

**TRANSFORMATION OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: AN
ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INDEPENDENT
CURRICULUM IN CLASS VII SMPN 3 PAMEKASAN**

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Abstract

This research describes the implementation of an independent curriculum at SMPN 3 Pamekasan, with special emphasis on Islamic religious education subjects. The main objective of this research is to describe and understand how the independent curriculum is implemented in the context of Islamic religious education. This research uses a qualitative approach with case study as the main method. Data were collected through various techniques, including observation, interviews, and documentation, from multiple sources such as the principal, vice principal for curriculum, teachers, and students. Data were analysed using an interactive model and validated using various techniques. The results show that implementing the self-directed curriculum involves extracurricular Pancasila learner profile-strengthening projects and extracurricular. The self-contained curriculum provides flexible, creative, and meaningful learning experiences and maintains the Pancasila learner profile. It also provides opportunities for students to develop their academic and non-academic potential. This research offers new insights into how a self-contained curriculum can be implemented in Islamic religious education and how it can positively impact students, teachers, and schools. However, it also shows that successful implementation requires support, commitment, and further research.

Keywords: Independent curriculum; Islamic religious education; Pancasila learner profile



Introduction

Indonesia's journey to independence was driven by various factors, with education playing a crucial role. Education has freed Indonesia from centuries of colonisation. However, the current state of education in Indonesia is a cause for concern, characterised by a significant shortage in both the formal and informal sectors (Atika & Ikaputra, 2023). This education deficit is a barrier to developing a skilled workforce capable of meeting demands in various fields.

Despite Indonesia's efforts in education, the quality is still below standard, hindering the nation's progress (Alifah, 2021). The continuous evolution of the education landscape underscores the need for change and improvement. The enactment of the Republic of Indonesia Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System reflects a commitment to creating an environment conducive to active learning and holistic development.

Although Indonesia's education system has undergone substantial changes over time, there is still a gap between theory and practice; several studies highlighted the changes in Permenristekdikti Number 33 of 2018 to Kemendikbud-Ristek Number 32 of 2021 (Minto et al., 2023), changes in the 2013 curriculum in welcoming golden Indonesia in 2045 (Machali, 2014), Curriculum Changes in Indonesia: A critical study of efforts to find the ideal Islamic Education Curriculum (Muhammedi, 2016), The Dynamics of the Development of the Pesantren Education Curriculum; A Philosophical Analysis (AR, 2018). The existing literature lacks comprehensive insight into the practical implications of curriculum development and its impact on educational outcomes. In addition, implementing innovative approaches such as the "Merdeka Curriculum" requires further exploration and analysis.

Overcoming shortcomings in the Indonesian education system requires a diverse approach. Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is a step towards flexible and student-centred learning (Alfaeni & Asbari, 2023). However, effective implementation requires careful planning, adequate resources, and continuous evaluation to ensure its success (Nasution, 2023).

This research aims to understand the implications of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly in the context of Islamic Religious Education at SMPN 3 Pamekasan. By exploring this implementation, valuable insights can be gained into the challenges and opportunities associated with curriculum reform in Indonesia (Rambung et al., 2023).

This study aims to investigate the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education at SMPN 3 Pamekasan, focusing on its practical implications and effectiveness. Its specific objectives are to assess the alignment between curriculum objectives and classroom practices, identify challenges faced during implementation, and explore strategies to enhance the impact of the curriculum.

This study aims to investigate the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education at SMPN 3 Pamekasan, focusing on its practical implications and effectiveness. Its specific objectives are to assess the alignment between curriculum objectives and classroom practices, identify challenges faced during implementation, and explore strategies to enhance the impact of the curriculum.

Understanding the dynamics of curriculum implementation in Islamic Religious Education can provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders. By addressing gaps in the literature and offering practical recommendations, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse of education reform in Indonesia, which ultimately aims to improve the quality and relevance of education for future generations.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, researchers used a qualitative approach. This type of case study is very suitable for research related to teaching and learning activities, both from the experience of teachers and students and direct experience (Yin, 2015).

