

Strategies to Face the Challenges of the Independent Curriculum in Improving the Quality of Islamic-Based Education

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Abstract

The educator or teacher is the main promoter of learning, some of the tasks shouldered are educating, leading, training and developing the curriculum. The purpose of educators is to create conducive learning conditions in the sense of a learning atmosphere that is fun, interesting, provides a sense of comfort and security, and provides opportunities for students to think actively, critically, creatively and innovatively while developing the ability to reason knowledge independently or independently. Students must certainly be able to organize a learning process that can at least achieve learning objectives. Strategies in improving the quality of resources and infrastructure for teaching and learning activities in schools in the form of increasing the capacity of Islamic educational institutions, the existence of institutions that carry out learning development and curriculum assessment, development and provision of learning advice / media assistance.

Keywords: Strategy; Challenges of Islamic Education; Islamic-Based Quality Improvement

Abstrak

Pendidik atau guru adalah promotor utama pembelajaran, beberapa tugas yang dipikul adalah mendidik, memimpin, melatih dan mengembangkan kurikulum. Tujuan dari pendidik adalah untuk menciptakan kondisi belajar yang kondusif dalam arti suasana belajar yang menyenangkan, menarik, memberikan rasa nyaman dan aman, serta memberikan kesempatan kepada siswa untuk berpikir secara aktif, kritis, kreatif dan inovatif sambil mengembangkan kemampuan nalar pengetahuan secara sendiri atau mandiri. Peserta didik tentunya harus mampu menyelenggarakan proses pembelajaran yang sekurang-kurangnya dapat mencapai tujuan pembelajaran. Strategi dalam meningkatkan mutu sumber daya dan sarana prasarana kegiatan belajar mengajar pada sekolah berupa peningkatan kapasitas lembaga pendidikan Islam, adanya lembaga yang melakukan pengembangan pembelajaran dan penilaian kurikulum, pengembangan serta pemberian bantuan saran/media pembelajaran.

Kata Kunci: Strategi; Tantangan Pendidikan Islam; Peningkatan Kualitas Berbasis Keislaman

A. INTRODUCTION

The current implementation of the Independent Curriculum must be able to improve students' abilities. Independent learning or often known as Merdeka Belajar, teachers and students have the freedom to explore skills and improve learning according to skills and abilities. Ki Hajar Dewantara said that the current learning principle will lead to the concept of independent learning which is currently being discussed, so that it can be one way to improve self-competence in accordance with the character of students, so that the morals or attitudes of students can be maintained while still introducing character building values.¹

¹ Israwati Amir, Nursalam Nursalam, and Irvan Mustafa, "Tantangan Implementasi Nilai-Nilai Profil Pelajar Pancasila Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia Pada Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar," *GHANCARAN: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra Indonesia*, 2022, hlm. 209, <https://doi.org/10.19105/ghancaran.vi.7587>.

Through character, moral and ethical education, generations of Indonesians become better. Education independently will transform and must be in line with the education system in the 4.0 era. The independent learning curriculum is expected to be able to overcome the decline in learning ability due to the Covid-19 pandemic that has occurred in this world, more specifically in Indonesia, so that learning shifts from offline processes to online processes. As a result, education units in schools are not ready for these learning changes because they do not have the facilities and infrastructure to implement learning concepts. Another fact that shows that education in Indonesia is still far from being aspired to towards national and international standard education. Indonesia is experiencing a learning crisis because many students in schools still cannot understand learning well.²

The era of revolution 4.0 which leads to education that will grow and develop according to the modernity of education today, the pioneer who initiated this, namely the minister of education Nadiem Makarim made a new policy, namely freedom of learning or often called freedom of learning. Independent learning is expected to improve the quality of human resources and strive to improve the national education system, ready to face the challenges of the times.³

The curriculum has a major impact on applied training in a more applicable form. If the curriculum is well planned and supported by adequate facilities and infrastructure, support and facilitate teachers to teach and students to live or be aware of the importance of education, and the quality of teachers and students towards good things that are improving Indonesian education culture. The regulation of Merdeka Belajar is an idea to improve the education system that has become a culture in Indonesia that has been implemented nationally. The rules of the concept of independent learning also have the desire to create an educational atmosphere that is more in demand and leads to something desired. The policy of the independent curriculum must be able to realize ideal education with all the ideas and possibilities that will occur according to the times, requiring training and education from time to time.⁴

Education will require a strong foundation to be able to overcome the developments that occur during the presence of the industrial revolution 4.0 today until the future. The concept of independence from education leads to ideal education, education that is willing to innovate and collaborate in various fields. The current situation is used as a foundation for educational innovation, starting from the learning system, skills and teaching abilities of teachers. Collaboration with technology, virtual learning methods, and smart teaching and learning strategies.

