

PROBLEMATICS OF IMPLEMENTING THE INDEPENDENT LEARNING CURRICULUM IN LEARNING ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT SMA NEGERI 12 MEDAN

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Abstract

The Independent Learning Curriculum has become an important topic in the world of education, which offers a new paradigm that focuses on flexibility, adaptability and student empowerment in the learning process. This concept is full of potential and dynamic, its implementation in various educational contexts faces a number of common problems. This study aims to find out how the implementation of the independent learning curriculum, find out the problems faced in the implementation of the independent learning curriculum, and find out how the form of assessment of Islamic religious education learning based on the independent curriculum at SMA Negeri 12 Medan. This research is a field research using descriptive qualitative method. Collecting data in this study using interviews, observation and documentation. Analysis techniques use: data reduction, data visualization, and drawing conclusions/verification. Meanwhile, the data validity test takes the form of source triangulation and technical triangulation. The results of the research showed that the learning of Islamic religious education in the independent learning curriculum at SMA Negeri 12 Medan was fully handed over to teachers and students. Teachers are given freedom in making lesson plans, such as using strategies, methods, media and learning approaches. The problems of learning Islamic religious education in the independent learning curriculum are: teachers still have difficulties in developing independent learning-based learning, incomplete facilities, teachers are comfortable with the 2013 curriculum and inadequate human resources. Meanwhile, the teacher's strategy in implementing the curriculum takes the form of: formulating learning objectives, determining teaching and learning activities, determining tools and materials for learning, planning evaluation of Islamic religious education learning.

Keywords: *Implementation, Independent Curriculum, Islamic Education*

INTRODUCTION

The independent learning curriculum is a source of attention for educational thinkers, and is very interesting material to discuss for students, teachers, lecturers or educational experts.

Changes in the education curriculum certainly have their own reasons and certainly have the aim of advancing the education system. Because a good curriculum is a curriculum that is developed according to the lives of students. According to Soetopo and Soemanto, one of the reasons for changes in the curriculum is due to the liberation of parts of the world from colonialism, the rapid development of science and technology, and the increase in population in each region.¹

Along with changes in the development of science and technology, of course these changes will have an impact on changes to the education system in Indonesia. The aim is for graduates from education in Indonesia to be able to compete with the global world. The influence of the development of this technology means that everyone can feel its positive impact.² In fact, the digital era means that many people have to be able to adapt to be able to use various digital-based media and information. For example, people can now work using tools such as computers, cellphones, and so on without having to come to the office. Apart from that, the positive impact of technological developments makes it easier for many people to be able to communicate or convey information remotely, both locally and internationally.³

Schools as centers for implementing the independent learning curriculum are of course required to advance the development of educational institutions in Indonesia to be able to innovate, collaborate, and be able to maintain balance between the education system and current developments in the era of globalization. According to Nadiem Makarim as Minister of Education in Indonesia, the concept of independent learning education was initiated in the education curriculum as a response to the needs of the education system in the 4.0 era towards the 5.0 era. The aim of implementing the independent learning curriculum set by the ministry of education is so that each student can learn according to their respective skills. In implementing this independent learning curriculum, students will be trained and supported to be able to think critically, have skills, create students who are creative, innovative, and have the ability to use various technological and information media as supporting media in the learning process.⁴

In the past, school was a place of learning and teachers were the only source for seeking

¹ Annisa Melani dan Erizal Gani, "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia Di SMP Negeri 16 Padang," *Journal of Education Dan Humanistik* Vol. 1, no. 12 (2023): 24.

² Muhammad Ngafifi, "Kemajuan Teknologi Dan Pola Hidup Manusia Dalam Perspektif Sosial Budaya," *Pembangunan Pendidikan Dan Aplikasi* 2, no. 1 (2014): 47.

³ Syamsu Madyan Wahdina Salim Aranggere, Dian Mohammad Hakim, "Impelementasi Program Merdeka Belajar Pada Pembelajaran Aqidah Akhlak Dalam Mengembangkan Kreativitas Peserta Didik Di MTs Hidayatul Mubtadi'in Tasikmadu Malang," *Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 3 (2022): 152.

