

Implementation of the Independent Curriculum: Educational Innovation that Encourages Learning Independence

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang using a qualitative descriptive approach. This research involves subject teachers, madrasah heads, curriculum waka, and students as key and supporting informants. Data collection was carried out using semi-structured interview techniques, non-participatory observation, and documentation. The data obtained was analyzed through four stages: data reduction, data display, data verification, and drawing conclusions to describe the implementation of the curriculum in depth. The results of research related to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang show a significant impact on students' academic and social performance. Academically, curriculum flexibility allows students to choose topics and learning methods according to their interests, leading to improved academic understanding and skills. Project-based and research-based learning methods develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as evidenced by better academic outcomes and increased achievement. On the social side, the curriculum strengthens collaboration and communication skills between students through group projects and community activities. This increases students' sense of community and confidence, as well as their participation in extracurricular activities. However, challenges such as unequal access to resources and limited teacher training need to be addressed. With adequate support and periodic evaluation, the positive impact of the Independent Curriculum is expected to be maximized, encouraging the holistic development of students at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang.

INTRODUCTION

In an effort to improve the quality of education, the Decree of the Minister of Religion Number 792 of 2018 and the Decree of the Minister of Religion Number 184 of 2019 concerning guidelines for the implementation of the curriculum in madrassas provide space for educational institutions to innovate in the management of education and learning (Hatta, 2023). These two decisions open up opportunities for madrasas to develop curricula according to their respective potentials and peculiarities, thereby encouraging the creation of a more creative and adaptive learning process. This step is the basis for the implementation of the Independent Curriculum launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology to begin to be enforced in the 2022/2023 school year (Iskandar et al., 2023).

The Independent Curriculum is designed to face the challenges of 21st century learning and the changing dynamics of the ever-evolving world (Arifin & Mu'id, 2024). The main concept of the Independent Curriculum is the simplification of the curriculum that allows educational units to have flexibility in learning management (Andari, 2022; Rahmafritri et al., 2024; Rani et al., 2023). With this curriculum, it is hoped that madrasas can innovate in the teaching and learning process, as well as adjust teaching materials to the needs and characteristics of students. This is in line with the goal of improving the quality of education and facilitating learning that is more responsive to the development of science and technology.

A paradigm shift in education requires an update in curriculum management, especially in the context of madrasas that must continue to adapt to global developments and technology (Bahri, 2019). Within the framework of the Independent Curriculum, madrasas are given greater autonomy to create and innovate, and have the freedom to design a learning process that suits the needs of students (Rahayuningsih et al., 2024). This autonomy is important to create a more dynamic, humane, and in accordance with the times, so as to improve the quality of educational services in madrasas.

The Independent Curriculum is not only a continuation of the 2013 Curriculum, but also as a solution to overcome various obstacles faced in the implementation of the previous curriculum (Febriani et al., 2022; Maskur, 2023). By emphasizing flexibility and providing space for creativity, the Independent Curriculum aims to overcome the difficulties faced in the preparation of lesson plans, teaching, and measurement of learning outcomes in the 2013 Curriculum. The innovations presented through the Independent Curriculum are expected to support the recovery of learning after the COVID-19 pandemic and create a more relevant and effective learning process (Ningrum et al., 2023).

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang is a concrete example of the implementation of educational innovations that encourage learning independence. Since the beginning of the 2022/2023 school year, Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang has begun to implement the Independent Curriculum with a focus on class X. Socialization and debriefing to teachers and educators are carried out in stages to ensure the effective understanding and implementation of this new curriculum. The

implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang not only includes changes in teaching methods, but also seeks to create a learning environment that is more supportive of active and creative participation of students.

One of the advantages of the Independent Curriculum is its ability to provide more flexible and interactive learning. In the context of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang, this curriculum allows teachers to develop more innovative and interesting teaching methods. Project-based learning and freedom in determining how to learn provide opportunities for students to explore the material in more depth and relevance. Thus, students can be more actively involved in the learning process, develop critical skills, and be independent in learning.

