

Independent Curriculum in Learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the implementation process of the Independent Curriculum in learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, identify supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation, and evaluate the effectiveness of this curriculum in improving the quality of learning. The Independent Curriculum is an educational policy that provides flexibility for educational institutions and teachers to determine teaching methods and materials that suit the needs of students. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method at one Madrasah Ibtidaiyah that has implemented the Independent Curriculum. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews with the head of the madrasah and teachers, as well as document analysis related to the curriculum implementation. The results of the study show that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah still faces various challenges, such as the readiness of educators, limited facilities and infrastructure, as well as the understanding of parents regarding curriculum changes. However, there are supporting factors such as flexibility in learning, increased teacher creativity, and support from the Ministry of Religious Affairs in the form of training and mentoring. The conclusion of this study indicates that the Independent Curriculum has a positive impact on learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, especially in increasing students' independence and creativity. However, improvements are needed in aspects of teacher training, strengthening infrastructure, and socializing with parents so that the implementation of this curriculum can run more optimally.

Keywords: *Independent Curriculum, Learning, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Implementation, Islamic Education.*

INTRODUCTION

Education plays an important role in shaping the character, skills, and intelligence of students so that they are ready to face future challenges. In an effort to improve the quality of education in Indonesia, the government through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology has introduced the Independent Curriculum which aims to provide flexibility for educational units to develop learning that is more flexible, contextual, and in accordance with student needs. This curriculum also provides opportunities for teachers to innovate in teaching, by emphasizing project-based learning, deep understanding of concepts, and strengthening student character.

In the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah environment, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is a challenge as well as an opportunity for educators in aligning Islamic values with a modern educational approach. As an Islamic-based basic educational institution, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah not only plays a role in improving student literacy and numeracy, but also building their morals and character in accordance with Islamic teachings. Therefore, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah needs to be studied more deeply so that it can run optimally without reducing the essence of Islamic education which is the hallmark of madrasahs. However, in practice, the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah faces various obstacles. The readiness of educators to understand and implement the new curriculum, limited facilities and infrastructure, and the lack of understanding of parents regarding changes in the curriculum are some

of the factors that influence the effectiveness of the implementation of this curriculum. Therefore, further research is needed to explore how the Independent Curriculum is implemented in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, the supporting and inhibiting factors, and its impact on the quality of learning.

In addition, this study provides a new contribution to the study of the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah by highlighting the unique challenges faced by madrasahs in implementing this curriculum. The novelty of this study lies in the practical aspects of the implementation of the independent curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, most previous studies have discussed more about the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in public schools (Elementary Schools and Junior High Schools), while this study specifically examines the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, which have special characteristics in integrating Islamic values in learning.¹ Then, research conducted by Yunita et.al research on Madrasah Ibtidaiyah focuses more on the adaptation of the Independent Curriculum in formal education based on Islam, with a focus on the implementation of assessments, teaching modules, and P5 projects. Meanwhile, research on Islamic boarding schools examines how Islamic boarding schools adapt the Independent Curriculum by maintaining the tradition of Islamic education, including teaching methods based on yellow books and the halaqah system.²

Based on these problems, this study aims to analyze the implementation process of the Independent Curriculum in learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, identify the challenges faced, and evaluate the extent to which this curriculum is effective in improving the quality of education in madrasahs. The results of this study are expected to provide useful recommendations for policy makers, educators, and Islamic educational institutions in optimizing the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the research on the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, a number of concepts and theories need to be studied to provide a strong academic basis. This discussion includes an in-depth understanding of the Independent Curriculum, the characteristics of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah as an Islamic educational institution, and curriculum implementation strategies in the learning process.

The Independent Curriculum is an education policy designed to provide greater flexibility in the learning process, adapt to students' needs, and allow teachers to develop innovative teaching methods. According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology,³ this curriculum is based on three main principles, namely project-based learning to hone critical thinking skills, communication, collaboration, and creativity; focus on essential materials to ensure deep understanding of concepts; and flexibility for educators in adjusting learning methods to the needs of students.