² Amir, Nursalam, and Mustafa, hlm. 211.

³ Yuni Sagita Putri and Meilan Arsanti, "KURIKULUM MERDEKA BELAJAR SEBAGAI PEMULIHAN PEMBELAJARAN," *Seminar Nasional Pendidikan Sultan Agung IV* 4, no. 1 (December 27, 2022): hlm. 22, <http://jurnal.unissula.ac.id/index.php/sendiksa/article/view/27269>.

⁴ Irwan Efendi, Sri Murhayati, and Zaitun Zaitun, "Model Inovasi Pengembangan Kurikulum Merdeka," *At-Tajdid: Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 4 (October 30, 2022): hlm. 197, <https://doi.org/10.24014/AT-TAJDID.V2I4.20043>.

Islamic-based educational institutions are challenged to produce excellent graduates. Having excellence or expertise in knowledge, skills and personality, because education with Islamic nuances in a broad sense is an effort to maintain and develop human nature and human resources in it to form a perfect human being according to Islamic standards to become a servant of Allah SWT. who are real and able to function as leaders who can correct shortcomings and can improve and maintain balance on this earth.⁵

The problems expressed above explain that several efforts must be made to build skilled and highly competitive human resources, with science and technology insight, moral and cultured. One of them is curriculum updates. The curriculum has a very important place in education. Through this curriculum can be a way or guide to organize and guide so that educational goals are achieved and do not deviate from the planned goals. Islamic-based education requires directed planning in the implementation of the use of digital resources. Therefore, it is necessary to create a curriculum that can be a reference for digital technology-based learning. So that Islamic education can emerge with the benefits of its resources if planned and implemented properly.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Implementation of the Independent Curriculum⁶ many schools/madrasahs have begun to be implemented independently although they still face various challenges. Lack of teacher understanding to limited funds also affect changes in the learning system that are meaningful and fun. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum is submitted according to the choice of the education unit. There is an Independent Learning option (applying some parts of the principles of the Independent Curriculum without replacing the curriculum that is being implemented by the school); Mandiri Ubah (has started using the Merdeka Curriculum with the teaching tools provided); and Mandiri Berbagi (implementing the Merdeka Curriculum by developing various teaching tools yourself).

Formal educational institutions of schools/madrasahs have begun to choose the Independent Curriculum gradually, from the basic level to the higher level. Adjustments are still being made so that the status of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum can be improved according to choice and ability. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum which provides flexibility for educational institutions to adjust the curriculum according to school conditions and needs is believed to be going well. With the approach of voluntary implementation of the Independent Curriculum by education units, within two years of the massive implementation of this new curriculum, around 80 percent of education units were interested in implementing. Separately, Education, Culture, Research and

⁵ Atik Wartini, Maragustam Siregar, and Eka Saptaning Pratiwi, "Kontribusi Metode Belajar Berbasis Riset Dalam Pengembangan Ruang Merdeka Di Taman Anak Salam Yogyakarta," *Kiddo: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini* 3, no. 2 (September 12, 2022): hlm. 93, <https://doi.org/10.19105/KIDDO.V3I2.6824>.

⁶ Mulik Cholilah et al., "Pengembangan Kurikulum Merdeka Dalam Satuan Pendidikan Serta Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Pembelajaran Abad 21," *Sanskara Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran* 1, no. 02 (May 31, 2023): 56–67, <https://doi.org/10.58812/SPP.V1I02.110>.

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Technology Minister Nadiem Anwar Makarim said it would take five to seven years to implement the new curriculum. For the implementation of the Independent Curriculum this time, the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology did it in a different way, namely offering it to schools to be implemented as needed and voluntarily. Nadiem said, the Merdeka Curriculum reduced learning content by 30-40 percent of the material compared to the 2013 Curriculum to emphasize deep learning. In addition, there is an allocation of about 20 percent of time for project-based learning and provides flexibility for teachers to set the speed of the learning process according to the needs and abilities of students. Furthermore, Nadiem explained, the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology presents Merdeka Belajar with the aim of improving the quality of the education system⁷ and make the learning process an enjoyable experience for students in Indonesia. "To give birth to lifelong learners, we need to bring interesting and fun learning to our children,"

