



Independent Curriculum Practices in the Learning System in Junior High Schools

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Abstract

The Merdeka Curriculum (Independent Curriculum) is a curriculum implemented by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Research, and Technology since 2022. Although this curriculum aims to improve the quality of education in Indonesia, several problems have been identified in its implementation. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh) at a junior high school. This study used a qualitative case study method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with ten informants, including the principal, vice principal for curriculum, teachers, and students. All data were analyzed using the thematic interactive model of data analysis of Miles and Huberman. The research findings describe how the Merdeka Curriculum is implemented in Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh) through three stages: i) planning by teachers, ii) learning implementation, including opening, core, and closing activities, and iii) evaluation of student outcomes. Overall, all stages have been implemented successfully through the concept of independent learning in the practice of the Merdeka Curriculum.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a process of systematically transferring knowledge from one person to another according to standards set by experts. With this transfer of knowledge, it is hoped that attitudes, maturity of thinking and maturity of personality can be changed in formal and informal education. The function of education according to Islam is to guide and direct the growth and development of students from stage to stage of their lives until they reach the point of optimal ability based on the guidance of Islamic law. (Rahmat & Ridwan, 2020; Aminah et al., 2022; Manurung & Syahril, 2023). At the 2019 National Teachers' Day event, Nadiem Makarim announced the concept of "Independent Learning Education" in his speech.

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This concept serves as a guideline for the new curriculum, replacing the 13th curriculum, and is a response to the needs of our education system in this era of the industrial revolution. Independent learning gives students the freedom to experience a pleasant learning environment and gives teachers the freedom to develop or implement educational and enjoyable learning, using a variety of learning methods. A pleasant learning environment will certainly influence students' interests and motivation, which can also influence their learning outcomes (Suhartono, 2021; Engkizar et al., 2024; Rahman et al., 2024). The concept of independent learning, also known as the "independent curriculum," gives teachers the flexibility to choose appropriate teaching materials for their students, tailored to their individual learning needs and interests. This "independent curriculum" also reinforces the achievement of the Pancasila student profile, developed according to government-determined themes (Muhajir, 2021). Initially, IKM was implemented in stages and national implementation was carried out in 2024, meaning that all educational institutions that use the government curriculum must implement this independent curriculum, either partially or completely, then the name was changed from the independent curriculum to the national curriculum (Rani et al., 2023; Marhamah & Zikriati, 2024).

The implementation of the Merdeka curriculum should have been applied in all educational institutions, both state and private educational institutions (Ledia & Bustam, 2024; Astutik & Khoirinindyah, 2024). However, researchers see that currently there are still many private educational institutions, especially Islamic boarding school-based educational institutions, especially in the areas around the researcher's current residence, namely the Agam Regency and Bukittinggi City, which have not yet implemented this curriculum. Several Islamic boarding school-based private madrasas that researchers visited in Agam Regency, such as those in Sei Pua District, Banuhampu District, Canduang District, IV Koto District, IV Angkek District and several private madrasas in Bukittinggi City, still use the thirteen curriculum.

In the researcher's observations, the private Islamic boarding school-based educational institutions that have just implemented the Merdeka curriculum are Madinatul Munawwarah Private Middle School is located in the Koto Salayan sub-district of Bukittinggi city, by using an integrated curriculum, namely the curriculum from the Ministry of Religion and the Islamic Boarding School Curriculum and after the researcher came directly and interviewed the head of the madrasa, the researcher obtained information that it turned out that this madrasa had been implementing this curriculum since two years ago, namely since 2022, so in the researcher's mind the question arose how this madrasa could implement this Merdeka curriculum quickly, while many other madrasas which are also based on Islamic boarding schools have not yet implemented this new curriculum. Based on this, researchers are interested in conducting research on how to implement IKM in Madinatul Munawwarah Private Junior High School. This is particularly true for the Islamic jurisprudence subject in grade VII of the madrasah, as this subject not only emphasizes theory but also involves more practical activities that require students to be more active, thus aligning with the principle of the independent curriculum, where teachers are merely facilitators. The researcher discussed this research in a scientific paper entitled *Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in the Fiqh Subject for Class VII in Private Junior High School Madinatul Munawwarah, Bukittinggi city*.

