Implementation Strategies of the Independent Learning Curriculum in Achieving Character Education Competencies in Islamic Religious Education at School

Supadi[1], Fauzi[2]
UIN Prof. KH. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto, Indonesia
Email: supadispkmb@gmail.com

Abstract

The Independent Learning Curriculum is a new education system designed to provide freedom for students to develop their unique potential, both academically and personally. Unlike traditional curricula, which often limit the scope of learning to a predetermined structure, the Independent Learning Curriculum allows flexibility in teaching methods and learning outcomes. This study aims to describe the Implementation Strategy of the Independent Learning Curriculum in Achieving Character Education Competencies in Islamic Religious Education at School. This research uses a qualitative approach, specifically the literature study method. Various sources, including academic journals, books, and other scholarly works related to character education and the Independent Learning Curriculum, were reviewed to develop insights into strategies for achieving Islamic character education. The results of this study highlight the importance of integrating character education into all aspects of the curriculum. Effective strategies include incorporating moral and ethical lessons into all subjects, embedding character-building activities in intracurricular and extracurricular programs, and ensuring that teachers are role models through their behavior. In addition, the findings suggest that character education should be part of a long-term and continuous process that involves training and habituation, thus encouraging students to internalize noble values over time. The implications of this study are very important for schools that want to implement character education in the Independent Learning Curriculum. Schools should prioritize the development of a comprehensive character education strategy, which includes careful planning in the syllabus, lesson plans and in-school activities. In addition, educators should balance students' academic and moral development.

Keywords: Independent Curriculum, Character Education, Islamic Religious Education.

INTRODUCTION

The independent learning curriculum is a system that frees students to develop their own potential, teachers and students are both guided to be able to master certain subject matter and potentials that are limited by the existing curriculum system (Kartika, 2021). Meanwhile, the independent learning system is that students are free to develop their own potential without having to compete in certain knowledge with their friends, no more exam system, no more ranking system (Kartika, 2021). Here the teacher is required to

supervise and develop the potential of each individual student without any more demands for abilities that must be forced (Kartika, 2021).

Merdeka Belajar is one of the programs of the Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim which has started in 2020 with the initial stages, and then will be continued in 2021. As published in kompas.com explained that "The Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) explained that it will continue the transformation of education and promotion of culture through the Merdeka Belajar Program in 2021.

Humans are the most perfect creatures of Allah SWT that have many gifts that are not owned by other creatures, it becomes a special privilege for humans, one of which is reason, which humans use as controlling in carrying out all actions so as to form a strong character in themselves (Apiyani, 2022). Character is interpreted as a way of thinking and behaving from individuals to live and work together, within the scope of family, community, nation and state (Arifudin, 2020).

The definition of character education itself can be seen in the functions and objectives of education where there are goals to educate the nation's life; faith and piety to God Almighty; noble character; physically and mentally healthy; knowledgeable; capable; creative; independent; and become a democratic and responsible citizen. According to Kaimuddin in a journal entitled Implementation of Character Education in the 2013 Curriculum (2014 in Kartika, 2021) character education is a conscious effort that is planned and directed through the learning environment for the growth and development of all human potential that has a good personality, moral character, and has a constructive positive effect on nature and society. Individuals with good character are individuals who can make decisions and are ready to take responsibility for any consequences of their decisions, character is considered as the values of human behavior related to God, self, fellow human beings, the environment and nationality which are manifested in thoughts, attitudes, feelings, words and actions based on religious norms, laws, manners, culture, customs, and aesthetics (Apiyani, 2022). Therefore, strengthening character education in the current context is very relevant to overcome the moral decadence that is happening in this country, which is what makes one of the important instruments that affect the back and forth of a nation is character. However, currently one of the problems that has received the spotlight and given birth to the concerns of today's society is the emergence of various forms of negative behavior among our students. Brawls between students, drug use, free sex practices and a series of examples of negative behavior are forms of the low character of today's students.

