



OPTIMIZATION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION MANAGEMENT IN WELCOMING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INDEPENDENT LEARNING CURRICULUM

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid with a focus on the integration of Islamic education and worldly knowledge. The methods used are in-depth interviews with the principal, teachers, and students, as well as observations of the implementation of the curriculum. The results of the study indicate that this curriculum provides flexibility that allows educators to adjust teaching methods according to student characteristics and developments, without ignoring Islamic principles. Curriculum development focuses on strengthening academic competence and student character, while maintaining the integration of Islamic values in each subject. For example, in learning Indonesian, students are not only taught writing skills, but also Islamic ethical and ethical values in communicating. The competency-based Independent Learning Curriculum provides space for students to explore their interests and talents, while developing a strong character. However, the main challenge faced is maintaining a balance between worldly and religious knowledge, especially in avoiding neglecting Islamic values amidst academic demands. Good coordination between management, teachers, and the school committee is essential to ensure the successful implementation of this curriculum. Overall, this curriculum shows that education that integrates worldly and religious knowledge can produce students who are intelligent, have noble character, and are ready to face global challenges with a strong moral and spiritual foundation.

Keywords: *Implementation, Curriculum, Independent Learning, Management.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the important elements in creating quality human resources, who not only master knowledge and skills, but also have good character and are able to face global challenges (Abidin, 2021), (Ganis Aliefiani Mulya Putri & Nisrina, 2022). In Indonesia, the implementation of an effective and relevant education curriculum is very important to ensure the achievement of these goals. One of the major innovations in the Indonesian education system is the implementation of the independent learning curriculum, which is expected to improve the quality of education by providing more freedom to educators and students in the teaching and learning process.

This Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, offers a more flexible approach and is oriented towards developing the potential of students holistically. This concept prioritizes strengthening competence, character development, and

implementing learning that is more relevant to the needs of the times (Ainissyifa et al., 2024). In this study, Islamic education as part of the national education system is also faced with challenges and opportunities in implementing the curriculum.

Islamic education management, which includes planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation in the context of education based on Islamic values, has a strategic role in directing and managing the implementation of this curriculum (Akrim et al., 2022). From the perspective of Islamic education management, the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is not only seen from the technical and administrative aspects, but also from the perspective of alignment with the basic principles of Islam that prioritize the values of justice, diversity, and equality in education. Thus, it is important to explore how this curriculum can be adapted and implemented in Islamic educational institutions, as well as the challenges and opportunities that exist in implementing the concept.

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum from the perspective of Islamic education management, by considering various internal and external factors that influence the process. The location of this research was carried out at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid Paiton Probolinggo, which is one of the Islamic educational institutions that has implemented the Independent Learning Curriculum in its learning activities. Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid has special characteristics as an Islamic educational institution that prioritizes religious values and academic skills simultaneously, thus providing a relevant picture of how this curriculum can be adapted in the implementation of the independent learning curriculum from the perspective of Islamic education management, especially in the institution Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid has implemented the program in question.

In contrast, previous studies discussed the implementation of the independent learning curriculum, including; (1) Nurmiyati (2021) her research revealed that the Independent Learning Curriculum provides more space for students to develop their interests and talents, with a more flexible and competency-based approach. One of the basic principles of this curriculum is learning that is oriented towards results (output) which is more than just cognitive aspects, but also character, skills, and attitudes. This is further strengthened by research conducted by (2) Abdullah (2022), who emphasized his research on the implementation of this curriculum in Islamic educational institutions, such as madrasas, must pay attention to the balance between teaching worldly and religious knowledge, as well as strengthening the character of students based on Islamic values. (3) Asyari (2018), her research focuses on the management of Islamic education involving a number of elements, such as curriculum, management of human resources (teachers and educators), facilities and infrastructure, and supervision in order to achieve the predetermined educational goals.

Based on the various studies above, all of them discuss about This research has a new contribution (novelty) that enriches the study of the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum in the context of Islamic education, especially at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid Paiton Probolinggo. Based on the existing literature, previous studies have emphasized several important aspects related to the Independent Learning Curriculum and Islamic education management, but this study integrates these concepts with a more holistic and contextual approach, which has not been widely discussed before. By producing several research results, including (1) Development of the Independent Learning Curriculum with a Focus on Islamic Education, (2) Integration of World and Religious Sciences in the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum at the Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid institution.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum from the perspective of Islamic education management at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid Paiton Probolinggo (Winarni, 2021). To achieve this goal, this study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to gain a deep understanding of the implementation

process of the curriculum in the context of Islamic education. By focusing on Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid, which has implemented the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges and opportunities faced by Islamic educational institutions in adapting this curriculum (Gadai et al., 2022).