The Merdeka Belajar transformation effort focuses on improving teacher competence. Transformation is carried out for preteacher education to focus more on abilities that are relevant to practice, not just limited to theory. While the Teacher Mobilization program aims to produce a new generation of principals and supervisors, it does not solely focus on competence. The readiness of regions to implement the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum varies. Some time ago, the Head of the Bangka Belitung Islands Education Quality Assurance Agency Guritno Wahyu Wijanarko explained that the implementation of the Free Learning Curriculum requires the independence of school principals and teachers in learning the curriculum independently. As a result, the need for teachers to learn online has increased. In fact, there are limitations of the internet network due to geographical conditions and infrastructure.⁸

Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs Yaqut Cholil Qoumas emphasized that madrassas are ready to implement the Independent Curriculum. He conveyed this at the commemoration of National Education Day (Hardiknas) on May 2, 2023. Yaqut said the National Day commemoration should not only be a ceremony. This moment is considered to be a joint commitment to continue to accelerate the transformation of religious and religious education. Yaqut's opinion "I convey that madrasahs are ready to implement an independent learning curriculum," In order to support the policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) of the Republic of Indonesia, the Ministry of Religion has also issued Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs Number 347 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Madrasahs. Yaqut argued, "The implementation of the Independent Curriculum (IKM) in madrasahs is 100% following the policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology," the Ministry of Religious Affairs only adapts according to the learning needs in madrasahs to

⁷ Siti Baro'ah, "Kebijakan Merdeka Belajar Sebagai Strategi Peningkatan Mutu Pendidikan," *Jurnal Tawadhu* 4, no. 1 (May 18, 2020): 1063–73, <https://ejournal.iaiiig.ac.id/index.php/TWD/article/view/225>.

⁸ Sarlin Patilima, "Sekolah Penggerak Sebagai Upaya Peningkatan Kualitas Pendidikan," *PROSIDING SEMINAR NASIONAL PENDIDIKAN DASAR* 0, no. 0 (January 22, 2022), <https://ejournal.pps.ung.ac.id/index.php/PSNPD/article/view/1069>.

strengthen Islamic religious education and Arabic which is its trademark. Yaqut said that the number shows the enthusiasm of madrasah residents in implementing the Independent Curriculum and a sign that madrasahs dare to change. The optimistic attitude of transformation by madrasahs and other educational units under the Ministry of Religious Affairs will have a significant impact on religious life in the country.⁹

The progress of the world of Islamic education will continue to be carried out. One of them is by encouraging related agencies such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs to be more aggressive in improving the quality of Islamic education. Madrasahs are very important to maintain to preserve Islamic-based education. By maintaining madrasahs, commitment to give birth to a generation that is intellectually and spiritually superior. Many important people, officials, politicians were born from madrasahs. This shows that the pattern of education in madrasahs can be a guideline for faith-based education.

C. METHOD

The approach used by researchers in this study is a qualitatively descriptive approach.¹⁰ Qualitative research is research that produces descriptive data, namely making observations of speech or writing and the behavior of the people observed. This approach is expected to produce an in-depth description of the speech, writing, and observable behavior of an individual, group, society, and organizational unit of analysis. Furthermore, according to the observed context, the data obtained are then recorded and analyzed.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The conception of an independent curriculum leads to more independent learning is the freedom for students to feel a comfortable learning atmosphere for teachers and the freedom to design educational and fun learning. The Ministry strongly promotes this program through *pilot-project* schools or trials and instructors or being driving teachers in creating new things according to the times. This conception applies at all levels of education, from elementary school to college.

The main key in this learning is a pleasant learning atmosphere. Of course, in terms of natural and automatic, if the learning atmosphere is pleasant, this can affect student interest and learning outcomes. Thanks to an interesting learning atmosphere and a meaningful learning process, learning becomes more qualified. Freedom in the learning process in accordance with the previous learning concept, that is, learning familiar terms is fun. The learning process is fun, not just having fun of course. But more on achieving learning goals in a more enjoyable way. Learning is smoother, which naturally affects students' physical and

⁹ Lisnawaty Dukalang, "Optimizing the Role of Development Supervisors on Obstacles to Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Assisted Madrasah," *International Emergency Nursing* 2, no. 2 (2023): 184–86, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ienj.2009.05.001>.