Deviant and disgraceful behavior that hit the students as mentioned above is a common symptom that appears in various places in Indonesia, parents are certainly worried and anxious about the phenomenon of character or moral decline among children and adolescents. Facing this phenomenon, educational institutions are usually seen as an alternative way out that is quite capable of overcoming moral decline and disgraceful behavior among children and adolescents. This institution does function as a place of learning various sciences as well as shaping the character of students (Supriani et al., 2022).

Islamic religious education is an effort to foster and nurture students so that they can always understand the teachings of Islam as a whole. Then appreciate the purpose of its teachings which in the end can practice and make Islam a way of life (Susilowati, 2022).

Religious education concerns the whole person or is comprehensive, not only equipping children with religious understanding or developing children's intellect, but concerning the whole person of the child, starting from daily practice in accordance with religious teachings, both concerning human relations with God, humans with other humans, humans with nature, and humans with themselves. Islamic Religious Education has a very important role in the life of mankind. Islamic religion becomes a guide in an effort to realize a meaningful, peaceful and dignified life. Therefore, the internalization of Islamic values in the life of each individual becomes a necessity, which must be pursued through education, both education in the family, school and community environment (Susilowati, 2022).

Character education has an important role in fostering student morals related to moral concepts, moral attitudes, and moral behavior. These three aspects must be developed in order to realize students with noble character (Rosyad, 2019). Based on the background description above, the purpose of this study is to describe the Implementation Strategy of the Independent Learning Curriculum in Achieving Character Education Competencies in Islamic Religious Education at School. So the benefit of this research is to provide insight to educators, especially Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, regarding the implementation strategy of the Independent Learning Curriculum in achieving character education competencies in schools. This research is also expected to provide clearer guidance on how to integrate character education in the entire learning process and school activities. In addition, another benefit of this research is to assist policy makers and school managers in formulating effective educational policies to overcome moral problems and negative behaviors that are being faced by students, such as brawls, drug abuse, and deviant sexual behavior.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses the literature research method. According to Ahmad (2009) This library method is included in the type of qualitative research, where data collection is carried out in a place where research results are stored or by looking for sources from relevant books or journals. Qualitative research is research to analyze or reveal symptoms thoroughly and as they are through data collection from natural settings as a direct source with the key instrument of the research itself.

The type of research used is the type or model of qualitative research. Qualitative research is more directed to the process than the results, therefore in this study the focus is on analyzing the Islamic Religious Education curriculum policy in Islamic character
building. This type is used to describe in detail related to the object of research in this case the formation of Islamic character. This research deals directly with the text, the data source is secondary obtained from previous researchers not original from the first hand in the field.

According to Arikunto (2002), research instruments are tools used by researchers in collecting data so that it is systematic and easy to process. In qualitative research, the researcher acts as a research instrument and is in the research setting so that the resulting data is descriptive, data collection techniques are carried out by triangulation or a combination of relevant sources. This research procedure does not emphasize the formulation of the initial problem but follows the development of the setting to be studied. This research is carried out by collecting and recording data in detail from various problems related to the object of research. This research data collection technique by looking for previous scientific research studies that are relevant to this research but the problem is different.

Data analysis is an activity of organizing, sorting, classifying, marking and categorizing so that findings will be obtained based on the problem to be solved. In analyzing the data, this study uses descriptive analysis carried out by describing existing problems, existing opinions, ongoing processes and developing effects or effects (Iman, 2013).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of research through literature studies are presented in table 1 which contains the results of the analysis of literature reviews which include the author's name, year of publication, title, method and research results related to the implementation strategy of the independent curriculum implementation of Islamic religious education in achieving character education in students at school.