The research methods used in this study include several data collection techniques, namely in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews will be conducted with relevant informants, such as madrasah principals, teachers, and students, to explore their understanding of the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. Participatory observation will help researchers to directly observe the dynamics of learning in the classroom, including interactions between teachers and students and the implementation of Islamic education principles in the curriculum. In addition, documentation in the form of planning documents, syllabi, and teaching materials will also be analyzed to understand the structure and process of curriculum implementation in the madrasah.

Data collection was carried out with the aim of exploring in-depth information about how Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid manages and implements the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, as well as how Islamic education management is applied to achieve educational goals based on Islamic values (Harahap, 2020). The data analysis process will be carried out using thematic analysis techniques, which allow researchers to identify patterns or themes that emerge from interview, observation, and documentation data. These findings will then be analyzed and compared with theories of Islamic education management, as well as previous research, to provide a broader understanding of the implementation of this curriculum in Islamic educational institutions.

In order to ensure the validity of the research results, this study also uses triangulation techniques, both source, technique, and time triangulation, to ensure that the data obtained is consistent and valid. Research ethics are also strictly maintained, by ensuring informant consent, maintaining data confidentiality, and maintaining transparency in every stage of the research. Thus, this study is expected to provide a significant contribution to the development of Islamic education theory and practice, especially in the context of implementing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in madrasahs. The following is a table of interview respondents below;

| NO | POSITION | INISIAL |
|----|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | Headmaster | MM |
| 2 | Deputy Curriculum | NH |
| 3 | 2 Subject Teachers | ZA, ZR |
| 4 | 5 Students | AC, AD, DE, WR, KK, KTP |

Table 1.1 Interview Respondents

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in Indonesia is one of the strategic steps taken to respond to the need for education that is more flexible, competency-based, and relevant to the demands of the times. This curriculum provides more freedom to educators and students in the learning process, with the main goal of developing individual potential holistically, including cognitive aspects, skills, and character. On the other hand, Islamic education, which has a main focus on the formation of morals and character based on religious teachings, faces its own challenges in integrating the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum with Islamic values contained in Islamic education management.

In this study, the perspective of Islamic education management plays an important role in ensuring that the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is not only effective in academic aspects, but also in line with the basic principles of Islamic education. Islamic education management includes various elements, such as planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation, all of which must pay attention

to the balance between worldly knowledge and religious knowledge, as well as strengthening the character of students. Therefore, it is important to understand how madrasahs, as Islamic educational institutions, can adapt and implement this curriculum while adhering to the underlying Islamic values.

The implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum in Islamic educational institutions, especially at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid Paiton Probolinggo, provides a concrete picture of the challenges and opportunities in combining curriculum flexibility with the principles of Islamic education. This study focuses on how Islamic education management in madrasahs can support the implementation process, by considering internal and external factors that play an important role. The process involves the management of human resources (teachers and educators), facilities and infrastructure, and the implementation of appropriate evaluation to ensure the achievement of holistic and value-based educational goals.

Therefore, the discussion on the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum from the perspective of Islamic education management does not only look at the technical aspects of the curriculum itself, but also involves an analysis of how the curriculum can be implemented effectively and in accordance with the context of Islamic values in educational institutions. In this case, strengthening character, integrating worldly and religious knowledge, and using appropriate managerial strategies are very important to ensure the success of the curriculum implementation in madrasahs.

Development of Independent Learning Curriculum with Focus on Islamic Education

The implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid Paiton Probolinggo has shown how flexibility and freedom in the learning process can be integrated with Islamic values. One of the important findings in this study is the development of a curriculum that accommodates the academic needs of students while strengthening their religious identity. In the context of Islamic education, the development of the independent curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid focuses on strengthening student competencies not only in aspects of worldly knowledge but also in religious aspects, such as understanding the Qur'an, hadith, and morals.

The Merdeka Belajar Curriculum provides more space for educators to adjust teaching materials to the interests, talents, and needs of students. At Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid, this curriculum was developed with a competency-based approach, which allows teachers to adapt teaching methods according to the characteristics of each student. One example of the implementation of this curriculum development is the integration of project-based learning that not only involves academic competencies, but also involves activities based on Islamic values, such as community service, preaching, and skills training that are relevant to the needs of the community.