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang emphasizes the application of Pancasila values in the context of education. This curriculum provides opportunities for students to not only learn theory but also apply it in daily life, so that learning becomes more meaningful and contextual. These practice-based projects contribute to the development of students' character as well as improving social and problem-solving skills.

As part of continuous efforts to improve the quality of education, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang is expected to be a model for other madrasahs in implementing a curriculum that encourages learning independence. Continuous evaluation and adjustment are carried out to ensure that this curriculum is truly effective in achieving educational goals. With the support of all stakeholders, including madrasah heads, teachers, students, and parents, it is hoped that the Independent Curriculum can make a significant contribution to improving the quality of education and learning independence at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang and other madrasahs in Indonesia. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the independent curriculum in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out from May 9, 2024 to June 1, 2024 at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang, which is located at Jl. Prof. K. H. Zainal Abidin Fikri, Pahlawan, Kemuning District, Pahlawan District, Palembang, South Sumatra. This research uses a qualitative type of research, which focuses on the process rather than the result and is conducted on natural conditions with an emphasis on discovery, in accordance with theory and broad insights for interviews and analysis (Annur, 2018; Hardani et al., 2020). The approach of this research is qualitative descriptive, which aims to describe and describe phenomena by explaining, explaining, and describing problems and drawing conclusions deductively (Annur, 2008; Sukmadinata, 2019). This research involved key informants, namely fiqh class X teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang, as well as supporting informants such as madrasah heads,

curriculum waka, and students at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang (Bagong, 2005).

The data collection techniques in this study involve several main methods: interviews, observations, and documentation. The interviews were conducted in depth to explore accurate information about the implementation of the Independent curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang, using semi-structured interviews to get opinions and ideas from informants (Tanzeh, 2009; Yusuf, 2018). Non-participatory observation is used to record and analyze phenomena related to the implementation of the curriculum without being directly involved in the activity, with the aim of checking the accuracy of information from the interviews (Ferdiansyah, 2015). Documentation collects written, printed, and graphic data to reinforce observations and interviews (Arikunto, 2006). After data collection, the analysis is carried out by following four stages: data reduction to simplify and group information, data display to present data in narrative form, data verification to ensure compatibility with the original source, and drawing conclusions to identify patterns and make conclusions (Suggestion, 2021). Triangulation is carried out through sources, techniques, and time to ensure the validity of the data, by comparing information from different sources and techniques, as well as examining the data at different times to increase the credibility of the research (Patton, 2009; Sugiyono, 2021).

RESEARCH RESULTS

This study examines the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang as an educational innovation that aims to encourage student learning independence. The results of the study are expected to provide in-depth insight into the effectiveness of the Independent Curriculum in creating a more adaptive and individual-oriented learning environment for students at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang.

Flexibility of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang

At Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum brings significant changes in learning approaches that allow greater flexibility for students and teachers. This flexibility is at the core of the Independent Curriculum, which is designed to provide room for innovation and adjustment according to the needs and characteristics of students and the local context of the school. This curriculum changes the educational paradigm from a rigid and standardized system to a system that is more adaptive and responsive to the development of individual students.

One of the key aspects of the flexibility in the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang is the development of learning modules that allow students to learn according to their pace and interests. In its implementation, this school provides modules that can be accessed online and offline, giving students the freedom to choose topics and learning methods that suit their needs. This not only increases students' engagement in the learning process, but it also allows them to explore topics that interest them in depth. For

example, students interested in science can choose research projects in science areas that are relevant to the curriculum, while students interested in the arts can work on creative projects that match their interests.

In addition, flexibility in learning can also be seen from the application of various assessment systems. Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang implements a formative assessment that focuses more on the learning process than the final result alone. With this approach, teachers can provide constructive feedback and support students in developing their skills gradually. Project-based assessment, self-assessment, and peer assessment are some of the methods used to measure student progress. This allows students to demonstrate their abilities in a variety of ways and gain a more holistic understanding of their accomplishments.

