



## Analysis of teachers' problems in the implementation of the independent curriculum in PAI subjects

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### ABSTRACT

Many students experience obstacles in learning Islamic Religious Education, coupled with the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum which is still relatively new in its implementation. The implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum certainly requires time for adjustment, so this affects student learning outcomes and the achievement of appropriate learning objectives. This study aims to examine the problems that occur at SMA Daarul Qur'an Bandung related to the implementation of the Independent Learning curriculum in learning Islamic Religious Education subjects. The research method used is a qualitative case study approach with data collection through observation, interviews and document studies. The results of the study show that in the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum in schools there are still various problems, especially in the teacher aspect. It can be concluded that the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education subjects at SMA Darul Quran Bandung shows a number of challenges that need to be overcome. By continuing to evaluate and adjust, it is hoped that schools can overcome the challenges faced and improve the quality of learning for students as a whole.



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## INTRODUCTION

Education is the main foundation in the development of a nation and education can also change over time (Pillawaty, 2023). As an integral part of the educational process, the curriculum plays an important role in determining the quality and relevance of learning, in realizing the functions and goals of national education, the implementation of the right curriculum and learning methods is needed (Mustofa et al., 2023). In Indonesia, efforts continue to be made to update the curriculum to improve the quality of education. One of the latest initiatives is the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, a policy program designed to provide freedom and creative thinking in learning (Yunita & Widodo, 2023).

The Independent Curriculum was launched by the Minister of Education and Culture in February 2022. This curriculum is interpreted as a learning design that provides opportunities for students to learn calmly, relaxed, fun, stress-free, and pressure-free, so that they can show their natural talents.

Merdeka Curriculum, or independent curriculum, is an educational approach that emphasizes freedom and flexibility in the teaching and learning process (Luthfi et al., 2023). Its implementation aims to provide opportunities for students to develop their potential according to their interests and talents. In its implementation, there are several important aspects that need to be considered such as the concept of freedom to learn, the role of teachers, management and supervision, human resource development, adaptation to future needs and the existence of evaluation and feedback. With this approach, it is hoped that students can be better prepared to face future challenges and have skills that are relevant to the needs of the world of work.

In line with what was expressed by Yuli Bangun Nursanti, the focus of independent learning lies in the learning process. Currently, in the learning process, there are still many students who have not been able to provide analytical thinking. In independent learning, it is hoped that a critical and analytical way of thinking can be developed (Mulyana & Ramdani, 2023). The Independent Curriculum is present and can be expected for students to develop according to their potential and abilities. Students deserve to get conducive, quality, expressive, applicative, varied, and critical learning (Himmah & Fadriati, 2023). As well as the change in the new curriculum, cooperation, strong commitment, seriousness, and real implementation from all parties are needed, so that the Pancasila student profile can be embedded in students. The concept of the independent learning curriculum emphasizes the provision of freedom in the field of education. In realizing this, it is necessary to update the curriculum in accordance with the progress of the times and technology (Windayanti et al., 2023).

Problematics are problems that need to be solved. Problems in learning or education will hinder the achievement of goals to the maximum. Problems can also be said to be uncertainty, therefore solutions to existing problems are needed (Himmah & Fadriati, 2023). The existence of a solution in solving problems is a must. In learning, there are several possible problems that can occur, including: a) Problems related to students, b) Problems related to educators, such as teachers' mastery of materials and classroom management, c) Problems related to Learning Evaluation (Mulyana & Ramdani, 2023).