However, the development of the Independent Learning Curriculum in Islamic educational institutions such as Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid faces challenges in maintaining a balance between teaching worldly and religious knowledge. On the one hand, this curriculum gives teachers the freedom to develop materials that are more contextual and relevant to the needs of the times, but on the other hand, Islamic educational institutions must still ensure that Islamic values remain the main foundation in education. Therefore, this madrasah strives to create an integrative curriculum that combines both, so that students not only develop intellectually, but also have a strong character based on Islamic teachings.

In terms of Islamic education management, the development of this curriculum involves close coordination between various elements of education, such as teachers, madrasah principals, and school committees. Madrasah principals play an important role in designing policies that support curriculum development, while teachers are required to have skills in adapting the curriculum to remain in line with the goals of Islamic education. In addition, the management of human resources and infrastructure are also key factors in the successful implementation of this independent curriculum. Adequate infrastructure, such as classrooms that support technology-based learning, as

well as relevant teaching materials, greatly influence the effectiveness of this curriculum development.

Overall, the development of the independent learning curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid shows great potential in creating education that is more flexible and relevant to the needs of the times, without ignoring the principles of Islamic education. The integration of worldly and religious knowledge, as well as strengthening the character of students based on Islamic values, are the main foundations in the development of this curriculum. Although there are challenges in maintaining a balance between the two aspects, the success of implementing this curriculum is highly dependent on the ability of the madrasah to manage resources, design relevant programs, and motivate teachers to continue to innovate in the learning process.

As conveyed by (MM) emphasized in "the interview was conducted with the Principal of Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid, Mr. Ahmad Fadhil, to explore views and experiences related to the development of the Independent Learning Curriculum at the Islamic educational institution. The following are the results of the interview which describe how this curriculum is implemented at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid, as well as how the institution seeks to integrate Islamic educational values with the flexibility offered by the Independent Learning Curriculum".

Strengthened by the supervising teacher, namely (ZA, ZR) said that As a teacher at the madrasah, I always try to link learning materials with Islamic principles. Even though we teach general subjects such as Indonesian, I always try to integrate religious values in every discussion and assignment given. For example, in writing, I direct students to not only focus on writing techniques, but also to create works based on Islamic ethics, such as maintaining manners in communicating and respecting others. So, even though the learning method is more flexible, these values are never neglected."

The development of the independent learning curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid offers a great opportunity to create education that is more flexible, relevant, and in accordance with the needs of the times. This curriculum provides more freedom to teachers and students in the learning process, allowing teachers to be more creative in choosing teaching methods and strategies that suit the characteristics of students. On the other hand, students are also given space to explore their interests and talents, and to be more actively involved in more meaningful learning. However, even though flexibility is the main character of this curriculum, educational institutions still strive to ensure that the basic principles of Islamic education remain a solid foundation.

In its implementation, this curriculum not only focuses on developing academic competencies, but also tries to integrate Islamic values in every subject, even though the subjects taught are general. This is done by linking each subject matter with Islamic moral and ethical principles, such as in learning Indonesian. For example, in writing activities, students are not only taught about good writing techniques, but are also given direction to produce works that reflect Islamic manners and ethics, such as maintaining politeness in communicating and respecting others. This shows that even though this curriculum is more open and flexible, religious values are still prioritized and integrated in every learning activity.

However, the implementation of the independent learning curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid also faces several challenges, especially in maintaining a balance between curriculum flexibility and strengthening Islamic values. The biggest challenge lies in how to ensure that the teaching of worldly and religious knowledge can go hand in hand without sacrificing one or the other. Although this curriculum provides more freedom in choosing teaching methods and materials, strengthening students' character and morals remains the main focus. Therefore, even though there is freedom in learning, there are still efforts to link each topic taught with moral and spiritual principles that are in accordance with Islamic teachings.

The madrasah has also made various efforts to ensure that any changes in the curriculum remain in accordance with the vision and mission of the institution, namely to produce students who are not only academically competent, but also have good character and noble morals. Coordination between teachers and management is very

important to ensure that this curriculum can be implemented effectively, while maintaining a balance between teaching worldly knowledge and religious knowledge. Every teaching material and method applied is continuously evaluated to ensure that the goals of holistic education based on religious values are achieved properly.

Overall, the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid provides an illustration that flexible and competency-based education can still run hand in hand with strengthening character and morals, in accordance with Islamic teachings. This approach shows that flexibility in the curriculum does not have to sacrifice religious values, but can be integrated harmoniously in the learning process, so that students not only become intellectually intelligent, but also have noble morals and are ready to face global challenges. Thus, this madrasah has succeeded in creating education that is relevant to the development of the times, but still adheres to the basic principles of Islamic education.