⁴ Mulyasa, *Menjadi Guru Penggerak Merdeka Belajar* (Bandung: PT Bumi Aksara, 2021).

knowledge. However, in the digital era, the role of schools and teachers has begun to shift due to the impact of technological developments and advances, making it possible for everyone to obtain various knowledge without space and time.⁵ Even though currently the role of teachers has begun to shift due to technology, of course the role of teachers is very important in making learning a success in the digital era. Therefore, in implementing the independent learning curriculum concept, every teacher must have a good understanding of using technological media professionally. Teachers must be able to design learning using various strategies, methods and even effective approaches in carrying out the teaching and learning process.

One of the real manifestations of implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum is through a shift in the teaching paradigm which involves changes in the mindset of teachers during the learning process. Previously, there was a deep-rooted belief among teachers that the teaching process should be confined to the classroom with the primary focus on knowledge imparted by themselves. As a result, students are only considered as passive recipients of information whose role is to listen to the teacher's explanations and record the material presented by them. In implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum, teachers are expected to act as drivers and providers of facilities so that students are more active and creative. The basic principle of the Independent Learning Curriculum is that learning does not have to be limited to the classroom, but can take place in the field or in the library.

The government's efforts to implement the independent learning curriculum are to complement the previous curriculum by using an active learning approach and based on religious values, Pancasila, national culture.⁶ Based on this, the government has given freedom to educational institutions to develop an independent learning curriculum that is centered on the interests and abilities of students based on Pancasila values.⁷ However, if you look at the current reality, there are still many schools that are not ready to implement the independent learning curriculum in 2023. This is because there are still some teachers who do not fully understand the concept of the independent learning curriculum. So there are differences in carrying out the learning process up to the assessment.

⁵ Rahmad Fadhli, "Implementasi Kebijakan Kurikulum Merdeka Di Sekolah Dasar," *Jurnal Elementaria Edukasia* Vol. 5, no. 2 (2022): 148.

⁶ Evi Susilowati, "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Dalam Pembentukan Karakter Siswa Pada Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam," *Jurnal Al Miskawih* Vol. 1, no. 121 (2022).

⁷ Jaelani Muharrom, Aslan, "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Pada Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam Di SMK Pusat Keunggulan SMK Muhammadiyah Sintang," *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Dan Kearifan Lokal* Vol. 3, no. 5 (2023).

In the context of implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum at SMA Negeri 12 Medan, an educational institution located in the North Sumatra region, this school has been chosen as one of the pilot schools in adopting the Independent Learning Curriculum. However, it should be noted that the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum at SMA Negeri 12 Medan does not yet cover all classes as a whole. There are certain aspects that still require further development, especially in the context of Islamic Religious Education learning. Currently, the application of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education learning has only started at grade 1 and grade 2. Based on the results of initial interviews with PAI teachers at SMA Negeri 12 Medan, it is said that PAI teachers at SMA Negeri 12 Medan are still implementing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. has not run perfectly and comprehensively.⁸ This indicates that there are challenges in implementing this approach effectively. Teachers may face difficulties in changing pre-existing learning practices and adapting them into a more flexible curriculum framework. Teachers also face difficulties in using strategies or methods that are appropriate to the Islamic Religious Education learning context in the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. This suggests that in addition to a change in approach, they may also need additional support in developing and adopting strategies that better suit the new curriculum approach. This emphasizes the importance of in-depth training and guidance.

Therefore, implementing the independent learning curriculum is a challenge for all subject teachers, especially Islamic religious education (PAI) teachers, to continue to increase understanding regarding the implementation of the independent learning curriculum. So this research is very important to be discussed in more depth to find out the extent of the implementation of the curriculum they study at SMA Negeri 12 schools as well as knowing the obstacles faced and knowing strategies in implementing the curriculum in Islamic religious education subjects.

Several literature reviews also reinforce the problems of implementing the independent learning curriculum in Islamic religious education learning in schools. This can be seen from research conducted by Cahaya Mulyana, et al.⁹ Research conducted by Surya Darma Damanik.¹⁰

⁸ Wawancara dengan Guru PAI SMA Negeri 12 Medan pada Tanggal 20 Juni 2023.

⁹ Cahaya Mulyana, dkk, "Analisis Problematika Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam Di SMAN 12 Bandung," *Al-Hasanah: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* Vol. 8, no. 1 (2023): 2.