Primary data is collected directly from the source and processed by the organisation or individual. Those included in the preliminary data are as follows: Principal of SMPN 3 Pamekasan, Waka curriculum of SMPN 3 Pamekasan, Islamic religious education teacher of SMPN 3 Pamekasan, seventh-grade students of SMPN 3 Pamekasan, students' learning atmosphere in class VII of SMPN 3 Pamekasan. In this study, the data collection techniques researchers use are Observation (Observation), interview (interview), and Documentation Analysis.

Data analysis includes interviews, observations, and existing documentation results. Data analysis in this study was carried out before entering the field, during the field, and after completion of the field (Sugiyono, 2019). This study's data analysis activities are carried out interactively and occur continuously until completion, so the data is saturated. The data analysis in qualitative research is as follows: Data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Moleong, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMPN 3 Pamekasan

The independent curriculum is a curriculum that gives schools the freedom to explore their abilities according to the available facilities, inputs, and resources and gives teachers the freedom to provide relevant and urgent material.

According to Ningsih (2023), the Independent Curriculum is a policy of the ministers of religion and culture that aims to restore the orientation of schools and local governments, which is done to adjust the educational conditions in their regions according to creativity in various fields.

Meanwhile, according to Hattarina, Saila, Faradilla, Putri, & Putri (2022), the Independent Curriculum is a curriculum that provides opportunities for students to learn as freely and comfortably as possible so that students can learn calmly, relaxed, and happily without pressure by paying attention to students' natural talents that they already have without being forced to know a field outside of students' hobbies and abilities (Gaffar et al., 2021).

Ainia (2020) argues that the Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum where teachers and students have more freedom in determining learning methods, places, and times. This is in line with the opinion of Mr. Alfian Efendi, S. Pd, as the deputy head of the curriculum; he believes that the independent curriculum is a curriculum that frees teachers and students to explore learning activities by existing facilities and infrastructure.

Based on the above opinion, it can be concluded that the Independent Curriculum is a curriculum that gives students the freedom to explore their interests and talents without coercion to find learning outside of their interests, which is done to adjust the educational conditions in their area according to creativity in various fields.

In implementing the independent curriculum at SMPN 3 Pamekasan, there are three contents: extracurricular, the project of strengthening the profile of Pancasila students, and extracurricular.

1. Intra curricular

Intracurricular is the primary teaching and learning activity at school, which is held in the classroom. Schools are free to choose effective teaching and learning strategies, methods, and techniques according to the characteristics of the subjects, students, teachers, and the conditions of the resources available (Ridho, 2019).

According to (Anggara et al., 2023), Intacurricular is an independent curriculum learning activity in the classroom. Meanwhile, the allocation of lesson hours is compiled in one year. In line with the application of intracurriculars at SMPN 3 Pamekasan, intracurriculars are all activities related to learning materials taken by students, such as religious or ethical education, social studies, Civics, etc.

2. Project on Strengthening the Profile of Pancasila Students (co-curricular)

The Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project is a new project-based learning in which learning is carried out to explore actual and factual issues in the surrounding environment. For the allocation of Pancasila Strengthening Project activities, 25% of intracurricular learning activities.

According to Ningsih (2023), research argues that the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project explores actual and factual issues in the surrounding environment. Students are invited to think critically and reason about how to solve problems and find solutions by the profile of Pancasila Students. The implementation of the Pancasila student profile strengthening project is carried out three times within one year, consisting of two projects in the odd semester and one project in the even semester.

This is in line with the implementation of the project to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students at SMPN 3 Pamekasan. Namely, students must complete three themes in 1 year with the time allocation of 1 theme completed in 4 weeks. The theme taken refers to the Pancasila Learner Profile, and the teacher determines the theme selection.

3. Extracurricular

Extracurricular activities are activities carried out by students outside of learning hours (class). Extracurricular activities are intended so that students can develop their personalities, talents, and abilities in various fields outside the academic field. This activity can be art, sports, personality development, and other activities that have a positive purpose for the student's progress.

According to Permendikbud Number 62 of 2014 Article 2, extracurricular activities are organised to optimally develop students' potential, talents, interests, abilities, personalities, cooperation, and independence to support the achievement of national education goals.