Integration of World Science and Religion in the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum in Madrasah Institutions

In the implementation of the independent learning curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid, there is a very real effort to integrate worldly knowledge and religious knowledge. This madrasah views education as a process that not only prioritizes mastery of knowledge, but also the development of students' character and spirituality in accordance with Islamic teachings. Through a more flexible curriculum, teachers are given the freedom to adapt teaching materials and methods that are in accordance with the needs of the times, but still based on religious values (Zulfa et al., 2024).

According to the curriculum administrators at the madrasah, the integration of worldly and religious knowledge begins with the understanding that education must touch on two main aspects: academic knowledge and the moral character of students. In learning, although the material taught covers various fields of general knowledge, such as mathematics, science, or language, there are still efforts to link each learning with the principles of Islamic teachings. For example, in the Indonesian language subject, in addition to teaching writing and language skills, students are also taught about speaking ethics and manners in communicating, all of which reflect moral values in Islam. This shows that although the curriculum gives freedom to learning methods, the ultimate goal remains to form students who are not only academically intelligent, but also have strong characters and noble morals.

Meanwhile, students at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid admitted that they felt the positive impact of the curriculum that integrates worldly and religious knowledge. They feel that learning at this madrasah not only gives them knowledge, but also shapes their attitudes and morals in accordance with Islamic teachings. For example, in writing lessons, in addition to correct writing techniques, students are also guided to produce works that contain the values of honesty, politeness, and mutual respect. One student representative said that they felt more challenged and involved in learning that not only focuses on academic achievement, but also on the formation of a good personality, which can be useful both in the world and in the hereafter.

However, this implementation also faces several challenges, especially in maintaining a balance between worldly and religious knowledge. Although this curriculum gives teachers more freedom to design materials that are relevant to the needs of the times, there are still challenges in ensuring that religious values are not neglected amidst the increasing space for more flexible and innovative learning materials. Students also realize that in facing high academic demands, it is important to continue to remind themselves of the ultimate goal of education, which is not only to be successful in the world, but also to achieve happiness in the afterlife. However, they feel that learning in this madrasah leads to strengthening character and morals in accordance with Islamic teachings (Wanto et al., 2022).

On the other hand, the enormous opportunity of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is its flexibility, which allows teachers to be more creative in delivering material that is not only academic, but also applicable in everyday life. With the freedom in learning

methods and approaches, students can experience a learning experience that is more interesting and relevant to the times. This curriculum allows students to develop skills that are in accordance with the needs of the modern world without forgetting the basics of religious values that are an integral part of their lives (Tuna et al., 2023).

Overall, the implementation of the independent learning curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid shows that education that integrates worldly and religious knowledge can be implemented well. This is proven by the efforts of educational institutions in maintaining a balance between mastering knowledge that is relevant to the development of the times and strengthening character based on Islamic values (Sejdini, 2022). With a flexible curriculum but still based on Islamic moral principles, students are not only prepared to become intelligent individuals, but also to become individuals with noble character and ready to face global challenges with a solid religious foundation..

Based on an interview with (MM), the development of the independent learning curriculum at this institution focuses on achieving a more holistic education. This curriculum not only prioritizes the academic aspects of students, but also includes strengthening character, morals, and spirituality in accordance with Islamic teachings. The principal stated that although this curriculum provides flexibility for educators to choose teaching methods, religious education remains the main priority in every learning process. This aims to ensure that each student is not only academically intelligent, but also has noble character and is ready to face the challenges of the world with a strong moral foundation (Spernes & Ruto-korir, 2021).

According to the Head of the Madrasah, this curriculum provides ample room to adapt the material according to the needs of the times, while still maintaining that religious values remain integrated into each subject. For example, in learning general science such as Mathematics, Science, or Indonesian, in addition to teaching academic skills, teachers also link these lessons to moral values contained in Islamic teachings. Thus, the education provided in this madrasah is not only aimed at increasing students' knowledge, but also at forming individuals who are balanced between worldly and religious knowledge (Cuciniello & Pasta, 2022).

Overall, the development of the Independent Learning Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid is designed to create a balance between academic education and character education. This curriculum approach is expected to produce students who not only master knowledge, but also have strong moral values, and are ready to face global challenges with a solid religious foundation (Kistoro et al., 2022). Thus, the education provided is more relevant and can prepare students to become individuals who are useful to society and religion.