Islamic Religious Education is an effort to foster and nurture students so that they can always understand the teachings of Islam comprehensively, live the goal, which in the end can practice and make Islam a view of life (Pillawaty, 2023). This comprehension necessitates a set of reciprocal support mechanisms, including: Islamic Religious Education is a deliberate endeavour encompassing advice, instruction, and/or training activities conducted intentionally to achieve specific objectives. Students who are equipped to attain objectives through guidance, instruction, and training that enhance their beliefs, comprehension, appreciation, and application of Islamic religious teachings. 3) Educators/Teachers (GBPAI) who intentionally conduct advice, instruction, and/or training activities to facilitate their pupils in attaining specific objectives. PAI activities aim to enhance students' belief, understanding, appreciation, and practice, so cultivating personal attributes and fostering both individual and social piety (Fauzi, 2023).

One distinguishing feature of Islamic religious education is its foundation in the Qur'an and Sunnah, which provide normative guidance for all areas of life. This guidance encompasses not only the learning environment but also the development of students' character and fundamental dimensions, including their capacity for critical thinking-life skills in reasoning and problem-solving (Syahbana et al., 2024). Consequently, students must be endowed with character development and critical thinking abilities that enable them to confront diverse problems and make judicious judgements grounded in religious and ethical principles.

Numerous students encounter difficulties in mastering PAI, alongside the recent deployment of the Independent Learning Curriculum. The introduction of the Independent Learning Curriculum necessitates a period of adjustment, which therefore impacts students' academic performance and the attainment of relevant learning objectives. PAI learning difficulties may arise from multiple variables involving both students and teachers engaged in the educational process. A contributing component to the issue is the deficiency of invention and originality in formulating appropriate PAI learning methodologies and models for their implementation inside the Independent Learning Curriculum. Other factors include poor student perception of PAI, inappropriate learning methods, learning media that do not attract students' interest in learning, monotonous learning processes, schools that do not provide learning support facilities, teachers are not able to keep up with IT developments in the learning process, and the application of the concept of independent learning for students is not precise (Mustofa et al., 2023).

Previous research on the problems of implementing the independent curriculum in Mathematics subjects, such as those conducted by Tri Ajeng Oktavia, Dina Maharani, and Khoiril, showed that mathematics learning carried out by students in grade X of SMK Negeri 2 Pacitan was

still not in accordance with the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum. Students are still not given freedom in choosing learning materials. Students have not been able to choose the subject matter they are interested in, and the learning carried out is sometimes not adjusted to the vocation they are studying. Students are still passive in the mathematics learning process because the teacher is the center of learning, which is not in accordance with the teacher's function as a facilitator in learning which requires students to show more activity. In addition, learning that is expected to be carried out outside the classroom (outing class) cannot be applied in mathematics learning at SMK Negeri 2 Pacitan. The learning place is also considered to have not innovated, because schools generally still implement learning in the classroom. The classroom learning process is inversely proportional to the Independent Learning Curriculum which states that indoor learning must be outdoor outside the classroom with project-based that can develop student characteristics.

Prior studies on educators' challenges in executing the Independent Curriculum, including those by Zulaiha et al. (2023), indicate that teachers at SDN 17 Rejang Lebong face difficulties in the planning, execution, and evaluation of the Independent Learning Curriculum for first and fourth-grade students. Educators encounter challenges in formulating learning plans, particularly when assessing the learning goals to be attained by students, as these are developed in stages. They also struggle to articulate it as Learning Objectives (TP) and to organise it as a Learning Objectives Flow (ATP). Moreover, educators who lack proficiency in technology struggle to comprehend and delineate the Learning Outcomes (CP) provided by the centre, which must be articulated as Learning Objectives (TP) and organised into a Learning Objectives Flow. Insufficient textbooks, inadequate instructor proficiency and preparedness in using learning media, challenges in identifying class projects for grades I and IV, and insufficient time allocation for project-based learning are all issues.

According to research conducted by Setiawan (2019), most teachers face obstacles in designing learning activities that are in accordance with this curriculum approach. Teachers feel the need for better training and support to integrate the principles of the Independent Learning Curriculum into daily learning practices. Another research conducted by Wibowo et al., (2024) highlights the limitations of resources, especially access to technology, as one of the main problems faced by teachers. Most teachers find it difficult to implement technology-based learning methods that should support the Independent Learning Curriculum approach, due to the limited infrastructure in their schools.

