appraisal

In critical appraisal, the Independent Curriculum provides flexibility in project-based learning and character building, but challenges are experienced in its implementation. Five articles are included in the criteria for implementing the independent curriculum; the discussion of each article can be seen in Table 1.

3. Result of Literature Review

The literature review results in the author's article found various challenges faced in implementing the independent curriculum; each was found in teacher readiness, limited facilities, and adaptation of learning methods.

The first article's findings are that the achievement of Islamic Religious Education learning objectives is influenced by the role of educators, representative materials and teaching, students who have the will and skills, and students who apply each material to real life. Students can combine expectations and reality so that Islamic Religious Education learning is used as a guide, direction, and target for actions taken appropriately and clearly.

The second article finding is that the Problems that occur in the implementation of the independent curriculum in Islamic religious education subjects are Islamic religious education teachers who find it difficult to change their mindset or old habits in teaching, Islamic religious education teachers are still carried away by the 2013 Curriculum learning model so that its implementation uses a mixed learning approach between the 2013 curriculum and the independent curriculum and Islamic religious education teachers do not understand in detail related to differentiation learning and find it challenging to apply it in learning.

The third article finds that character education must be integrated into each subject, self-development, and Madrasah culture. Students can develop character values through spiritual and social attitudes.

The fourth article's findings concern the implementation of the independent curriculum in Islamic religious education, which has not been fully implemented. Several obstacles are faced, including some teachers not fully understanding independent learning. The obstacles felt in implementing the independent curriculum in Islamic Religious Education learning are the difficulty for educators in creating fun and quality learning and determining the right themes and content in P5 activities to suit students' interests and talents.

4. Data Analysis

Data analysis matrix from 5 articles explaining the implementation of the independent curriculum in Islamic religious education, namely as follows:

Table 1. Analysis Data

No.	Researcher Name and Year	Title	Research Result
1.	(Cahaya, 2022)	The role of Islamic religious education teachers in implementing the independent learning curriculum in the digital era	By using the library research method, it was concluded that the Islamic Religious Education Learning version of "Merdeka Belajar" was designed to train students to have critical thinking skills, creativity, communication skills, and abilities and to make students have cooperation and be able to collaborate so that later students can have more mature, wise, more careful thinking so that students can understand, develop and apply Islamic teachings in everyday life.
2.	(Pillawaty, 2023)	Problems of Islamic religious education teachers in implementing the independent curriculum	The results of this study can conclude that Islamic religious education teachers who implement an independent curriculum tend to find it challenging because students' independence still needs special attention. In addition to being required to be facilitators, teachers must also be able to form active and creative students, and this is not easy to implement if students tend only to follow the teacher's directions without any initiative.
3.	(Muslimin, 2023)	Development of character education curriculum in madrasas based on the independent curriculum	The findings reveal that the development of character education implemented in learning must be integrated into each subject, self-development, and Madrasah culture. Character values developed in students can be through two attitudes, namely spiritual and social. Spiritual is practicing the teachings of the religion they believe in, while social includes honest behavior, discipline, responsibility, politeness, caring for the environment, and self-confidence in interacting with the environment. Several stages of student character development can be passed through 1) knowledge (knowing), 2) implementation (acting), and 3) habits.
4.	(Hakim & Nabila, 2022)	Implementation of the independent learning curriculum in character formation	The study results show that the independent learning curriculum in schools has been running, but teachers face several obstacles in implementing it. Obstacles related to understanding revolve around not understanding the essence of independent learning; it is challenging to

		eliminate old habits, and the lecture method still dominates. Other technical obstacles revolve around the difficulty of creating teaching modules and the incompatibility of the learning platform with what is in it. Finally, at the evaluation stage, teachers have difficulty in making assessments.
5. (Noor et al., 2023)	Implementation of the independent curriculum in Islamic religious education learning	The study results show that the independent curriculum's implementation process is divided into three stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. The positive impacts of implementing the independent curriculum on Islamic Religious Education learning include increasing teacher and student creativity, increasing student enthusiasm and activeness in learning, and increasing teacher enthusiasm in developing their capacity. Obstacles to implementing the independent curriculum in Islamic Religious Education learning are the difficulty for educators in creating fun and quality learning and determining the right themes and content in P5 activities to suit students' interests and talents.