¹⁰ Wahyudin Darmalaksana, "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Pustaka Dan Studi Lapangan," *Pre-Print Digital Library UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung* 5 (2020).

mental performance to achieve meaningful learning. All of this must have been achieved based on Master's great contribution.¹¹

Education systems, both learning and teaching at all national levels, are currently needed to adapt to the evolution of Revolution 4.0. Indonesian human resources must be improved in order to adjust to the times. The quality of human resources will be further improved in the future. The development of technology that is growing rapidly today, it is expected that the education system in Indonesia will also change. Quality education is very valuable and a necessity because education plays a very important role in realizing the ideals of the nation and state. With globalization and the development of information and technology, education faces increasingly diverse challenges and problems. Therefore, the development of the education sector must be planned as well as possible so that various challenges and problems can be overcome. The government continues to strive to improve the quality or quality of education in accordance with the process of changing times and more modern times.¹²

The educator or teacher is the main promoter of learning, some of the tasks shouldered are educating, leading, training and developing the curriculum. The purpose of educators is to create conducive learning conditions in the sense of a learning atmosphere that is fun, interesting, provides a sense of comfort and security, and provides opportunities for students to think actively, critically, creatively and innovatively while developing the ability to reason knowledge independently or independently. Students must certainly be able to organize a learning process that can at least achieve learning objectives.

A good curriculum can guarantee that the quality of education will increase in the future. The curriculum process is also no joke, it is designed to achieve a goal. The right learning planning process certainly has a significant impact on the results and meaningfulness of learning.

A good learning planning process certainly makes it easier to identify the process both in the process of identifying weaknesses and finding solutions for improving education development in the future. Learning planning is one of the skills that must be mastered by teachers. Especially in the era of independent learning, when teachers have the freedom to direct the learning carried out to things that please students and are more comfortable, then the teacher is assumed that the teacher is able to plan, implement and evaluate the learning that has been done. However, there are still many observations in activity planning that are often overlooked by some teachers. Instead of planning, teachers often come to class just because they come in and know the material right then and there what is going to be learned without being prepared in advance.

¹¹ Sutrisno and Nurul Mahruzah Yulia, "Pengembangan Kompetensi Guru Dalam Mendesain Pembelajaran Pada Kurikulum Merdeka/ Teacher Competency Development in Designing Learning in the Independent Curriculum," *Al-Mudarris: Journal Of Education* 5, no. 1 (April 27, 2022): hlm. 32, <https://doi.org/10.32478/al-mudarris.v5i1.954>.

¹² Putri and Arsanti, "KURIKULUM MERDEKA BELAJAR SEBAGAI PEMULIHAN PEMBELAJARAN," hlm. 21-22.

The implementation of the ideal learning process is certainly very necessary in arranging the direction of maturity or making students understand and understand what they want to achieve. The purpose of this plan is to prepare what will be done and how the learning process will take place in the classroom. In order for this design plan to be well structured, educators positioned as trainers / teachers need scientific skills and support related to the right learning plan.¹³

Determining the performance of teaching tasks and educational programs, for that good teaching skills are needed. Lesson planning helps prepare problem-solving materials to meet real and appropriate educational needs while directing transparent and detailed goals. Learning is carried out to achieve certain goals. In the direction to achieve these goals, various efforts have been planned and implemented with directed and structured programs through learning activities. In such a situation, to see whether the conception, implementation and results are in accordance with the objectives or not compared or contrary to what is expected, a form of evaluation is needed.¹⁴

Based on the policy direction, the Islamic Education strategy within the scope of the Directorate General of Islamic Education is implemented through 5 priority activities, namely: Strategies set to achieve this include: Good governance strategic issues in the management of public administration. The main functions of the Directorate General of Islamic Education are basically regulation, service and empowerment. These three functions are important factors in improving quality, relevance, and competitiveness through service process efficiency and quality control supported by strong regulations and organizational structures. Improving the quality of planning, implementation, monitoring & evaluation activities followed by corrective actions requires the support of accurate Islamic Education data and information systems.