In line with extracurricular activities at SMPN 3 Pamekasan, there are two types: compulsory and optional. Mandatory extracurriculars are scouting and optional extracurriculars that are developed and organised according to the talents and interests of

students. All students (VII, VIII, IX) must follow this mandatory scouting extracurricular with an allocation of 2 lesson hours per week. While students follow the optional extracurriculars in grades VII and VIII, the time allocation is equivalent to 2 hours of lessons and is carried out in the afternoon/evening.

Based on some of the above opinions, it can be concluded that implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in schools consists of intracurricular learning, Project Strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile, and extracurricular activities. Extracurricular learning is learning held in the classroom while the time allocation for lesson hours is written in one year. Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project learning is learning to understand better learning in the classroom by exploring fundamental issues in the surrounding environment through the Pancasila student profile. Extracurricular Learning is learning to dig deeper into student talents such as basketball, badminton, etc.

Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education

Islamic Religious Education is an effort and process of continuously instilling an education between teachers and students with *karakul Karima* as the ultimate goal. In line with the opinion of Nadhiroh & Anshori (2023), Islamic Religious Education is all efforts to maintain and develop human nature and the human resources to form a perfect human being (*insan kamil*) according to Islamic standards.

Meanwhile, according to Hasnawati, Islamic Religious Education is an effort to foster and nurture students to understand Islamic teachings comprehensively. Nurhantara & Utami (2023) also argue that Islamic Religious Education is an effort to form students who can learn, are motivated to learn, need to learn, want to learn, are interested in exploring Islam, and understand how to be religiously correct in learning Islam as a science that affects changes in attitudes about aspects, cognitive, and psychomotor individuals.

The Islamic religious education teacher at SMPN 3 Pamekasan stated that Islamic religious education is a conscious and planned effort to increase understanding of Islamic teachings in daily life through the holy book *Al-Qur'an* and *hadith*.

Applying the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education subjects has several stages, including the following: First, Learning Planning: In this planning, independent-based planning is also needed based on vision, mission, goals, learning targets, and research in the classroom. Second. Learning implementation is left entirely to the teacher and students, while the school only provides a policy that the teacher must obey. There are opening, core, and

closing activities in implementing learning. Third (Mahbubah, Amin, Aziz, Rozi, & Badriyadi, 2022). Learning Evaluation is carried out to assess student behaviour that often occurs and changes in evaluating the methods used in written tests, oral tests, and actions. At the same time, the tools used are peer questionnaires, observation sheets, reflections, and recordings.

In line with Susilowati's opinion (2022), implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education has three activities: Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation. Planning, in planning, must analyse the learning achievements that students must achieve at the stage of student development. Implementation: In implementation, the teacher must prepare the material to be delivered; in general, the implementation of learning has three stages, namely, opening, implementation, and closing. Evaluation: In the evaluation stage of learning, the independent curriculum in Islamic religious education is carried out with an assessment in the form of diagnostic assessment, formative assessment, and summative assessment.

According to Nelisma (2022), The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education is not much different from the previous curriculum; namely, there are opening, core, and closing activities. However, what makes the difference is that students are given freedom according to their talents and interests; besides that, the difference lies in learning tools, including if the previous curriculum (curriculum 13) contained the preparation of KI and KD, the independent curriculum had learning outcomes (CP) if the previous curriculum was a lesson plan, the independent curriculum became a teaching module.

Meanwhile, according to Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo (2022), implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education can be implemented in two activities, First, Intracurricular activities, in Intracurricular activities there are opening/beginning, core, and closing activities. The allocation of Extracurricular learning time is written in one year, equipped with an allocation of lesson hours if delivered regularly or weekly. Second, Project Learning Strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile is learning to train students to explore real issues in the surrounding environment and collaborate to solve a problem.

This is in line with the opinion of Nadhiroh and Anshori (2023) that applying the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education Learning is focused on fostering student interest and involving students in obtaining new learning experiences that are interesting and meaningful. There are three stages in the learning process: opening, core, and closing. In addition, there is also a Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project learning; this learning

is a strengthening of character education, which consists of 6 dimensions of the Pancasila student profile.