In addition, research conducted by Prasetyo (2021) shows that there is still confusion among teachers regarding the change in their role in the context of the Independent Learning Curriculum. Teachers need to adapt to more challenges in facilitating more independent and student-centered learning, while previously the more teacher-centered learning model was dominant. Research by Kurniawan et al., (2022) also observes the lack of adequate administrative support and evaluation related to the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum. The availability of sufficient time to plan, implement, and evaluate learning with this new approach is the key to success, but it has not always been met.

The Independent Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) faces several problems in its implementation. Some of the main challenges faced by PAI teachers include the lack of teacher understanding regarding the implementation of this curriculum, minimal training, lack of student motivation and interest, resource constraints, and difficulties in conducting assessments in accordance with previous research conducted by Diah and Andriyani (2024), Armelia (2024) and Zaskia dan Hamami (2021). The novelty of this research compared to previous research is that it specifically discusses teacher problems in implementing the independent curriculum and specifically on Islamic Religious Education subjects, where previous research, although both focused on Islamic Religious Education subjects, also had other problems besides teacher problems.

Based on the background above, the problem of implementing the independent curriculum is an important thing to research. Therefore, the researcher is interested in researching this to examine the problems that occurred at SMA Daarul Qur'an Bandung related to the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum in learning Islamic Religious Education subjects.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used by the researcher in this study is a qualitative approach *Case Study*. According to Murdianto & Jayadi (2020) Qualitative approach *Case Study*, is a comprehensive, intense, detailed, and in-depth model and is more directed as an effort to study contemporary problems or phenomena.

The source of information in this study is Informants, who are deliberately selected to cover a variety of views. The selected research objects are individuals who have in-depth knowledge of the issues being investigated (key informants), including school principals, deputy heads of curriculum sections, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and students. Data were collected through several methods, such as (a) observation; (b) interviews; and (c) document study. To ensure the validity of the data, several steps are taken, including (a) extending the data collection period, (b) careful and consistent observation, (c) triangulation of data, and (d) discussion with peers. The validity and reliability of the data were ensured by conducting Triangulation, Member Checking, and Audit Trail.

Structured interviews are an interview method in which researchers use a series of pre-prepared questions. These questions are usually rigid and cannot be changed during the interview. While semi-structured interviews are an interview method that combines elements of structured interviews and unstructured interviews. Researchers have a list of questions they want to ask, but can adjust and change the questions based on the responses given by the respondents. The duration of each interview lasts for 15 minutes. Interviews are recorded using a recording device on a cellphone.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education Subjects at SMA Darul Quran Bandung

Based on the results of research in the field. SMA Darul Quran Bandung is one of the schools that is patronized by the Islamic boarding school foundation, besides that SMA Darul Quran is also a driving school that has implemented an independent learning curriculum. This school has implemented an independent curriculum since 2022 and has been running for 2 years. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum also includes the Learning of Islamic Religious Education Subjects.

The application of the independent curriculum in Islamic religious education subjects at SMA Darul Quran Bandung is in line with government policies in terms of implementation, at SMA Darul Qur'an Bandung teachers are emphasized that they must maximize the differentiation of attention to students. As a driving school, the principal of SMA Darul Qur'an Bandung which previously implemented the 2013 curriculum followed the policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture in overcoming the renewal of learning in the 21st century, which finally followed the change in the implementation of the curriculum to an independent curriculum where this policy became a refinement of the implementation of the curriculum from the previous curriculum.

The attitude of SMA Darul Qur'an Bandung in facing curriculum changes reviews that curriculum changes are commonplace for the education office or the ministry of education and culture to adjust to current conditions, although there are some differences between each curriculum change but the goal is the same, namely to adjust to existing conditions. This independent curriculum was channeled during covid because of the lost control that occurred, not only the education process, but also other division processes were affected.