¹⁰ Surya Darma Damanik, "Problematika Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka Dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam Di SMP Negeri 38 Medan," *Jurnal Manajemen Akuntansi* Vol. 3, no. 4 (2023): 2619.

Research conducted by Ihdan Alam Niswatun Aminah and Mohammad Ahyan Yusuf Sya'bani.¹¹ Based on several previous studies, this study notes that there are similarities in variables between the research being conducted and previous research. What these variables have in common is the discussion regarding the independent curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. In the sense that both have a focus on aspects of the independent curriculum in the context of PAI learning.

Even though there are similarities in the variables, this research shows that there are significant differences between this research and previous research. The main difference is that this research does not only discuss the problems of implementing the independent learning curriculum in PAI learning. More than that, this research also aims to explain how the problems of implementing the independent learning curriculum are overcome by describing the strategies used. The emphasis on strategy disclosure is a significant aspect. This shows that this research does not only focus on identifying problems or challenges in implementing the independent curriculum, but also seeks to provide practical guidance by explaining strategies that can be used by educational practitioners, especially PAI teachers. This provides significant added value in understanding how the independent learning curriculum can be implemented more effectively and successfully in the context of Islamic religious learning. In a broader context, this research is a valuable contribution to the understanding of how the independent learning curriculum can be applied effectively in PAI learning. This also underlines the importance of understanding the strategies used in implementing the independent learning curriculum as part of improvements in the education system. Thus, it is hoped that this research can provide useful insights and has the potential to improve the quality of PAI learning and the implementation of the independent curriculum more broadly.

METHOD

The method used in this research is qualitative, where the qualitative method investigates the state of natural objects (which are not experienced), with the researcher as the main vehicle. Qualitative research is a research method that is descriptive and tends to seek meaning in the data obtained from research results. This method is often used by someone when conducting research

¹¹ Ihdan Alam Niswatun Aminah dan Mohammad Ahyan Yusuf Sya'bani, "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Al-Ilmi* Vol. 6, no. 2 (2023): 2.

related to social and cultural issues.¹² This type of case study approach is used to investigate and understand an event or problem that arises by collecting various types of information, which is then processed to obtain a solution to the problem that arises. To get accurate information, researchers conducted research at one of the educational institutions at SMA Negeri 12 Medan. Based on connecting researchers to look deeper into the events experienced by informants. The subjects of this research are Islamic religious education teachers.

Data collection was carried out through observation, interviews and notes. Discourse analysis is a method used to reveal the meaning or communicative message contained in a text in context. So the meaning extracted from a text or communication message is not only expressed through clearly written text but is more than that. The data analysis process applies and develops the interaction model proposed by Miles and Huberman. Miles and Huberman argue that qualitative data analysis operations are carried out interactively and continue continuously until completion, so that the data is saturated with data operations in data analysis, specifically: data reduction, data visualization, and drawing conclusions/verification.¹³ Apart from the several data collection and analysis techniques above, the researcher also tested the validity of the data, namely: First, source triangulation, a process of checking interview results through the same source using different data collection techniques. Second, technical triangulation, as a hacking process from data collection techniques in the form of interviews but through different sources.

DISCUSSION

The concept of the Independent Learning Curriculum in PAI Learning

The Independent Learning Curriculum is an educational approach that aims to give students more freedom in determining their interests, talents and needs in the learning process. According to Nadiem Anwar Makarim, the independent learning curriculum aims to create a comfortable classroom atmosphere, as well as making students not only listeners but also able to think independently, cleverly and bravely.¹⁴ Therefore, the independent learning approach encourages students to be more active and independent in exploring areas of their interest and developing their potential according to their personal interests and talents.¹⁵ The Independent

¹² Hardani, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Dan Kuantitatif* (Mataram: CV. Pustaka Ilmu, 2020), 40.

¹³ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2019), 438.

¹⁴ M. Iqbal, dkk, "Kurikulum Dan Pendidikan (Merdeka Belajar Menurut Perspektif Humanism Arthur W Combs)," *Jurnal Pendidikan* Vol. 10, no. 2 (2022): 281.