Several previous studies, such as those presented by Anas, revealed that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum was able to encourage students' learning independence while providing more space for teachers to innovate.⁴ However, there are challenges that cannot be ignored, especially the readiness of educational staff and the limited facilities that are not evenly distributed across various educational institutions.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah as an Islamic educational institution has unique characteristics because it combines the national curriculum with Islamic religious education. Based on Afida Nurriqi's research, this madrasah plays an important role in shaping the intellectual and spiritual intelligence of students by instilling Islamic values in every aspect of learning.⁵ In the context of implementing the Independent Curriculum, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah faces the challenge of balancing the national curriculum with local religious-based content. Muhammad Nasir noted that although madrasahs have the freedom to adapt the curriculum, limited resources, especially in developing innovative learning methods, are still obstacles that need to be overcome.

Curriculum implementation in learning is a dynamic process and involves many aspects. Fullan stated that the success of curriculum implementation depends on teacher readiness, student involvement, parental support, and educational institution policies.⁶ In a study conducted by Suryani, it

was found that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at the elementary school and madrasah levels was influenced by several key factors, namely teacher readiness in understanding and implementing the curriculum, the availability of facilities and infrastructure that support project-based learning, the role of parents in supporting a more flexible learning system, and madrasah policies in adjusting the curriculum to student needs.

This study focuses on how these factors contribute to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, while also identifying strategies that can be used to overcome existing challenges.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to analyze the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Miftahul Ulum Cermenan Ngoro Jombang. This approach was chosen in order to dig up in-depth information about how this curriculum is implemented, its supporting and inhibiting factors,⁷ and its impact on the learning process. The research approach used in this study is descriptive qualitative, which aims to understand the phenomenon based on data obtained from observation, interviews, and documentation. This method allows researchers to obtain a comprehensive picture of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in the madrasah by considering the experiences and views of various parties involved in the learning process.

This research was conducted at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Miftahul Ulum Cermenan Ngoro Jombang, which has implemented the Independent Curriculum. The subjects of the study included the principal of the madrasah as the policy maker in implementing the Independent Curriculum, teachers as the main implementers of the curriculum in the learning process, students as beneficiaries of the implemented curriculum, and parents of students as parties who play a role in supporting learning at home.

Data collection techniques in this study include observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to see firsthand how the Independent Curriculum is implemented in the classroom and madrasah environment, including the learning methods used by teachers and student responses in learning. Interviews were conducted in depth with the principal, teachers, and parents of students to gain a broader understanding of the implementation of the curriculum, the obstacles faced, and the impact of the curriculum on the teaching and learning process. Documentation involves analysis of curriculum policy documents, learning tools, and student learning outcomes as additional data in this study.

The data collected was analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model which consists of three main stages.⁸ First, data reduction, which is filtering and summarizing important data that is relevant to the research to make it easier to analyze. Second, data presentation, which is compiling data in the form of descriptive narratives so that it can be analyzed further and make it easier to draw conclusions. Third, drawing conclusions, which is interpreting research findings to draw conclusions and provide recommendations regarding the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Miftahul Ulum Cermenan Ngoro Jombang.

To ensure the validity of the data, this study used triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing data from various sources, including teachers, madrasah principals, students, and parents. Technique triangulation was applied by verifying the results of various data collection techniques, such as observation, interviews, and documentation. In addition, time triangulation was used by collecting data at several different times to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the research results.

This study has limitations that need to be considered. This study was only conducted in one madrasah that has implemented the Independent Curriculum, so the results cannot be generalized to all madrasahs in Indonesia. However, this study can still be a valuable reference in understanding the opportunities and challenges of implementing the Independent Curriculum in other madrasahs with similar characteristics. By understanding the various factors that support and hinder the

implementation of this curriculum, it is hoped that the results of the study can contribute to the development of education policies and improving the quality of learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

RESULTS

This study has limitations that need to be considered. This study was only conducted in one madrasa that has implemented the Independent Curriculum, so the results cannot be generalized to all madrasas in Indonesia. However, this study can still be a valuable reference in understanding the opportunities and challenges of implementing the Independent Curriculum in other madrasas that have similar characteristics. By understanding the various factors that support and hinder the implementation of this curriculum, it is hoped that the results of the study can contribute to the development of education policies and improving the quality of learning in Elementary Madrasas.