Supit, Masinambow, Repi, Naharia, & Jacobus (2023) in their research argue that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic religious education subjects has two types of learning, namely Intracurricular and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (Cocurricular). Extracurricular learning is face-to-face learning carried out in a structured classroom and must be followed by students. For the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project Learning is project-based learning to create a Pancasila profile with a time allocation of 25% of Intracurricular learning each year.

Pertiwi, Novaliyosi, Nindiasari, and Sukirwan (2023), in their research, argue that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education subjects is the government's effort to restore learning, of which there are two lessons, namely Intracurricular learning and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (Cocurricular). Extracurricular learning is found in every subject that refers to learning outcomes. Meanwhile, the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project is carried out flexibly in terms of content and implementation time, with a time allocation of 30% each year.

In line with the application of the independent curriculum in Islamic religious education lessons at SMPN 3 Pamekasan, learning activities consist of Intracurricular and Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Projects. In intracurricular learning, there are three activities: the initial activity (Opener), the core activity, and the final activity (Closing). During the activity, teachers and students can choose methods, strategies, etc. Meanwhile, the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project Learning is an activity carried out outside of class hours to deepen further and appreciate the subject matter learned in extracurricular activities in the classroom, per the Pancasila student profile. In implementing the independent curriculum learning, the structure of lesson hours is compiled in total in one year, including Islamic religious education lessons. Meanwhile, the time allocation for Islamic religious education subjects in the Merdeka Curriculum is divided into two learning activities, namely, extracurricular learning and learning in the form of a project to strengthen the profile of Pancasila Students (for 1 hour).

Based on some of the above opinions, it can be concluded that applying the independent curriculum in Islamic religious education has four materials, namely Al-Qur'an and hadith, aqidah, morals, and fiqh. This application has three stages: planning,

implementation, and evaluation. *First, planning* involves several activities, namely compiling and making devices, preparing materials per the profile of Pancasila students, determining methods and strategies, and preparing tools, media, and learning resources. *Second.* The implementation has two lessons: the intracurricular and project strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile. Extracurricular is face-to-face classroom learning consisting of opening, core, and closing activities. Extracurricular has a time allocation that is compiled in total in one year. The Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project is learning outside of class hours to deepen further and appreciate the subject matter learned in class with a time allocation of 25% per year. Third. Evaluation to determine the extent of students' abilities in learning. Evaluation activities can be carried out at the beginning of learning, during the learning process (Formative), and at the end (Summative). The activities of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project designed by SMPN 3 Pamekasan can be seen in Figure 1.0.

NO	KIs	Tema	Bentuk Kegiatan	Sasaran Nilai PPP	Kolaborasi Mapel	Alokasi Waktu pertahun
1	VII	Bangunlah jiwa dan raga	Jurus Sakti (Jum'at Bersih dan Berileterasi) Kegiatan: Membuat Rangkaian Gerak Berirama dan Bersih –	Beriman, Bertakwa, Berahlak Mulia, Mandiri, Kreatif, dan gotong Royong.	PJOK, Bahasa Indonesia, IPA, dan Matematika	Setiap Minggu
2		Cerlang budaya daerah	Wisata Edukasi Batik di Desa Klampar, Proppo, Pamekasan dan Kunjungan ke home industry Batik Klampar, Proppo, Pamekasan.	Mandiri, Kreatif, Kritis, dan Bergotong Royong.	Seni Budaya, B. Inggris, B. Madura, dan Prakarya	Des M2, M3, Semester 1
3		Bhineka tunggal ika	Memfasilitasi perayaan hari besar Agama dan Bakti Sosial	Berkebhinekaan Global	PKn, Pend. Agama, TIK, dan IPS	Maret M5 Semester 2 Mei M4 Semester 2
4		Perubahan iklim global	Penanaman Pohon, Pengelolaan Sampah, Kebersihan Drainase	Mandiri, Kreatif, Gotong Royon g, Beriman, dan Bertakwa.	IPA, IPS, dan Pend. Agama	Juni M3 M4 Semester 1
5		Kewirausahaan	Pameran, Pentas Seni, Membuat Vidio, dan Inovasi Pembuatan & Pengolahan Bio Pori	Kreatif, Inovatif, dan Cinta Lingkungan	IPS, Seni Budaya, IPA dan TIK	Juni M1 Semester 2