Table 1. The results of the analysis of research articles on the implementation strategy of the implementation of an independent curriculum for learning Islamic religious education in achieving character education in students at school

No.	Author and Year	Title	Research method	Results
1	Nina, Indriyani, Suryani, Indriyanis, Suryani, (2023)	Implementation of the independent learning curriculum in shaping the discipline character of students in elementary schools	Literature study from database search on google scholar	Based on the results of the analysis, the research explains that learning with the implementation of an independent curriculum can improve the attitude of discipline for students in carrying out learning in the classroom supported by thematic subjects.
2	Apiyani, (2022)	Implementation of character education in Madrasah	The method used in this study uses a method or approach (*library research*)	Teachers and Madrasahs need to integrate the values developed in character education in the existing Curriculum, Syllabus and Learning Program Plan (RPP). The learning principles used in the development of national culture and character education

No.	Author and Year	Title	Research method	Results
				strive for students to recognize and accept the values of national culture and character as their own and be responsible for the decisions they make through the stages of recognizing choices, assessing choices, determining stances, and then making a value in accordance with self-belief.
3	Susilowati, (2022)	Implementation of the independent curriculum in student character building in Islamic religious education subjects	This research is a qualitative research with observation, interview and documentation methods.	The results show that the implementation of the independent learning curriculum at school has been running, but there are several obstacles faced by teachers in implementing it. Obstacles related to understanding revolve around not understanding the essence of 'independent learning', it is difficult to get rid of old habits, namely the dominance of the lecture method. Other constraints related to technicalities revolve around the difficulty of making teaching modules and the incompatibility of learning platforms with what is in them. Finally, at the evaluation stage, teachers have difficulty in conducting assessments.
4	Rosad, (2019)	Implementation of character education through learning activities in the school environment	Qualitative approach of literature study type	Character building through environmental factors can be done through several strategies, including exemplary, intervention, consistent habituation and reinforcement. In other words, development in character building requires role models who are transmitted, intervention through the learning process, training, continuous habituation in the long term which is carried out continuously and reinforcement, and must be balanced with noble values.
5	Muslimin, (2023)	Curriculum development for	The approach used in this	The findings reveal that the development of

No.	Author and Year	Title	Research method	Results
		character education in madrasah based on an independent curriculum	research is qualitative with a literature study method, researchers use several books, journals, and recent observations as references.	character education implemented in learning must be integrated into each subject, self-development, and madrasah culture. Character values developed in students can be through two attitudes, namely spiritual and social. Spiritual is carrying out the teachings of the religion they adhere to, while social includes honest behavior, discipline, responsibility, courtesy, environmental care and confidence in interacting with the environment. Some stages of learner character development can be passed through 1) knowledge (knowing), 2) implementation (acting), and 3) habits (habit).
6	Munawwaroh, (2019)	Exemplification as a method of character education	By using the library research method	This study found that exemplary is the most important and most effective method of character education when done comprehensively by educators in every educational environment; then done together with other educational methods; and shown in three aspects: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor.
7	Lestari and Hasibuan, (2022)	Implementation of authentic assessment of the independent curriculum in fostering character education in the subject of moral creed for class X MAN 1 langkat students	observation direct observation viz: interview, observation, and documentation	The research results explain that the implementation of the authentic assessment of the independent curriculum of Akidah Akhlak subject for class X MAN 1 Langkat students is carried out by assessing all aspects that must be assessed in authentic assessment, be it cognitive or knowledge aspects, affective or attitudinal aspects, and psychomotor. In the knowledge aspect of the teacher Akidah Akhlak teachers use assessments in the form of written, oral, and assignment tests for affective aspects using a form of direct observation