Based on the research conducted on “Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Learning in Elementary Madrasas”, several main findings were obtained covering aspects of implementation, supporting factors, obstacles, and their impact on the learning process.

The results of observations and interviews show that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah is still in the adaptation stage. Several madrasahs have tried to implement project-based learning and provide flexibility for teachers in compiling learning materials. However, the implementation still varies depending on the readiness of the madrasah and educators. In general, the Independent Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah is implemented with a project-based learning approach that integrates Islamic values with general materials, curriculum adjustments that provide more space for teachers to adjust teaching methods to student needs, and character strengthening based on Islamic values as part of madrasah education.⁹

Several factors that support the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah include support from the principal who provides flexible policies in implementing the curriculum, the commitment of teachers who are active in developing creative and innovative learning methods, the participation of parents who help support learning at home, and adequate learning facilities, such as textbooks that are in accordance with the Independent Curriculum and digital devices in several more advanced madrasahs.

Despite various supporting factors, several obstacles were also found in the implementation process, including the lack of understanding of teachers regarding the Independent Curriculum, especially in compiling appropriate teaching modules and assessments; limited facilities in several madrasas, such as access to technology and learning media that support innovative methods; resistance to change, especially from educators who are still accustomed to the previous curriculum system; and minimal training and mentoring, so that teachers still find it difficult to implement project-based learning methods.¹⁰

From the research results, it was found that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum had several positive impacts, including students being more active and creative in learning because the project-based approach provides freedom to explore, increased understanding of concepts because the material taught focuses more on the essence and relevance to everyday life, and the formation of a stronger Islamic character, because religious values remain a major part of learning in madrasas. However, negative impacts were also found in several madrasas that were not ready, such as increased teacher workload because they had to adjust teaching materials independently, and the lack of clear assessment standards, so that some teachers had difficulty in assessing student development.

Based on research findings, several strategies that can be applied to increase the effectiveness of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah include increasing training and mentoring for teachers, so that they are better prepared to apply learning methods in accordance with the Independent Curriculum; providing more adequate facilities and infrastructure, such as digital learning media and textbooks based on the Independent Curriculum; building collaboration between madrasahs, parents, and communities to support project-based learning processes; and strengthening internal madrasah policies, so that curriculum implementation can run more systematically and in a focused manner.¹¹

DISCUSSION

Based on the research results that have been explained, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Miftahul Ulum Cermenan Ngoro Jombang shows a number of aspects that are important to discuss further. This discussion will elaborate on the findings found during the research, explain the relationship between these findings and relevant theories, and provide recommendations that are expected to improve the implementation of the curriculum in the future.

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum aims to provide flexibility in learning and adjust to the needs of students. From the results of the study, it was found that Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Miftahul Ulum Cermenan Ngoro Jombang has begun to implement project-based learning. This approach allows students to learn more practically and independently, which is in line with the principles of the Independent Curriculum which prioritizes the development of student character and creativity. However, in the implementation process, not all aspects can be implemented properly. Some of the obstacles found include limitations in facilities and learning resources that support project-based methods. The lack of teaching aids, technology, or special space for experiments and projects has proven to be an obstacle in improving the quality of learning based on student creativity. Some teachers also expressed difficulties in compiling teaching modules that are in accordance with the characteristics of the Independent Curriculum. This is because this curriculum gives teachers more freedom to determine teaching materials and how to teach them, so many teachers feel less prepared to make these adjustments.

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum does not only depend on government policies, but also on support from all elements of education. Research findings show that factors that support the implementation of this curriculum include the support of the madrasah principal who plays an important role in providing direction and flexible policies that make it easier for teachers to design learning in accordance with the Independent Curriculum guidelines. A proactive madrasah principal will facilitate all the needs required in implementing the curriculum. In addition, the enthusiasm of teachers who want to develop new learning methods is also a key factor. However, without sufficient support in terms of training, this enthusiasm will not be enough to overcome technical challenges in implementation. Parental involvement also has a positive effect on curriculum implementation. Parents who support their children's learning process at home will provide better results in their children's education, which supports the achievement of the Pancasila student profile.