In understanding this independent curriculum, SMA Darul Quran Bandung views and concludes that the independent curriculum wants the nation's children to be proficient in their fields, not proficient in everything, if the previous curricula emphasized that all children must be able in everything, in contrast to the independent curriculum, a student is encouraged to be good in his potential field which later after graduating from school students have skills and are ready to enter the world of work and society. In the independent curriculum there is no term for children who do not rise because all children are special, great, and good in their respective fields, this is in accordance with the results of an interview with the principal of SMA Darul Qur'an Bandung that:

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*"Students have their own learning ability, there is kinesthetic, there is auditory, there is visual, we as teachers in this independent curriculum must not generalize that ability. As teachers, we must be able to see the potential and learning style of students".*

In order to implement the independent curriculum policy, the Darul Qur'an Bandung High School made preparations in several ways, namely attend training and mentorship. Training is part of education which is a means of coaching and career development as well as one of the efforts to improve the quality of human resources in accordance with job needs. Training is an effort to learn and practice that aims to develop certain skills for individuals or groups of individuals and is carried out in a relatively short time in a certain place (Hehakaya et al., 2022).

In an effort to implement the Independent Curriculum, teachers at Darul Quran Bandung, including PAI teachers, actively participate in various trainings and workshops organized by the government and schools. Before organizing the workshop at the school, several representative teachers from SMA Darul Quran Bandung had participated in the provincial level training which was attended by schools from all over West Java.

According to Mr. Kosasih M.pd as the principal of SMA Daarul Qur'an Bandung:

*"At SMA Daarul Qur'an Bandung, before the Independent Curriculum was implemented, we held online training/socialization for approximately 10 days before the New Academic Year. This training was attended by several teacher representatives from various subjects at the provincial level (West Java), along with other schools. Our resource persons are expert lecturers who are experienced in their fields. At first, we only sent a few teachers to take part in this training. After that, when entering the new school year, we held a workshop to socialize the Independent Curriculum program."*

After the training at the provincial level, SMA Daarul Qur'an Bandung held a special workshop for all teachers at the school. This is in line with the statement of the principal of the Curriculum and PAI Teachers:

*"Socialization or training on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is carried out online via Zoom and guided directly by a team of experts from UNPAS. This socialization explains the content of the Independent Curriculum, such as Learning Outcomes (CP) and Learning Objectives Flow (ATP)."*

With these steps, SMA Daarul Qur'an Bandung ensures that all teachers are ready and understand the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, having a positive impact on the quality of education in schools.

Developing teaching tools, the learning planning process can begin with the creation of a learning goal plan based on Learning Outcomes. Then, this learning objective is used as the basis for making teaching materials or teaching modules. Teachers must also consider the characteristics of students and the learning approach chosen when compiling learning materials. In making teaching modules, Islamic Religious Education teachers can make them independently or adapt teaching modules from peers, then modify them to suit the subjects taught and in accordance with the provisions of the Independent Learning curriculum (Himmah & Fadriati, 2023).

In addition to participating in training and workshops, PAI teachers at Daarul Qur'an High School Bandung are also active in developing learning tools that are in accordance with the Independent Curriculum. They compiled Learning Outcomes (CP), Teaching Modules, Learning Objectives (TP), Learning Objectives Flow (ATP), and Educational Unit Operational Curriculum (KOSP). Interestingly, the main difference between the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum lies only in the naming.

According to Mr. Darma, who is a PAI teacher at Daarul Qur'an High School Bandung, he explained that:

*"The preparation is actually still the same, it's just that in the 2013 Curriculum we use the lesson plan, while in the Independent Curriculum it is called the Teaching Module. The content of the teaching tools is also slightly different, where the teaching materials in the Independent Curriculum are more tailored to the interests and talents of students."*

A similar opinion was also conveyed by the Vice Principal for Curriculum: "The teaching preparation between the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum is not too different, the difference is only in the naming. In the 2013 Curriculum it is called RPP, while in the Independent Curriculum it is called the Teaching Module. Basically, the content of the RPP and the Teaching Module is the same, there is only a slight difference in the deepening."