The importance of integrating worldly and religious knowledge is also reflected in interviews with teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid. The teachers emphasized that in teaching, they always try to link each subject to the principles of Islamic teachings. For example, in the Indonesian language subject, in addition to teaching correct writing and language techniques, students are also taught about speaking etiquette and ethics in communicating that are in line with Islamic teachings. Teachers revealed that although the methods used in learning are more flexible, they never forget the important aspects of religious education, which aims to shape students' character and morals (Susanti et al., 2024).

In addition, in general subjects such as Mathematics or Arts and Culture, teachers also try to integrate religious values. For example, in teaching Mathematics, students are taught not only to understand formulas or theories, but also to understand the application of this knowledge in everyday life, as well as how this knowledge can be used for the good of humanity, which is part of Islamic teachings. The teacher emphasized, "Our goal is not only to make students smart academically, but also to instill Islamic values that will shape them into individuals with noble character."

From the students' perspective, the interview results showed that they felt that education at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid had a positive impact in integrating worldly knowledge with religion. One student said that in every subject taught, they were not only taught to master the subject matter, but also taught to practice religious values in

everyday life. Students felt that learning based on character development gave them a deeper understanding of how the knowledge learned could be applied not only in the world, but also in preparation for the afterlife (Tambak & Sukenti, 2024).

However, students also acknowledged the challenges in maintaining a balance between academic knowledge and the application of religious values. Nevertheless, they feel that the education they receive provides them with the space to become better individuals, who are not only smart in academics but also have good morals according to Islamic teachings. They realize that every knowledge they learn is not only for progress in the world, but also for life in the afterlife (Sejdini, 2022).

Overall, the results of this interview indicate that the integration of worldly and religious knowledge in the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid can be implemented well. A flexible approach to the curriculum allows teachers to adapt the material to the needs of the times, while still ensuring that religious values are not neglected. Students also feel empowered to develop their potential academically while becoming individuals with character and noble character (Khudzaeva et al., 2023). Thus, the education provided not only develops intellectuality, but also forms character in accordance with Islamic principles, creating a very important balance in learning at this madrasah.

Illustration diagram of the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum from an Islamic Education Management Perspective, below;



Diagram 1.1 Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum from the Perspective of Islamic Education Management

CONCLUSION

The development of the Independent Learning Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid shows great potential in creating flexible, relevant education that can accommodate the needs of the times without ignoring the principles of Islamic education. This curriculum gives educators the freedom to adjust teaching methods to student characteristics and developments, while maintaining the integrity of Islamic values in every aspect of learning.

The main findings of this study indicate that this curriculum does not only focus on improving students' academic competence, but also on strengthening character and moral values in accordance with Islamic teachings. This can be seen in the efforts to integrate worldly and religious knowledge carried out at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid, where each subject, although general in nature, is still aligned with Islamic principles. For example, in learning Indonesian, in addition to writing skills, students are also guided to produce works that reflect ethics and manners in communicating in

accordance with Islamic values.

The Merdeka Belajar curriculum provides more space for teachers to develop teaching materials with a competency-based approach, and uses more contextual methods, such as project-based learning. This approach not only develops students' academic aspects, but also involves activities based on religious values, such as community service, preaching, and skills training that are relevant to the needs of the community. The flexibility of the curriculum allows students to explore their interests and talents, while still getting a strong character education.

However, the implementation of this curriculum faces challenges in maintaining a balance between worldly knowledge and religious knowledge. The flexibility provided by the curriculum sometimes risks causing neglect of religious values, given the pressure to meet increasingly high academic demands. Therefore, although this curriculum gives teachers the freedom to design more relevant materials, this madrasah still strives to ensure that Islamic values are always the main foundation in every learning process.

In this case, good management between management, teachers, and all elements of education is very important to ensure the success of curriculum implementation. Close coordination between the principal, teachers, and school committee allows for the development of an integrative curriculum and is able to create a balance between teaching worldly and religious sciences. Adequate educational resources, such as facilities and infrastructure that support technology-based learning, as well as regular evaluation of curriculum implementation, also greatly influence the effectiveness of this program.

Overall, the development of the Independent Learning Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Jadid has succeeded in creating an education that is not only relevant to the development of the times, but also adheres to the basic values of Islamic education. Through this approach, the madrasah is able to produce students who are not only academically intelligent, but also have strong characters, noble morals, and are ready to face global challenges with a solid moral and spiritual foundation. This integrated education between worldly knowledge and religion provides an illustration that a flexible and competency-based curriculum can go hand in hand with strengthening character based on Islamic teachings, thus creating a more holistic generation that is ready to face the future.

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