¹⁵ Cahaya, "Peran Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Di Era
Jurnal Ilmiah Didaktika Vol. 24, No. 1 (2023) | 6

Learning Curriculum concept emphasizes the idea that learning does not have to be limited to traditional classrooms or conventional learning structures. Instead, students are given greater autonomy in determining how, when, and where they learn. They can choose the topics they want to study, the most appropriate learning methods, and can even engage in learning experiences outside the school environment.¹⁶

The learning paradigm in this new curriculum can also be interpreted as differentiated learning, namely learning refers to the diversity of services provided by the different characteristics of learning participants. When students arrive at school, they have a wide range of differences in abilities, experiences, talents, interests, language, culture, learning styles, and many other factors. As a result, it is unfair if teachers only provide learning material and assess students in the same way for all students in the class. Teachers must pay attention to student differences and provide services that meet student needs.¹⁷

Therefore, the idea of independent learning sets learning goals based on the circumstances that students have to face. As a result, teachers who teach in each class will create unique learning objectives for each learning session. Because when implementing the independent learning curriculum, learning can be increased and decreased according to the context of the students in the class. Then the independent learning curriculum gives teachers greater freedom in choosing teaching techniques and approaches that can be adapted to the individual interests and needs of each student. This approach recognizes that each student is a unique individual with different interests, abilities, and learning styles.¹⁸

Every child, according to Jean Piaget, has the capacity to develop his own knowledge. This implies that each student can adapt their learning according to the qualities of their own uniqueness during the implementation of the independent learning curriculum, and the teacher only functions as a mediator and moderator. There are several criteria for independent learning. *First*, there is curiosity. *Second*, there is motivation from within the students. *Third*, actively search, find, manage and solve problems. *Fourth*, do not depend on the teacher.¹⁹

Digital,” *Jurnal Bilqolam Pendidikan Islam* Vol. 3, no. 2 (2022): 14.

¹⁶ Ibrahim, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2018), 23.

¹⁷ Desy Wahyuningsari, dkk “Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Dalam Rangka Mewujudkan Merdeka Belajar,” *Jurnal Jendela Pendidikan* Vol. 2, no. 4 (2022): 532.

¹⁸ Jihanna Amalia dan Muh. Wasith Achadi, “Analisis Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Materi PAI Pada Kelas 10 SMK Negeri 1 Depok Yogyakarta,” *Jurnal Nusantara: Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia* Vol. 3, no. 1 (2023): 46.

¹⁹ Ahmad Sahnun dan tri Wibowo, “Arah Baru Kebijakan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Di Sekolah Dasar,” *Jurnal Sittah* Vol. 4, no. 1 (2023): 38.

Teachers are the main component in ongoing education, thus before teaching learning in the independent learning curriculum to students, teachers should first understand independently as part of the independent learning curriculum. Teachers who understand this concept will be able to create a more dynamic classroom environment, integrate relevant projects or learning activities, and encourage students to be active in the learning process. In other words, teachers' strong understanding of the independent learning curriculum is the key to creating more meaningful, relevant and effective learning experiences for students. With a good understanding of this concept, teachers can identify differences in the way students learn and respond to them with appropriate methods. This ensures that every student has an equal opportunity to succeed.²⁰

The aim and objective of Islamic religious education is to create students who have a religious spirit and are obedient in carrying out the commands of Allah SWT in the context of independent learning which is applied in subjects. Responding to the "freedom of learning" policy, learning Islamic Religious Education has become a required subject in the educational curriculum from elementary school to university level. Students in the context of the Independent Learning Curriculum are expected to have the ability to think critically, develop a rational attitude, and understand and apply the principles of Islamic teachings in everyday life. This hope is made possible by the inclusion of policies in the independent learning curriculum.²¹ Therefore, planning based on independent learning is needed to maximize learning in Islamic religious education based on the independent learning curriculum. Based on research findings, PAI teachers and students in the classes of SMA Negeri 12 Medan are fully entrusted to the teachers and students in implementing the lessons they teach. Such as in using strategies, methods, media and using approaches in learning. Because in the Merdeka curriculum, it is important to give teachers and students complete freedom in the use of learning strategies, methods and media because this approach encourages responsiveness to individual needs and diverse learning contexts.²² Teachers are knowledge holders and experts in their fields, and giving them autonomy in choosing methods and strategies that suit the material and students they teach makes sense. Meanwhile, students who have an active role in choosing how they learn can feel

²⁰ Salman Hudri dan Khotibul Umam, "Konsep Dan Implementasi Merdeka Belajar Pada Evaluasi Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2022): 59.