METHODS

This research is a type of field research (Aryanti et al., 2022; Efendi et al., 2022; Engkizar et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2024) conducted at Madinatul Munawwarah Private Islamic Junior High School, Koto Salayan, Bukittinggi City. The focus of this research is to gather information directly from the field through

interviews with various related parties, such as the Head of the Islamic Boarding School, the Principal of the Islamic Junior High School, the Deputy Curriculum of the Islamic Boarding School, the Islamic Jurisprudence teacher, and several students directly involved in the learning activities. This approach was chosen to obtain a real picture of the dynamics of education at the Islamic Boarding School, especially regarding the implementation of the teaching and learning process in Islamic Jurisprudence. The purpose of this research is to understand how Islamic Jurisprudence learning strategies are implemented and the obstacles faced by teachers and students. In addition, this research also aims to contribute to the development of more effective Islamic Jurisprudence learning methods. Thus, the data obtained is expected to be the basis for evaluation and internal policy making of the Islamic Boarding School. This field approach is considered relevant to reveal empirical reality directly and objectively.

This research is qualitative descriptive in nature, attempting to describe and interpret phenomena that occur according to actual conditions in the field, without any data manipulation or fabrication. Data collection techniques used included direct observation of learning activities, in-depth interviews with key informants, and documentation to supplement the information collected. The data obtained were analyzed qualitatively through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues studied. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and methods to ensure the accuracy of the findings. The results of this study are expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the fiqh education process at the madrasah and serve as a reference in developing learning strategies at similar institutions. Using this method, researchers can explore the meanings, values, and practices that develop within the context of Islamic religious education in greater depth.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research problem formulation, the researcher obtained data related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the seventh-grade Islamic jurisprudence subject at Madinatul Munawwarah Private Islamic Junior High School in Bukittinggi City. Data collection was conducted through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation as a tool to gather comprehensive information. Key findings cover three important aspects of learning implementation: learning planning, learning implementation, and learning evaluation.

Learning Planning

Learning planning is a crucial initial stage in implementing the Independent Curriculum. The Islamic jurisprudence teacher at Madinatul Munawwarah Private Islamic Junior High School (MTs) carries out various planning stages, from developing teaching materials to understanding learning outcomes. An interview with Ustazah Husna, M.Ag, the Islamic jurisprudence teacher, stated:

"In lesson planning, teachers prepare and organize learning materials in accordance with the Independent Curriculum learning design, including its relationship to CP, learning objectives, ATP, and the P5 PPR design learning module."

Teachers also involve students in developing strategies and selecting learning media to align with the principles of the Independent Curriculum, which provides flexibility for both teachers and students. Ustazah Husna explained that this encourages students' active involvement in the learning process from the planning stage. Understanding learning outcomes is the next focus. In the Independent Curriculum, Islamic jurisprudence learning outcomes are divided into two main

elements: Islamic religious jurisprudence and Islamic muamalah jurisprudence. Ustazah Husna explained that the Islamic religious jurisprudence CP covers purification, prayer, fasting, and dhikr, while the Islamic muamalah CP covers the laws of buying and selling, inheritance, usury, and other economic activities that must be carried out in accordance with Islamic sharia principles. This suggests that learning planning must adapt to both domains.

Implementation of Learning

The implementation of fiqh learning in grade VII is entirely up to the creativity of teachers and students. The school provides complete flexibility in determining learning approaches and methods. This was emphasized by Yuli Fatmawati, S.Pd.I, Deputy Head of the Madrasah for Curriculum:

"Now, Madrasahs directly hand over the teaching of their respective subject teachers. This is what is meant by independent learning. We at Islamic boarding schools actually understand this independent curriculum better because it gives teachers the freedom to deliver material according to the students' needs, as long as it adheres to the learning objectives and ATP."

During the initial activities, the teacher opens the lesson with a greeting and prayer, followed by class conditioning, motivation, and apperception. The teacher also poses questions connecting the previous material to the day's lesson. One student said:

"Teachers always check the cleanliness of our class before learning, then they are told to pray. At the end of learning, they are asked again about the material that has been presented."