Strategic Plan monitoring and evaluation aims to determine the level of achievement and compatibility between the plans set out in the 2015-2019 Strategic Plan with the results achieved based on policies implemented through activities in each unit, level, type, and educational path on a regular basis. Synchronization between these four steps is a necessity so that the Islamic development targets stated in the Strategic Plan can be implemented and the effectiveness of their achievement measured. Some of the target indicators for supporting education management and other technical task services are: Improving the Quality and Relevance of Islamic Education;

In line with the direction of national policy to improve the quality of religious education in schools to strengthen understanding and practice to foster noble morals and noble ethics, the Islamic Religious Education strategy is prioritized on improving the quality

¹³ Fitriah Fitriah et al., "WORKSHOP PENINGKATAN KOMPETENSI PENYUSUNAN PERANGKAT PEMBELAJARAN MENGHADAPI KURIKULUM MERDEKA," *BUDIMAS: JURNAL PENGABDIAN MASYARAKAT* 5, no. 1 (January 31, 2023): hlm. 7, <https://doi.org/10.29040/BUDIMAS.V5I1.7422>.

¹⁴ Sutrisno and Yulia, "Pengembangan Kompetensi Guru Dalam Mendesain Pembelajaran Pada Kurikulum Merdeka/ Teacher Competency Development in Designing Learning in the Independent Curriculum," hlm. 32.

of PAI teachers and supervisors as well as students' understanding of Islamic teachings and improving the quality of resources and infrastructure for teaching and learning activities.

Strategies in improving the quality and understanding of students towards Islamic teachings are in the form of providing opportunities for students to take part in Complete Qur'an Reading and Write (TBTQ) training, participating in PAI creativity competitions, organizing USBN PAI, and expanding PAI development materials with a national perspective.

Strategies in improving the quality of resources and infrastructure for teaching and learning activities in schools in the form of increasing the capacity of pokjawas institutions, the existence of institutions that carry out learning development and curriculum assessment, development and provision of learning advice / media assistance.

Increasing Access, Quality, Relevance and Competitiveness of Islamic Religious Education; In line with the direction of national policy to implement 12-year compulsory education evenly and improve quality religious education services, the Islamic Religious Education strategy is prioritized on increasing access, quality of educational facilities and infrastructure, quality of students, quality of educators and education staff, quality assurance and moderate Islamic learning in Islamic religious education.

In line with the direction of national policy and the Ministry of Religious Affairs to implement 12-year compulsory education equally, the RA and Madrasah strategies are prioritized on improving access and quality of educational facilities and infrastructure, students, educators and education staff, institutions, and madrasah learning curriculum.

In line with the direction of national policy to improve access, quality, relevance and competitiveness of higher education, especially Islamic Higher Education (PTKI), the Islamic Higher Education strategy is prioritized on increasing access to Islamic religious higher education, quality of Islamic higher education services, improving the quality of PTKI educators and education staff, improving the quality of PTKI research results and increasing innovation results at PTKI.

Providing facilities for students to take part in competitions, olympics, seminars and talent development at national and international levels. Increased understanding of the concepts, approaches and methodologies of participatory community development in line with the development of science and its application to practice knowledge for community development and local (regional) development and develop science.

Curriculum transformation is carried out in a structured and systematic manner by time and technology. This effort is supported by alignment of the curriculum with Industry 4.0 features, information literacy, technological literacy and human competence. Therefore, the flatform of the independent curriculum or independent learning process is based on several theories that generally assume that meaningful learning to build competency processes requires improvisation to form knowledge.¹⁵

¹⁵ Feri Novriadi, Desyandri, and Yeni Erita, "View of Studi Literatur : Tinjauan Filsafat Perspektif Islam Terhadap Kurikulum Merdeka," *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Konseling*, 2023, hlm. 1747, <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.31004/jpdk.v5i1.11202>.

The conception of an independent curriculum, learning focuses on developing students' essential knowledge and skills according to their level. Deeper and focused discussions and can be applied or often referred to as applicative conceptions, more meaningful, interesting to discuss, and fun in the learning process.

E. CONCLUSION

The discussion in the paper above can be concluded that the independent curriculum is one of the most important parts in the world of education because the curriculum is a regulatory reference so that educational goals are achieved. Especially in the curriculum prepared for independent learning in accordance with the direction and objectives of the independent curriculum, which is one of the efforts to recover from the learning crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Curriculum changes are systemic changes that can improve learning. This independent curriculum is actually prepared by the government as the decision maker of all regulations that have been set. However, education units and teachers are responsible for operating and implementing the curriculum that has been established and developed by the government. In addition, because the independent curriculum has several weaknesses, it must be socialized and adapted first before the independent curriculum becomes the national curriculum. The implementation of the curriculum is indeed important as the spearhead of measuring the quality of education, but it becomes impossible if it does not go side by side with the quality of human resources of educators who have not reached everything that is aimed at by the main focus of the independent curriculum, therefore suggestions for improving the quality of human resources to be given more attention.

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