²¹ Anis Sukmawati, "Implementasi Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Dalam Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam," *Jurnal El-Banat* Vol. 12, no. 2 (2022): 123.

²² Mohamad Rifqi Hamzah,dkk, "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Sebagai Wujud Pendidikan yang Memerdekakan Peserta Didik," *Arus Jurnal Pendidikan*, Vol. 2, Nomor 3, 2023, hlm. 223.

more involved, enthusiastic, and responsible for their learning. It also allows for more student-centered learning, allowing students to take control of their own learning. By allowing creativity and diversity in learning approaches, the Merdeka curriculum creates a more dynamic and relevant learning environment, which in turn can help students achieve a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the subject matter.

The results of an interview with an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher show that in the learning planning design process, the initial step taken by the teacher was to collect all material related to PAI subjects in the curriculum. Next, the teacher makes a selection to determine the materials that are considered important to be provided in class learning sessions, while other materials are selected for direct practice. For example, "fardhu kifayah" material would not be enough, if the material was only limited to delivery, but here the students, after knowing and understanding the material about fardhu kifayah, the teacher invites students to practice everything necessary in caring for the corpse. Such as: practicing washing, shrouding and praying over the corpse.

The learning steps for subjects at SMA Negeri 12 Medan consist of:

1. Introduction

At the beginning of the learning session, the Islamic Religious Education teacher and students together carry out a series of: sessions with joint prayer, asking for guidance and blessings in the learning process. Teachers check students' attendance and ensure their readiness to take part in the lesson. The teacher explains the benefits and objectives of the learning material that will be presented to students, helping them understand the relevance and objectives of learning. The teacher asks initial questions related to material that has been previously studied or related to the material that will be discussed. After that, the teacher and students together draw up an agreement containing rules that will support the smooth teaching and learning process. This agreement can include class norms, learning ethics, as well as the responsibilities of each party in the learning environment.²³

2. Core Activities

Core activities are a very crucial stage in the learning process. At the core activity stage, there are several steps, one of which is the exploration stage. In this stage, the Islamic

²³ Wawancara dengan Guru PAI SMA Negeri 12 Medan pada Tanggal 20 Juni 2023.

Religious Education teacher delivers material regarding Hajj and Umrah using a projector, then asks students to pay attention to the video which explains the procedures for carrying out Hajj and Umrah. After that, the teacher invites students to observe and identify differences in procedures for performing Hajj and Umrah, after which students ask questions related to the material they have just learned or convey things they understand.

3. Closing

In this stage, there are three steps taken by the teacher to complete the learning session. The following is a more detailed explanation of each step: First, the teacher reflects on the learning material that the students have just studied. The teacher evaluates how students respond to the material and whether the learning objectives have been achieved. In addition, teachers provide feedback to students by asking them about the material that has been discussed. These questions can focus on the student's understanding, critical thinking, or reflective thinking about the material. Second, the teacher exemplifies moral education values that can be applied in everyday life according to the learning material. For example, if the learning material is related to helping each other in kindness, the teacher can provide concrete examples of how the value of helping each other can be applied in real situations. The aim is to help students relate the material to values that can be applied in everyday life. Third, the teacher gives assignments to students. This assignment can be in the form of a task, exercise, or reflection that must be completed by students as part of learning. After giving an assignment, the teacher usually closes the learning session by praying together. This is a moment to reflect and be grateful, and ask for blessings for the learning that has been done.

Therefore, learning within the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum framework promotes a very flexible type of learning. This means that schools, especially teachers, have greater freedom and creativity in designing and delivering learning. They are not limited to certain methods and approaches, so they can adapt their teaching to their students' needs, interests, and learning styles. Teachers have a role as learning facilitators who support students in exploring topics or learning materials according to their needs. This means teachers strive to understand each student's individual interests, abilities and challenges and structure learning accordingly. So, the essence of this sentence is that the Independent Learning Curriculum gives schools and teachers the opportunity to make learning more appropriate to students' needs. This allows teachers to further

innovate their learning approaches, which in turn can create more engaging, meaningful and effective learning experiences for students.