Challenges and Opportunities: Implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMPN 3 Pamekasan

While implementing the independent curriculum at SMPN 3 Pamekasan for seventh-grade students is a bold step, some argue that it may lead to a lack of standardisation and consistency in education. Without a standardised curriculum, there will be disparities in the

knowledge and skills students acquire, leading to unequal opportunities and outcomes. In addition, without a standardised curriculum, it will be difficult to assess student achievement and progress uniformly, making it difficult to measure the education system's effectiveness. Therefore, some educators and stakeholders may advocate the importance of a standardised curriculum to ensure equity and quality of education. Implementing the independent curriculum at SMPN 3 Pamekasan for grade seven students provides opportunities and challenges.

While allowing for customisation and flexibility in designing learning experiences, it is essential to address issues of standardisation and consistency. One way to ensure a balance between flexibility and standardisation is to set clear learning objectives and outcomes that align with educational standards. In addition, regular assessments and evaluations can be conducted to monitor students' progress and ensure that they acquire the necessary knowledge and skills. Combining these elements, SMPN 3 Pamekasan can implement an independent curriculum while maintaining standards and ensuring equitable education for all students.

Implementing the independent curriculum at SMPN 3 Pamekasan for seventh-grade students opens up many possibilities to tailor the educational experience to students' needs and interests. Educators can create a more engaging and relevant learning environment that allows customisation and flexibility to meet students' diverse learning styles and abilities. This approach can foster a more profound sense of ownership of their education and encourage active participation in the learning process.

However, to address issues of standardisation and consistency, it is essential to establish a framework that ensures a balanced approach. One way to achieve this is to clearly define learning objectives and outcomes in line with educational standards. This can help maintain consistency in the knowledge and skills students are expected to acquire while allowing flexibility in achieving these goals.

In addition, regular assessment and evaluation are essential to monitor students' progress and ensure that they are meeting the learning objectives that have been set. These assessments can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the independent curriculum and help identify areas where additional support or resources may be needed.

By taking these steps, SMPN 3 Pamekasan can successfully address the challenges of implementing an independent curriculum while upholding standards and promoting equitable education for all students.

While the above research provides insights into the implementation of the independent curriculum, it is essential to note that there may still be limitations in the research conducted. For example, methodological limitations, small sample sizes, or data collection biases may affect the findings' validity and generalizability. This aligns with previous research, which shows that research and evaluation on the independent curriculum still needs development and improvement.

Based on the data collected from observations, interviews, tests, questionnaires, and documents, this study used a qualitative approach with data triangulation to increase the validity of the findings. However, this study still has limitations regarding a small sample size, which only involves one school, subject, and class. This may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader context. In addition, this study may also have biases in data collection, as the researcher herself is one of the teachers involved in the independent curriculum. This may affect the objectivity and credibility of the findings. To overcome these limitations, this study suggests that future research and evaluations could involve more extensive and diverse samples and use more neutral and independent methods to collect data.

CONCLUSION

This research evaluates the implementation of a self-directed curriculum at SMPN 3 Pamekasan, focusing on Islamic religious education. The self-contained curriculum, which involves intracurricular components, the Pancasila student profile strengthening project, and extracurricular activities, aims to provide students with flexible, creative and meaningful learning experiences. This implementation also allows students to develop their academic and non-academic potential. The implementation process involves continuous planning, execution and evaluation. The results show that the implementation of the self-paced curriculum has a positive impact on students, teachers and schools.

Although the implementation of this self-paced curriculum provides a positive impact, this study shows that adequate support from all parties involved is crucial for the success of this implementation. Therefore, further research is needed to measure this self-paced curriculum's effectiveness and benefits more comprehensively and evaluate the support needed in terms of facilities, resources and commitment. In addition, further research is needed to evaluate the impact of this standalone curriculum on Islamic religious education, including the subjects of Qur'an and Hadith, Aqidah, Akhlak, and Fiqh. This research can

also help formulate strategies to strengthen the future implementation of the standalone curriculum.

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