Flexibility is also reflected in the way Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang adjusts the learning schedule and time. The Independent Curriculum gives schools the autonomy to design more flexible schedules, which allows for adjustments to student needs and school conditions. At Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang, this means that there is enough time for extracurricular activities, group projects, and individual consultations with teachers. This flexible time allows students to better manage their study schedules, helping them balance between academic assignments and non-academic activities.

The experience at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang shows that flexibility in the Independent Curriculum can increase student involvement and motivation in the learning process. By giving students more control over how they learn and assessing their progress, the curriculum creates a more dynamic and responsive learning environment. Teachers, in turn, can focus more on their role as facilitators and mentors, supporting students in achieving their learning goals in a way that best suits the individual's needs.

Overall, the flexibility in learning the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang has proven to be effective in improving the quality of education and encouraging student learning independence. With a more adaptive and personalized approach, this curriculum gives students the opportunity to develop optimally according to their potential and interests. However, to ensure long-term success, it is important to continue to evaluate and make adjustments to the implementation of the curriculum, as well as ensure adequate support for all parties involved in the educational process.

Development of Student Independence in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang has become a significant step in efforts to develop student independence in the educational environment. The Independent Curriculum is designed to provide greater flexibility and freedom in the learning process, with the main goal of increasing students' learning independence. At Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang, the implementation of this curriculum emphasizes

student empowerment through various innovative approaches that support the development of independent skills and attitudes.

One of the main aspects of the Independent Curriculum is the freedom for students to determine their own learning paths. At Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang, students are given the opportunity to choose topics and projects that interest them, so that they can learn with more enthusiasm and be actively involved in the learning process. This approach not only increases students' motivation to learn but also teaches them time management skills and personal responsibility. With the ability to set schedules and set priorities in their learning, students can develop skills that are essential for independence.

In addition, the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang integrates projects and research as the main method in learning. These projects are designed to challenge students in solving real problems and applying the knowledge they have learned in a broader context. Through this activity, students not only gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter but also hone problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Students' independence is seen in the way they plan, execute, and evaluate their projects, which ultimately shapes a proactive attitude and initiative in learning.

The application of a project-based approach also supports the development of collaboration skills. Students often work in groups to complete assignments, which requires effective communication, cooperation, and fair division of tasks. Through this collaboration, students learn to appreciate the contributions of others, take on leadership roles, and resolve conflicts constructively. These skills are essential for independence in social and academic contexts, preparing students for challenges outside of the school environment.

Overall, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang has shown positive results in the development of student independence. By providing freedom in choosing topics, emphasizing project-based learning, and integrating collaborative approaches, students have been able to improve their independent skills and attitudes. While there are some challenges that must be overcome, the steps taken to train teachers and increase the availability of resources have contributed to the successful implementation of this curriculum.

Innovation in Teaching the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang has introduced various innovations in the teaching process that significantly affect the way students learn and develop. The Independent Curriculum, which is designed to provide flexibility and independence to students, has been adapted in a creative and effective way at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang. One of the main innovations is the development of project-based learning modules. This module not only provides subject matter, but also provides space for students to explore topics according to their interests. With this approach, students not only learn academic concepts but are

also involved in the process of discovery and research that encourages them to think critically and creatively.

In addition to project-based modules, Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang also implements a learning method that focuses on collaboration and teamwork. Students are often involved in group projects that require them to work together, communicate, and solve problems collectively. This approach not only helps students develop social skills and teamwork skills, but also strengthens their ability to complete tasks independently. By working in groups, students learn to appreciate different perspectives and bring ideas together to achieve a common goal.

Another innovation implemented at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang is the use of technology as a tool in the learning process. The school has leveraged various digital platforms to provide subject matter, conduct online discussions, and facilitate distance learning. With this technology, students can access additional learning resources outside of school hours and collaborate with their classmates virtually. Technology also makes it easier for teachers to provide feedback and assess student progress in real-time, making the evaluation process more dynamic and responsive.

The teacher training program is also an important part of innovation in teaching at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang. Teachers are given intensive training to adapt to the Independent Curriculum and utilize new learning methods. This training includes the use of technology, project-based teaching methods, and evaluation techniques that are appropriate to the curriculum. With the right training, teachers can be more effective in implementing the curriculum and supporting students in their learning process.