PAI Teacher Strategies in Learning the Independent Learning Curriculum

There are several teacher strategies that can be used in independent learning-based learning, namely:²⁴

1. Teachers must be able to understand the growth and development of students.

During the learning process, teachers must be able to understand the meaning of growth and development. Growth is a change that can be seen physiologically as a result of the maturation of students' functions which takes place gradually and over an indeterminate time. Meanwhile, development is a change that can be measured qualitatively and quantitatively in the process of human maturation. In the context of an independent curriculum, teachers are facilitators and students are the center of learning. At this stage, teachers must be able to accompany students so that they can achieve understanding that is appropriate to the students' growth and development.

2. Teachers must be able to know students' learning styles

In the 21st century, of course it is different from the previous century. For students who live and develop in the digital and technological era like today, teachers can provide learning related to things that students like. In the independent learning curriculum, schools must be able to become a second home for students. Schools must be able to create a learning atmosphere that is not scary and makes students not stressed. However, teachers must be able to understand students' learning styles so that the subject is enjoyable.

3. Helping students to discover interests and talents

The implementation of the independent learning curriculum must be able to be addressed by teachers by understanding each student's interests and talents. Because, in the Independent Learning Curriculum Framework, students are given the freedom to be actively involved in the learning process. They have the ability to determine what they learn, how they learn, and how they explore their own interests and talents. The freedom given to students allows them to choose subjects or topics that suit their personal interests. This means they can pursue

²⁴ Nurzila, "Dalam Menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Perlu Strategi Tepatguna," *Jurnal Literasiologi* Vol. 8, no. 4 (2022): 96.

learning that they find interesting and relevant to them, which in turn can increase motivation and engagement in the learning process.

4. Make maximum use of technology

It cannot be denied that nowadays everyone has entered the digital era. To compensate for students growing up in the digital era, the teacher's understanding in designing learning uses technology as a figure who is not left behind and can be present in the midst of students' lives. The presence of technology today allows teachers to deliver material through technology, such as showing presentations, videos/films that contain educational values, and using games in the learning process at school.

5. Teachers must have the ability to understand students' learning psychology

Some of the challenges and roles faced by a teacher in teaching, especially in the context of implementing the independent learning curriculum, include: Teachers are faced with various unique characteristics of each student. Every student has different needs, interests, talents and learning styles. The main challenge for teachers is how to accommodate these differences in the learning process, so that each student can reach his or her potential. Teachers are encouraged to provide special treatment and assistance to students who experience problems in learning. This could be in the form of extra support, guidance or tailored learning strategies. In the context of the Independent Learning Curriculum, it is important for teachers to get to know individual students better, understand their needs and potential, and design appropriate learning. In this way, teachers can create an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students, maximize their potential, and help them overcome the various challenges they may face in their learning.

Overall, these strategies underscore the importance of a learner-oriented approach in education. Teachers who care about students' individual growth and needs, and who utilize a variety of tools and approaches to support learning, can create more inclusive, effective, and motivating learning environments. Education that is student-centered and responsive to their needs tends to produce better outcomes in terms of student understanding and achievement.

The strategies used by teachers in implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education learning at SMA Negeri 12 Medan involve the following steps:

a. The teacher first formulates the learning objectives of Islamic religious education

The planning that has been prepared by the Islamic Religious Education teacher at SMA Negeri 12 Medan includes aspects of determining learning achievement, competencies that must be mastered, material to be taught, and learning objectives. Planning activities in Islamic Religious Education subjects includes several elements, including: Determining the subjects to be taught, Determining the material that will be presented to students, Determining the class and semester in which learning will be carried out, Determining the duration of time allocated for learning material, Identifying what competencies students are expected to achieve after completing learning, setting goals to be achieved through learning. Apart from that, planning also includes assessments that will be carried out in accordance with the policies and authority of Islamic Religious Education teachers.²⁵

b. Determining teaching and learning strategies

The learning strategies carried out by PAI teachers at SMA Negeri 12 Medan are applied by first determining the model of teaching and learning activities. Then the teacher collaborates with the principal and the teachers who teach at the school. Such as involving economic education teachers with Islamic religious education teachers to determine a project that is promoted by the independent learning curriculum, namely joint project-based learning. An example of carrying out buying and selling practices contained in Islamic religious education material is by observing students when buying an item in the school canteen.