Thus, despite changes in terminology and some adjustments, the essence of the preparation and content of learning remains similar, with more focus on adapting the teaching materials to the interests and talents of students. This shows the flexibility and emphasis of the Independent Curriculum on the development of students' individual potential.

## **B. Problems of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education subjects at Daarul Qur'an High School Bandung.**

Problematika comes from the English word "problematic" which means problem or problem, in the Indonesian dictionary, problema means something that has not been solved; which causes problems. A problem "is an obstacle or problem that must be solved, in other words, a problem is a gap between reality and something that is expected well, in order to achieve maximum results (Pratiwi et al., 2023). What is meant by Problematika is a gap between expectations and reality that requires a solution or solution.

The problems felt in the implementation of the independent curriculum are not only felt by educators but also by students. From the results of observations, interviews, and documentation conducted by researchers with the principal, Vice President of Curriculum, and PAI teachers, about the problems of implementing the independent curriculum.

The problems faced by Daarul Qur'an High School Bandung in general in implementing the independent curriculum include The first obstacle was when the covid period was indeed extraordinary, we adjusted to the learning conditions at that time, Understanding to me as the principal of the school to the teachers It is indeed necessary to adjust even though it is not too long, then focus yes, In the independent curriculum, the concept of subjects has been changed, replacing majors with a subject selection system that suits the career desired by students, The independent curriculum policy requires reinterpretation by each school, adjusted to the ability and conditions of the school. For example, the preparation of subject selection, the number of lesson hours, the implementation of tests, and the selection of subjects chosen by students vary. However, teachers at Daarul Qur'an High School Bandung are still very limited, according to the Principal's statement.

Meanwhile, the problems of implementing the independent curriculum felt by PAI Subject Teachers during teaching are The Diversity of Student Characteristics at the school is very diverse in terms of academic ability, socioeconomic background, interests, motivation, and learning styles. Workload and Demands of Teacher Administration Since the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, the workload of PAI teachers, especially related to learning preparation and assessment administration, has become heavier. Teachers are required to design learning with more varied models and methods and conduct comprehensive assessments including student attitudes, knowledge, and skills. In fact, the allocation of time to do the administration of the assessment and preparation is very limited

### C. The solution is carried out in responding to the problems of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education subjects at Daarul Qur'an High School Bandung

Solutions made in dealing with the Problems of the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum Something new cannot always be directly changed and run straight on the road, it will take time for the adjustment process, and if it is able to correct a failure, it will be a process of achieving success (Yunita & Widodo, 2023). Likewise, the independent curriculum is very new to be implemented. So a teacher also needs time for adjustment. In learning activities, a teacher certainly experiences various problems or obstacles in the teaching and learning process, especially in Islamic religious education subjects (Alami & Najmudin, 2023). After being explained, the various problems above that occurred related to the implementation of the independent curriculum.

The solutions to these problems are Conduct an initial mapping of students' characteristics, interests, and learning styles through questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations to find out the diversity of students in more detail (Azita et al., 2023). Develop appropriate learning plans and accommodate the diversity of student characteristics by applying differentiation in terms of learning objectives, content, processes, or products through individual and group approaches (Rasyidi & Al Idrus, 2024). Counseling and asking for parental cooperation to motivate students who have low learning motivation to be more interested and active in participating in PAI learning (Aminah & Syaâ, 2023). Developing PAI learning media and teaching aids by utilizing simple materials in the surrounding environment in order to overcome the limitations of infrastructure facilities in schools (Asfiati, 2023). Conduct training on the preparation of authentic assessment instruments and techniques for PAI teachers in order to carry out the Independent Curriculum assessment more comprehensively and objectively (Holst et al., 2020). Coordinate with principals and teachers of other subjects to reduce unnecessary teacher administrative burdens so that PAI teachers can focus on preparing and implementing learning. Coordinate with schools regarding the possibility of increasing the time allocation of PAI subjects so that learning is more flexible and sufficient to implement innovative and contextual learning strategies (Permendikbud No. 22 of 2016). Integrate PAI values and materials in the learning of other subjects through coordination with teachers of related subjects to overcome time limitations in class (Windayanti et al., 2023). Providing tutoring services individually or in small groups to students who have difficulty learning PAI so that they can follow the learning better (Hehakaya et al., 2022).