Overall, innovations in the teaching of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang have brought positive changes in the way students learn and develop. Project-based learning modules, the use of technology, and teacher training programs have strengthened the learning process and increased student independence. Although there are challenges that must be overcome, the efforts made by Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang to implement this innovation show their commitment to improving the quality of education and developing student potential. By continuing to adapt and overcome existing challenges, Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang has the potential to become a successful example in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum and educational innovation in Indonesia.

Challenges Faced in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang faces various significant challenges in its efforts to improve the quality of education and encourage student learning independence. One of the main challenges is the limited resources. The Independent Curriculum requires extensive access to various learning resources, such as textbooks, technology devices, and digital learning materials, which are often not fully available in schools. These shortcomings have an impact on the effectiveness of

curriculum implementation, hindering students' ability to explore and understand the material in depth. To overcome this problem, Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang needs to strengthen cooperation with related parties, including the government and donor agencies, to provide adequate resources and support the implementation of the curriculum.

Another challenge faced is the readiness and competence of teachers. The Independent Curriculum requires teachers to adapt to a more flexible and project-oriented approach to learning, which may require additional skills and knowledge. Some teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang may not be fully trained in this new methodology, which can affect the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. To address this, it is important for schools to provide regular training and professional development for teachers, to ensure that they have the necessary skills to implement the Independent Curriculum effectively.

Resistance to change is also a significant challenge. The Independent Curriculum brings about major changes in the way learning is conducted, and some students, parents, and educators may find it uncomfortable or difficult to adapt to the changes. To reduce resistance, it is important for Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang to involve all stakeholders in the implementation process, including through socialization, training, and clear communication regarding the benefits and objectives of this new curriculum.

In addition, time management and evaluation are also challenges in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. A more flexible approach to learning requires good time management so that all materials can be delivered effectively. Continuous evaluation is also needed to assess the success of the curriculum and make necessary adjustments. Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang must ensure that there is an effective evaluation system in place to monitor student progress and teaching effectiveness, as well as identify areas that need improvement.

Overall, these challenges show that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang requires collaborative and strategic efforts to overcome various existing obstacles. By addressing resource issues, improving teacher competence, managing resistance to change, and improving time management and evaluation, schools can increase the effectiveness of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum and achieve better educational goals. Through a planned approach and adequate support, these challenges can be overcome to ensure the successful implementation of the curriculum and the improvement of the quality of education at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang.

Impact on Academic and Social Performance of the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang has a significant impact on students' academic and social performance. This curriculum is designed to give students more freedom in the learning process, with the main goal of increasing learning independence and educational relevance. Academically, the Independent Curriculum has shown a

clear improvement. By giving students the freedom to choose topics and learning methods, they can be more involved in the learning process that suits their interests and strengths. This approach encourages students to be more active in research and projects, which has a positive impact on their academic understanding and skills. Project-based and research-based assessments also facilitate the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are reflected in better academic outcomes and improved achievement in exams and other tasks.

On the social side, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang has strengthened social relationships and collaboration skills among students. Group projects and community-based activities that are part of the curriculum encourage students to work together, communicate effectively, and understand different perspectives. This improves their social skills and strengthens the sense of community in the school. In addition, the freedom in choosing topics and involvement in relevant projects also increases students' confidence and their motivation to engage in extracurricular and social activities. This impact can be seen in increasing student participation in various school and community activities, as well as improving the quality of relationships between students.

However, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum also faces several challenges. Unequal access to resources and limited teacher training can hinder curriculum effectiveness. Some students may have difficulty managing their time and choosing the right topic without adequate guidance. Therefore, it is important for Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang to continue to increase support for teachers and provide the necessary resources to ensure the successful implementation of the curriculum. Periodic evaluations and feedback from students are also crucial to assessing the effectiveness of the curriculum and making necessary adjustments.

Overall, the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang has had a significant positive impact on students' academic and social performance. By encouraging learning independence, providing freedom in choosing topics, and improving collaboration skills, this curriculum has helped students develop holistically. Although there are challenges that need to be overcome, the steps taken to overcome these problems will support the continued success of the Independent Curriculum and advance the quality of education at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang.