c. Determine tools and materials for learning

The PAI teacher's strategy in determining Islamic religious education learning tools and materials in the classroom is by looking at the material first, after that determining what media can support the delivery of the learning material. For example, Hajj and Umrah material. PAI teachers not only explain how the Hajj and Umrah are carried out, but teachers can show videos via the big screen regarding the procedures and implementation of the Hajj and Umrah and can practice them outside the classroom.

d. Plan a learning evaluation that is appropriate to the material being taught

Learning evaluation is a very crucial element in assessing the success of the educational process. The quality of a school is also reflected in the quality of the evaluation used. This evaluation is a vital tool for measuring the extent to which students have understood and

²⁵ Wawancara dengan Guru PAI SMA Negeri 12 Medan pada Tanggal 20 Juni 2023”

accepted the lesson material that has been delivered by the educator.²⁶ The assessment process in Islamic religious education subjects at SMA Negeri 12 Medan involves several forms of assessment. One of them is a daily assessment, which can take the form of questions or written assignments. This means that students are assessed regularly in each meeting or learning session. Then the results of the re-discussion, or remedial, are then re-assessed. The teacher will evaluate students' understanding after the discussion. This aims to ensure that each student has an adequate understanding of the learning material. Thus, this assessment process supports the aim of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum to create a learning experience that is inclusive and appropriate to student needs.

Problems of Learning Islamic Religious Education in the Context of the Independent Learning Curriculum

The implementation of a relatively new curriculum requires students, especially teachers, to adapt to the latest curriculum changes. In the process of implementing this latest curriculum, a teacher often faces several challenges when teaching new subjects. One of the obstacles commonly felt by teachers and students today is a lack of understanding regarding the concept and implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum.²⁷

Generally, the problems with implementing the independent learning curriculum are:

1. Human resources are inadequate, one of the successes in implementing the independent learning curriculum is human resources. It can be seen that there are still many teachers who do not fully understand the implementation of the independent learning curriculum and there are still many teachers who do not have the competence to teach professionally and still use observant and boring teaching methods. In fact, every teacher must be able to process learning that can stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning.
2. Inadequate learning facilities and resources. Currently, the complaint of teachers in Indonesia is that they are required to become professional teachers, even though school institutions have not provided sufficient learning resources. Especially in the independent learning curriculum program, which uses digital media to balance the demands of the times with subjects. Even

²⁶ Djoko Siswanto Muhartono dan Sri Wahyuni, "Evaluasi Pelaksanaan Kebijakan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Dalam Rangka Peningkatan Hasil Belajar," *Jurnal Publiciana* Vol. 16, no. 1 (2023): 7.

²⁷ Hasan Basri, "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Pada Pelajaran Akidah Akhlak Di MTs Negeri 1 Yogyakarta," *Jurnal Murobbi Ilmu Pendidikan* Vol. 7, no. 1 (2023): 44.

though digital-based media definitely requires supporting facilities, such as internet networks, laptops/cellphones and teachers who must understand digital media.

3. Teachers are too comfortable with the previous curriculum and have to start from scratch to understand the new curriculum. In reality, currently there are still many teachers who do not have the enthusiasm to develop independent learning curriculum learning. This makes teachers stutter in dealing with the new policy. In fact, one of the policies in the independent learning curriculum program is that teachers must be able to process learning independently, creatively, and have fun, and teachers who are always learning and developing.²⁸

In the context mentioned, a change that might occur is a shift to an "independent learning curriculum" program. This program emphasizes several important aspects, including the teacher's ability to process learning independently, creatively and in a fun way. Apart from that, this program also underlines the importance of teachers continuing to learn and develop. So, in this context, efforts are needed to provide training and support to teachers so that they can understand and implement the independent learning curriculum well. In this way, they can be more effective in dealing with policy changes and ensure that the education they provide is in line with the program's objectives, namely independent, creative and enjoyable learning and teachers who are always learning and developing.