No.	Author and Year	Title	Research method	Results
				assessment, namely the teacher observes the attitude of students directly, on the psychomotor aspects of Akidah Akhlak teachers using a form of performance assessment, namely students are asked to display their abilities directly during the learning process and make assignments given. Implementation in fostering character education in Akidah Akhlak class X MAN 1 Langkat 1 Langkat students are coaching through habituation, ethics coaching through attention, ethics coaching through motivating, ethics coaching through punishment. Factors that influence in fostering character education of Akidah Akhlak subjects in class X MAN 1 Langkat, namely family factors, play environment factors and student associations, lack of cooperation between the school and the students. students' associations, lack of cooperation between religion teachers and parents, the character of students who are difficult to mold, and technological advances.
8	Tholiah, (2023)	Implementation of the independent learning curriculum in Islamic religious education learning in fostering the value of akhlakul karimah through an independent path of change at Ambulu Jember public high school in the 2022/2023 academic year.	This research uses a qualitative research approach with the type of descriptive field research (field research)	The results of this study are from planning: 1) analysis of learning outcomes 2) preparation of learning objectives 3) Arrange the flow of learning objectives 4) diagnostic assessment. Results from implementation: 1) developing teaching modules 2) adjusting learning to the stage of achievement and the characteristics of 3) processing formative and summative assessments. From evaluation results: 1) reporting on learning progress 2)

No.	Author and Year	Title	Research method	Results
				evaluation of learning and assessment.

The discussion is related to the implementation strategy of the independent curriculum for learning Islamic religious education in achieving character education for students in schools which focuses on the implementation of the independent curriculum on character building. Various relevant literature studies from previous research have been traced and reviewed as a source of writing this research. Currently, in Indonesia, the curriculum being implemented is the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. Nadiem Makarim, who is the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Mendikbud Ristek), stated that character education is one of the priorities in Merdeka Belajar. He said the foundation of character education lives from culture. In the Merdeka Curriculum learning design, students are given the opportunity to learn casually, calmly, happily, and pay attention to the natural talents of the students. The focus of independent learning is freedom to think creatively and independently (Nina., and Indrianis., 2023).

The Merdeka Curriculum refines the cultivation of student character education with the Pancasila student profile, which consists of 6 dimensions, each dimension of which is elaborated in detail into each element consisting of 1) Believing in God Almighty, Indonesian students who believe in, fear God, and have noble character are students who are moral in their relationship with God Almighty. He understands the teachings of his religion and beliefs and applies this understanding in his daily life. There are five key elements of faith, fear of God, and noble character: religious morals; personal morals; morals to humans; morals to nature; morals of the state 2) Global diversity, Indonesian students maintain their noble culture, locality and identity, and remain open-minded in interacting with other cultures, thus fostering mutual respect and the possibility of forming a positive new culture that does not conflict with the noble culture of the nation. The key elements of global diversity include knowing and appreciating culture, intercultural communication skills in interacting with others, and reflection and responsibility for the experience of diversity consisting of: Knowing and respecting culture, Intercultural communication and interaction, Reflection and responsibility for the experience of diversity, Social Justice 3) Gotong royong, Indonesian students have the ability to work together, namely the ability to carry out activities together voluntarily so that the activities carried out can run smoothly, easily and lightly. The elements of bergotong royong are collaboration, caring, and sharing, consisting of: Collaboration, caring, sharing 4) Mandiri, Indonesian students are independent learners, students who are responsible for their learning process and results. The key elements of independence consist of awareness of self and the situation at hand and self-regulation. 5) Critically reasoning, A critically reasoning learner is able to objectively process both qualitative and quantitative information, establish linkages between various information, analyze information, evaluate and conclude. The elements of critical reasoning are acquiring and processing information and ideas, analyzing and evaluating reasoning, reflecting on thoughts and thought processes in making decisions. Acquire and process information and ideas, Analyze and evaluate reasoning, Reflect and evaluate one's own thinking 6) Creative.

Creative learners are able to modify and produce something original, meaningful, useful and impactful. The key elements of creativity consist of generating original ideas and producing original works and actions and having flexibility of thought in finding alternative solutions to problems. Produce original ideas, produce original works and actions, have flexibility of thinking in finding alternative solutions to problems (Susilowati, 2022).