The core learning activities emphasize a practical approach, in line with the characteristics of Islamic jurisprudence, which contains application aspects. Teachers utilize not only lectures but also discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and group-based learning. The dominant learning model is discovery learning combined with discussion. Ustazah Husna said:

"Fiqh is a perfect fit for the independence curriculum because it demands action from students. The material often requires hands-on practice, so students must be truly active."

Learning activities are also interspersed with the implementation of P5 (Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project) and PPRA (Rahmatan lil Alamin Student Profile) through socio-religious activities such as funeral services, mutual cooperation, Yasin (the recitation of the Yasin), and social outreach. Yuli Fatmawati stated:

"We have implemented the practice of communal funeral prayers and extracurricular activities that are carried out in the community as a manifestation of PPRA."

Learning Evaluation

Learning evaluation in the Independent Curriculum consists of formative and summative assessments, as well as P5 and PPRA project assessments. According to Yuli Fatmawati, learning evaluation now uses the term assessment, with formative and summative types:

"The assessments conducted in the independent curriculum are commonly referred to as assessments. These assessments are not only summative but also formative, providing feedback to students and teachers on their learning progress."

Formative assessments are conducted in the form of daily tests, assignments, and observations, while summative assessments are conducted in the form of Mid-Semester Summative (STS) and End-Semester Summative (SAS). If the results do not meet the KKTP (standardized minimum standard), students are given remedial measures. Ustazah Husna stated:

"I always provide remedial work if students' summative test results fall short of the minimum competency criteria (KKTP). We also give short-answer tests or quizzes to gauge the students' understanding."

Furthermore, assessments of P5 and PPRA activities are also conducted specifically and reported in separate report cards. These activities take the form of socio-religious projects, such as funeral arrangements. This demonstrates that the Independent Curriculum assesses not only cognitive aspects but also attitudes and skills. Therefore, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) learning at Madinatul Munawwarah Private Junior High School (MTS) has been systematic, from the planning stage to the evaluation stage. The implementation of adaptive, participatory, and contextual learning demonstrates that this school is sufficiently prepared to implement the principles of the Independent Curriculum in a comprehensive and integrated manner.

From the data obtained, it can be analyzed that the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum in fiqh learning is greatly influenced by the active involvement of teachers and the support of flexible madrasah management. The role of teachers as facilitators and motivators is reflected in their involvement in every stage of learning, from planning and implementation to evaluation. Furthermore, the involvement of students (santri) in the planning and learning process demonstrates a student-centered approach, in keeping with the spirit of the Independent Curriculum. The implications of this implementation are increased student participation, character building, and the relevance of learning to real life.

This makes Islamic jurisprudence learning not only theoretical but also applicable and contextual. Furthermore, by integrating the P5 and PPRA programs into learning activities, the madrasah has succeeded in developing Islamic values, nationalism, and social engagement in students. This is proof that the Independent Curriculum is able to meet the challenges of 21st-century education, which demands meaningful, character-based, and real-life learning. With all its achievements, Madinatul Munawwarah Private Junior High School can serve as a model for implementing the Independent Curriculum, particularly in Islamic jurisprudence. However, ongoing training for teachers, strengthening collaboration between educators, and maximizing the support of facilities and infrastructure are still needed to support the continuity of innovative and meaningful learning.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the independent curriculum in Islamic boarding school-based educational institutions using two curricula at once, namely the Islamic boarding school curriculum and the Ministry of Religious Affairs curriculum, is not as difficult as previously understood by schools that have not implemented this independent curriculum, this can be illustrated in the implementation of the independent curriculum in the Madinatul Munawwarah Private Middle School Educational Institution in Bukittinggi City where researchers conducted research. In

Madinatul Munawwarah Private Middle School, Bukittinggi City, the Merdeka curriculum has been implemented for 2 years. The implementation of the independent curriculum in Islamic jurisprudence learning at MTsS Madinatul Munawwarah Bukittinggi goes through 3 stages, namely good planning carried out by the Islamic jurisprudence teacher himself, implementation that focuses on the learning process in the classroom (including opening activities, core activities, and closing), and evaluation of the results obtained from students with sub-activities from each stage that have been carried out well but only up to the concept of independent learning.

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