From the results of observations and interviews with an Islamic religious education teacher at SMA Negeri 12 Medan, it appears that in implementing the independent learning curriculum in Islamic religious education subjects, teachers face several challenges and obstacles. Some of the problems faced by teachers in carrying out Islamic Religious Education learning in the context of the Independent Learning Curriculum include:

- a. Teachers have the responsibility to independently develop learning objectives, especially in the context of Islamic Religious Education. Even though teachers are given freedom and independence in planning lessons, in reality there are still a number of teachers, especially those who have experience at SMA Negeri 12 Medan, facing difficulties in developing learning objectives. In fact, many teachers are not fully ready to develop optimal learning implementation plans. This is caused by a lack of understanding of the concept of the Independent Learning Curriculum at SMA Negeri 12 Medan and the lack of in-depth training

²⁸ Cecep Abdul Muhlis Suja'i, "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Pada Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam Di SMP Nurul Qomar," *Jurnal Hasbuna* Vol. 1, no. 2 (2023): 167.

provided by the government to implement the Independent Learning Curriculum at SMA Negeri 12 Medan.²⁹

- b. PAI teachers still have difficulty adapting learning methods and techniques to the independent learning curriculum. Becoming a teacher is not just about teaching, but being a teacher requires thorough preparation, is required to have qualified teaching competencies and teachers are required to be able to follow the development of students in the world of education.³⁰ The learning methods used by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at SMA Negeri 12 Medan in the context of implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum still follow the same methods as those used in the previous curriculum, namely the 2013 Curriculum. These methods include lectures, discussions, questions. answer, and practice. However, teachers give students the freedom to carry out learning when carrying out learning on religious practice material by giving students the freedom to use various thoughts and media to support when learning the religious practice. Therefore, it can be understood that the implementation of the independent learning curriculum has not been fully understood by teachers and sufficient time is needed for teachers to understand methods that are appropriate to the subject matter.
- c. Incomplete facilities, when the necessary facilities and infrastructure are incomplete or inadequate, this can be an obstacle in implementing a curriculum that relies on the use of technology and a more flexible learning approach. Therefore, to achieve success in implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum, it is important to ensure that schools have sufficient facilities and supporting technology so that the learning process can run well in accordance with the principles of this curriculum.³¹ The results of observations and interviews also stated that SMA Negeri 12 Medan also did not fully facilitate learning media in each class, such as not all classes using a big screen when the teacher wanted to show a video containing moral education values in a film.

Even schools do not facilitate Wi-Fi to support learning in the digital era as expected by the Indonesian education minister. Lack of awareness or understanding from students about the importance of playing an active and creative role in the learning process. This indicates

²⁹ Wawancara dengan Gruu PAI SMA Negeri 12 Medan pada Tanggal 20 Juni 2023.”

³⁰ Farid Qomaruddin, “Problematika Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka dalam Mata Pelajaran Bahasa Arab di MA Nasyi’ in Sidoarjo,” *Jurnal of Applied Linguistics and Islamic Education* Vol. 6, no. 2 (2022): 262.

³¹ Syaefan Abdan Syakuro Shinta Sri Pillawaty, Nurul Firdaus, Uus Ruswandi, “Implementasi Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Mengimplementasikan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar,” *Jurnal Edufest* Vol. 1, no. 1 (2023): 650.

that students may not fully understand their role in learning or lack motivation to actively participate. In fact, there are still a number of students who still experience confusion or difficulty in choosing subjects or learning topics that suit their personal talents and interests. This indicates that some students may face challenges in identifying what they really like and are good at. In the context of the Independent Learning Curriculum, it is hoped that students will have the freedom to choose what they want to learn based on their own interests and talents. However, these challenges may arise if students do not yet have sufficient understanding of their interests and talents or if they feel pressured by the expectations of their peers.

CONCLUSION

The independent learning curriculum is here to bring better changes to the learning process, providing freedom and flexibility to teachers and students, and allowing for better adjustments to individual needs in learning. Implementation of the independent learning curriculum has begun at SMA Negeri 12 Medan, indicating the school's commitment to adopting a learning approach that is more inclusive, student-centered, and oriented towards developing individual interests and talents. The implementation process took place in stages, showing awareness that curriculum changes require time and adaptation, especially when they involve learning experiences that are different from previous ones. Lack of understanding of the concept of an independent learning curriculum among teachers and students is a challenge faced. More in-depth training and understanding of the principles of the Independent Learning Curriculum is required to ensure effective implementation. Apart from that, facilities and infrastructure, especially IT equipment, are important factors in supporting the implementation of this curriculum. The success of independent learning is closely related to the availability of adequate facilities.

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