Based on the results of previous research analysis (Susilowati, 2022) revealed that the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is able to emphasize learning for students to be of higher quality in order to realize quality students and characterize the profile of Pancasila students with the hope of equipping students to be able, capable or ready to face global challenges that are increasingly developing in the future. Education is one part of life that plays an important role in change so that education itself must also develop for the sake of change and development of education itself. Changes in education are very important because education is able to prepare the process of growth and development of insight for students to always be honorable and dignified in the future. The development of education that is carried out in addition to following the changing times is also intended so that learning is able to adjust the pattern of development and the needs of society. Various efforts in the development of science are an important highlight in organizing the future of the country so that it becomes part of the category of indicators of whether the country is advanced or not. Innovation in education must be fast and integrated. Thus, the pattern of the learning process must be carried out innovatively, interactively, and have an organized character and independence according to the interests and talents of students. With this, students are given the freedom to develop in order to be able to find their own experiences and potential.

Another opinion from previous research (Sumarsih et al., 2022) explained that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum on the influence of students' disciplinary character can be done with the activities carried out by students in writing a description through a training using image media can provide an increase in students' understanding in various characters, including: discipline, honesty, democracy, religion, critical thinking, care for the social environment, as well as responsibility.

In research (Rosyad, 2019) explains that character education has an important role in fostering student morals related to moral concepts, moral attitudes, and moral behavior. These three aspects must be developed in order to realize students with noble character. In connection with the concept of school management, character education needs to be internalized through learning activities, extracurricular activities, and intracurricular activities. Character building through environmental factors can be done through several strategies, including exemplary, intervention, habituation that is carried out consistently and reinforcement. In other words, development in character building requires role models who are transmitted, intervention through the learning process, training, continuous habituation in the long term which is carried out continuously and reinforcement, and must be balanced with noble values.

In achieving character education in the independent curriculum according to (Laode Onde, 2020) that strengthening character education is carried out in an integrated manner

into all subjects presented based on themes by presenting character values in accordance with the subject matter studied from the initial activities to the final learning activities.

In organizing an independent curriculum to achieve character education competencies in schools, it should be carried out in an integrated manner in intracurricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities. (Muslimin, 2023). Other research (Lestari and Hasibuan, 2022) states that in the form of a final assessment of students related to character formation, it can be assessed based on the attitude and perspective of students in paying attention to the explanation of the material presented, the response generated in learning, and the attitudes and behaviors that arise outside the classroom, namely having mutual tolerance among others, discipline, confidence, and honesty in action. Furthermore, this aspect of assessment from various cognitive, psychomotor and affective aspects, time, making indicators, making assessment sheets, this is based on the learning model applied in the Merdeka Curriculum.

The Nature of Character Education, Functions and Objectives of Character Education, Principles of Development

Character Education, and Indicators of School Success in Character Education can be explained as follows:

1. The nature of character education

In strengthening character education, educational institutions are still relied upon as a very powerful medium to build intelligence as well as children's character for the better, therefore education is continuously built and developed so that the implementation process produces the expected generation. (Darmawan, 2021). Education is an absolute necessity for human life that must be fulfilled throughout life, because without education it is impossible for humans to develop properly, this is where the role of character education in the educational process is to form grains of goodness so that they can be embedded in each generation. According to (Arifudin, 2021) that the formation of character in oneself must be instilled since childhood, which is a time when personality formation is very necessary, because if noble values have been formed in children from an early age, then when they grow up they will become responsible and dignified human beings. The purpose of national education is a formulation of the quality of Indonesian human beings that must be developed by each educational unit, therefore the formulation of national education goals is the basis for the development of cultural education and national character. Based on Presidential Regulation number 87 of 2017 concerning Strengthening Education (PPK) article 1, what PPK means is: Strengthening Character Education, hereinafter abbreviated as PPK, is an educational movement under the responsibility of the education unit to strengthen the character of students through the harmonization of heart, taste, mind, and sports with the involvement and cooperation between education units, families and communities as part of the National Movement for Mental Revolution (GNRM). (Presidential Decree number 87 of 2017). In terminology (terms) character is defined as human nature in general which depends on life factors, character is the nature of the soul, morals, or character that characterizes a person or group of people, character is the values of human behavior related to God Almighty, self, fellow human beings, the

environment and nationality which are manifested in thoughts, attitudes, feelings, words and actions based on religious norms, laws and manners, culture and customs. Character can also be interpreted as the same as morals and character so that the character of the nation is the same as the character of the nation or character so that the character of the nation is the same as the character of the nation or the character of the nation (Darmayanti, 2021).