### Discussions

The results of the study stated that the problems experienced by teachers in implementing the independent curriculum were related to the workload and administrative demands of teachers since the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, the workload of Islamic Religious Education teachers, especially regarding the preparation of learning and assessment administration, has become increasingly heavy. Teachers are required to design learning with more varied models and methods and to carry out comprehensive assessments covering student attitudes, knowledge, and skills. In fact, the time allocation for carrying out assessment administration and preparation is very limited. The results of this study are in accordance with the research objectives and can be accepted because there are solutions to overcome these problems as mentioned above, namely teachers must carry out initial mapping of student characteristics, develop learning plans and media, and much more.

Previous research conducted by Susilowati (2022), although the curriculum for autonomous learning has been in place in schools, teachers have encountered a number of challenges in putting it into practice. Understanding-related barriers include a lack of comprehension of the fundamentals of "independent learning" and the difficulty of breaking previous habits, such as the predominance of the lecture style. Additional technological challenges include the incompatibility of the learning platform with its contents and the challenge of developing instructional modules. Lastly, teachers struggle to administer tests during the evaluation phase. In the study Nawawi et al., (2023), stated that The Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) learning approach or strategy is an innovation of the

approach used during Islamic Religious Education learning in the implementation of the independent independent curriculum. In teaching, educators use various tactics, strategies, approaches, and learning techniques so that students can enjoy learning, understand the material more easily, and hone their critical thinking skills with this learning methodology. Other studies state that student independence still requires extra attention so that Islamic Religious Education teachers often find it difficult to implement an independent curriculum. The implementation of an independent learning curriculum is a challenge for Islamic Religious Education teachers because in addition to being facilitators, they must also be able to develop active and innovative students. This will be difficult to do if students only follow instructions without taking the initiative (Pillawaty et al., 2023).

The implications of this study are teachers or schools can find out what challenges need to be overcome in implementing the independent curriculum, especially in Islamic religious education subjects, so that learning objectives can be achieved more effectively and efficiently. The limitations of this study are only discusses the implementation of the independent curriculum in Islamic religious education subjects and the research subjects are limited to SMA Darul Quran Bandung. The recommendations for further researchers are examine the implementation of the independent curriculum in all subjects with a wider research scope.

## CONCLUSION

While the graduate pre-service teachers who participated in this study lacked the theory on inclusion in education since they revealed divergent understandings of it, it can also be concluded that, the lack of theory on inclusion in education does not guarantee failure to practice it in regular classrooms since university graduate pre-service primary school teachers had positive attitudes towards inclusion in education and practiced it based on theory of regular education.

The recommendations below relate to policy, practice and research. Because university graduate pre-service primary school teachers revealed divergent and limited understandings of inclusion in education, education policy makers in Zimbabwe could consult and partner with other stakeholders, including individuals, organizations and institutions to develop a common national definition of inclusion in education in the country that could improve the delivery of services. Because most university graduate pre-service primary school teachers revealed limited and divergent understandings of inclusion in education while some university graduate pre-service primary school teachers revealed a total lack of understanding of inclusion in education, reviewing the core module on special needs education could ensure that pre-service teachers have a comprehensive understanding of the philosophy.

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