DISCUSSION

The Independent Curriculum, which is known for its flexibility and emphasis on the selection of topics and learning methods relevant to students' interests, is expected to overcome challenges in the traditional education system that is often centered on conventional teaching methods (Indriani et al., 2024). By giving students more freedom in the learning process, this study evaluates how this approach has an impact on improving students' motivation, academic skills, and social development.

The results of this study show that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang has a positive impact in encouraging student learning independence. Based on the findings, the flexibility offered by the Independent Curriculum allows for the creation of a more adaptive learning environment, where students can explore their interests and talents according to individual needs. This is in line with the theory of constructivism which states that effective learning occurs when students are actively involved in building knowledge based on their own experiences (Masgumelar & Mustafa, 2021). The flexibility of the curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang encourages students to set their own learning tempo, which is in line with the student-centered learning approach, where students are the main subjects in the educational process.

One example of the application of flexibility in the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang is the use of learning modules that can be accessed online and offline. This gives students the freedom to learn at their pace. In addition, students can also choose topics of interest and work on projects that are relevant to their interests. For example, students interested in the field of science can conduct scientific research, while students who are more interested in art can work on creative projects. These findings are consistent with other studies that have found that a project-based learning approach not only increases student motivation but also sharpens critical and creative thinking skills (Keeping Up with the Kardashians, 2024).

In addition to flexibility in learning methods, the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang also provides more diverse assessments. The formative assessment applied emphasizes more on the learning process than the final result. Thus, students get continuous feedback from teachers, which helps them identify areas that need improvement and improve gradually. Project-based assessments, self-assessments, and peer assessments provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their abilities in a variety of ways. This approach is in accordance with the theory of multiple intelligences put forward by Howard Gardner who emphasizes that each individual has different types of intelligence that can be explored and measured through various assessment methods (Afandi, 2021).

Time flexibility is also an important element in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang. With more flexible schedule adjustments, students have more time to engage in extracurricular activities, group projects, and individual consultations with teachers. This helps students to strike a balance between academic and non-academic demands, ultimately improving the overall well-being of students. A study by Richki et al. (2024) shows that the balance between academic and non-academic activities is essential for students' holistic development, including social and emotional development.

However, the results of this study also reveal several challenges in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang. One of the main challenges is limited resources, such as access to digital technology and learning materials. This is an obstacle in maximizing the

potential flexibility offered by the curriculum. Previous research has shown that the successful implementation of a flexible curriculum is highly dependent on adequate infrastructure and technological support (Khoirunnisa et al., 2024). To overcome this challenge, Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang needs to strengthen cooperation with the government and the private sector in providing the resources needed.

In addition, the readiness of teachers to implement more flexible and innovative learning methods is also an obstacle. Some teachers still need additional training to adapt to a more project-oriented approach to learning. This underscores the importance of professional development programs for teachers, as Darling-Hammond also expressed that continuous and relevant training is essential to improve the quality of teaching (Lahagu & Kustiawan, 2023).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusion of this study shows that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang has had a significant impact on the academic and social performance of students. This curriculum, with its flexibility in the selection of topics and learning methods, has increased student engagement and motivation. In the academic aspect, students show improvements in understanding and skills, as evidenced by better academic outcomes and critical thinking skills developed through a project-based approach. On the social side, the curriculum strengthens collaboration and communication skills, encouraging students to participate more actively in school and community activities. However, the implementation of the curriculum faces several challenges, including limited resources and teacher training. To ensure long-term success, it is important for schools to continuously improve support for teachers, improve access to resources, and conduct periodic evaluations. By overcoming this challenge, Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Palembang can continue to utilize the Independent Curriculum to advance the quality of education and holistic development of students. Based on research, it is recommended to continue to improve training for teachers and provide adequate resources to support the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. In addition, it is important to strengthen evaluation and feedback so that the curriculum can be adapted effectively, overcome challenges, and maximize the positive impact on students' academic and social performance.

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