2. Functions and Objectives of Character Education

The implementation of character education in schools is important even though schools or educational institutions are not the only institutions that are responsible and play a role in shaping the character of students, besides madrasah the character education process is also the responsibility of families and communities, in families parents have an important role in this character education process (Hasbi, 2021). Before students enter the school world, the family is the first place where children obtain and experience character education, the success of character education is highly dependent on the synergy between schools, families and communities, based on the Character Education Implementation Guide of the Ministry of National Education (2011) explained that character education functions to build a multicultural national life, build a nation's civilization that is intelligent, culturally noble, and able to contribute to the development of human life; develop basic potential for good hearts, good minds, and good behavior and good exemplary, and build attitudes of peace-loving, creative, independent citizens.

3. Character Education Development Principles

In principle, character development is not included as a subject matter but integrated into subjects, self-development and Madrasah culture (Tanjung, 2020). Therefore, teachers and Madrasahs need to integrate the values developed in character education in the existing Curriculum, Syllabus and Learning Program Plan (RPP). The learning principles used in the development of national culture and character education strive for students to recognize and accept the values of national culture and character as their own and be responsible for the decisions they make through the stages of recognizing choices, assessing choices, determining stances and then making a value in accordance with self-belief, with this principle students learn through the process of thinking, behaving and doing. These three processes are intended to develop learners' ability to carry out social activities and encourage learners to see themselves as social beings.

4. Indicators of School and Classroom Success in Character Education

Character is developed through the stages of knowledge (*knowing*), implementation (acting), and habits (*habit*), therefore character cannot be taught as knowledge. A person who has knowledge about goodness is not necessarily able to act in accordance with the knowledge he has, especially when he is not trained to do this goodness (Febrianty, 2020), thus to become a person with character, three *components of good character* are needed, namely *moral knowing* or knowledge about morals, *moral feeling*, and *moral action*. These three components need to be given to students so that they are able to understand, feel, and practice the virtues they know. According to

(Fitri, 2012) there are two types of indicators to be developed related to the education of Character Values and National Culture, namely Indicators for schools and classes, Madrasah and class indicators are markers used by school principals, teachers and personnel. Schools in planning, implementing and evaluating, madrasah as an implementing institution of character value education and national culture. Indicators are formulated in the form of learner behavior in class and school that can be observed through teacher observation when a learner performs an action at school, questions and answers with learners, answers given by learners to teacher tasks and questions, as well as learner writing in reports and homework, indicators function for teachers as criteria for giving consideration.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion in this study is that the Self-Directed Learning Curriculum provides a flexible and adaptive approach to education, allowing students to explore and develop their unique potential without the limitations of a rigid traditional system. This freedom allows teachers and students to collaborate in mastering subject matter and personal skills. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, the internalization of Islamic values is an important aspect of character education, which shapes students not only in terms of knowledge but also in moral and ethical behaviour. The research objective, which sought to describe the implementation strategies of the Independent Learning Curriculum in achieving character education competencies, has been successfully achieved. The research identified key strategies, including the integration of character education across all subjects, incorporating it into the syllabus and lesson plans, and enhancing it through various activities, both curricular and extracurricular. In addition, the role of teachers as role models and the importance of continuous habituation practices were also emphasized as effective methods to instill character values. This research makes a significant contribution to the development of character education strategies in the school environment, especially in the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum. Theoretically, this research enriches the literature on character education in the context of a more flexible curriculum. Practically, the results of this study can be used as guidelines for educators and policy makers to formulate more effective and sustainable character education implementation strategies, not only in the context of religious education but also in general education.

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