Despite the supporting factors, the obstacles faced during implementation remain significant and require special attention. Some of the obstacles found are the lack of adequate training for teachers. Many teachers do not fully understand the concept of the Independent Curriculum, especially in terms of adjusting teaching methods and compiling project-based assessments. This limited training causes the implementation of the curriculum to tend to be half-hearted, because teachers feel less confident in delivering material in a more creative and flexible way. In addition, limited facilities and infrastructure are a major challenge, such as classrooms that do not support project-based learning or limited teaching aids. Some madrasas also do not have sufficient access to technology that can facilitate the implementation of a technology-based curriculum. Another major challenge is the lack of clear assessment standards. The Independent Curriculum gives teachers the flexibility to determine assessment methods according to student characteristics, but this can trigger uncertainty in assessing student learning outcomes objectively. Several teachers expressed difficulty in designing appropriate assessment instruments to assess students' skills and understanding in the context of project-based learning.

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Miftahul Ulum Cermenan Ngoro Jombang has several positive impacts that can be seen, both in terms of learning activities and student character development. Some of the positive impacts found are that students become more active in learning, because project-based learning provides them with the opportunity to collaborate and explore more deeply about the subject matter. Increasing student creativity is also one of the visible impacts, because they are given space to design and work on projects related to their daily lives. Thus, students not only learn theory, but also apply the concepts they learn. As a madrasah, Islamic values and noble character are highly emphasized, which is in line with the objectives of the

Independent Curriculum to form quality student character. However, on the other hand, there are also less positive impacts, especially related to the high workload of teachers in adjusting learning to the new curriculum. Teachers have to make many adjustments in terms of preparing lesson plans, student evaluations, and a more individual approach.

Based on the discussion above, there are several recommendations that can be made to improve the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Miftahul Ulum Cermenan Ngoro Jombang. One of them is the implementation of continuous training for teachers so that they better understand how to implement the Independent Curriculum effectively, including in terms of project-based teaching and assessment. In addition, improving educational facilities, such as classrooms that support project-based learning, providing innovative learning tools, and access to adequate technology, is very necessary. Increasing cooperation between madrasahs, parents, and the community in supporting the learning process, both through extracurricular activities and in supporting projects carried out by students, is also a strategy that can be applied. Finally, the development of clear assessment standards will help teachers in assessing student development in the context of the Independent Curriculum.

Thus, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Miftahul Ulum Cermenan Ngoro Jombang provides challenges and opportunities. The success of implementing this curriculum is highly dependent on the readiness of all parties, starting from teachers, madrasah principals, parents, to the government in providing adequate facilities and training. If these challenges can be overcome, then the Independent Curriculum can have a very positive impact on improving the quality of learning in madrasahs.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted on the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, several important things can be concluded as follows: The Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah has been carried out with various adjustments that introduce project-based learning, character building, and student independence. However, its implementation is still in the adaptation stage and not all madrasahs implement it in the same way, depending on the readiness of each madrasah.

The most significant supporting factors are the support of the madrasah principal, the enthusiasm of teachers, and the participation of parents. Madrasahs that have active madrasah principals who support the Independent Curriculum policy are more successful in implementing this curriculum. In addition, parental involvement also greatly supports the success of learning in madrasahs. The main obstacles in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah include the lack of adequate training for teachers, limited learning facilities, and the lack of clear assessment standards. This makes it difficult for teachers to implement new learning methods and design evaluations that are in accordance with the curriculum.

The positive impact of implementing the Independent Curriculum in madrasahs is increased student activity and creativity, as well as strengthening character based on Islamic values. However, there are also negative impacts related to the increasing workload of teachers due to the many adjustments that must be made in the learning process. Recommendations that can be given to increase the effectiveness of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Elementary Madrasahs include ongoing training for teachers, improving learning facilities and infrastructure, developing clearer assessment standards, and strengthening cooperation between madrasahs, parents, and the community to support project-based learning. Overall, the Independent Curriculum in Elementary Madrasahs has great potential to improve the quality of education, but requires maximum support from all parties so that it can be implemented optimally.

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