Discussion

Strategy for Implementing Islamic Religious Education at Walisongo 2 Banyuanyar Islamic Senior High School

In developing an Islamic religious education curriculum based on the independent curriculum, Walisongo 2 Banyuanyar Islamic Senior High School has compiled a curriculum considering Islamic values, local culture, and student backgrounds. In addition, digital learning infrastructure and facilities continue to be developed, and facilities that are education sources for teachers and students continue to be improved. The independent curriculum in Islamic religious education learning aims for students to get quality learning relevant to the times' demands. Through an interview with one of the speakers, namely Mrs. Ira Agustin Handayani, S.S., she emphasized how to overcome these challenges through the following strategies:

First, Evaluating Student Needs and Characteristics

The findings of the first article are that the achievement of Islamic Religious Education learning objectives is influenced by the role of educators, where teachers evaluate needs and observe student characteristics. This method includes contextual learning, project-based learning, and differentiated teaching. Formative and summative evaluations are used by Islamic religious education teachers at Walisongo 2 Banyuanyar Islamic Senior High School. Summative evaluation is conducted at the end of the subject/semester, while

formative evaluation is conducted during the learning process. In addition, using technology in evaluation can increase student participation and assessment accuracy, thus supporting the optimal achievement of Islamic education goals (Sardiyanah, 2020).

Second, Holding Teacher Training and Development

Madrasah Aliyah Walisongo 2 Banyuwangi sends teachers, including Islamic religious education teachers, to attend meetings of all subject teachers related to implementing the independent curriculum through workshops, seminars, and technical guidance (bitter) as training and mentoring. This effort aims to improve teachers' knowledge, skills, and competence in understanding and analyzing learning outcomes, preparing learning plans, and creating learning objective flows and learning modules. With this effort, Madrasah Aliyah Walisongo 2 Banyuwangi is committed to developing Islamic religious education standards and ensuring educators have the appropriate knowledge and skills to teach students according to the independent curriculum.

Third, Improving Islamic Religious Education Through MGMP (Subject Teacher Deliberation) Activities

This activity involves a collaborative method where teachers share experiences and expertise in planning, teaching, and assessing learning. MGMP activities are used to train teachers' abilities, including Islamic religious education teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Walisongo 2, to improve learning quality. This forum is critical to overcoming the challenges teachers face and following the development of education and learning at the system and class levels.

Fourth, Implementing an Inclusive Learning Approach

The fourth article's findings are that the independent curriculum in Islamic religious education has not been fully implemented. The obstacles to implementing the independent curriculum in Islamic Religious Education learning are the difficulty for educators in creating enjoyable and quality learning and determining the right themes and content in P5 activities to suit students' interests and talents (Noor et al., 2023).

With an inclusive approach to Islamic religious education in Madrasah Aliyah, the aim is to create friendly, fair, and open learning for all students, including those with special needs or from diverse backgrounds. This approach is based on the *rahmatan lil 'alamin* principle, which emphasizes universal compassion and respect for differences. Teachers in Madrasah Aliyah need to adjust learning methods, such as visual, audio, or direct practice media, to support students with different learning styles, including those with learning difficulties. The curriculum is designed to be flexible and relevant by including the values of inclusivity, tolerance, and respect for diversity in Islamic religious education materials, such as in the study of morals, fiqh, or Islamic history. A supportive classroom climate is implemented through positive interactions, free from discrimination, and encouraging the

active participation of all students, for example, through collaborative learning or group work that strengthens mutual respect.

Fifth, Increasing Parental Involvement in Islamic Religious Education

This approach requires strategic steps to ensure real support in forming students' character and faith. Parental support can be expanded through collaboration with the school committee to develop inclusive, relevant educational programs that meet students' needs. With close synergy between parents and madrasahs, students get a good religious education at school and consistent support at home so that Islamic values can be embedded and applied in their lives. This approach ensures that the responsibility for Islamic religious education is not only in the madrasah but also becomes a collaboration to produce a pious generation with noble character and ready to face the challenges of the times.

D. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Walisongo 2 Banyunyar has been relatively effective despite specific challenges. The policy prohibiting using mobile phones in school aims to minimize negative impacts; however, mobile phones can also serve as valuable learning tools. Additionally, teachers' readiness to operate technological devices such as laptops and projectors needs improvement, and teaching methods should be adjusted to accommodate students' varying levels of understanding.

These findings indicate that enhancing the quality of Islamic religious education within the framework of the Independent Curriculum requires evaluating students' needs and characteristics. Teachers should actively participate in professional development programs, such as workshops, technical training, seminars, and Subject Teacher Deliberation (MGMP) activities, to improve their competence in adopting technology-based teaching methods. Furthermore, implementing an inclusive learning approach and increasing parental involvement can be strategic solutions to address the challenges faced in this educational setting.

Future studies should explore the effectiveness of technology-based learning strategies in implementing the Independent Curriculum, particularly in Islamic religious education. Additionally, further research could examine the impact of mobile phone prohibition policies on learning effectiveness and identify alternative policies that optimize technology integration in education.

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