

Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Learning at MA Al ZamZam Al Hazim Ungaran

Ayesha Andara Titania^{1*} Indah Rohmatun Nada² Farizka Devi Adhelia Sabrina³ Kafita Zahrotun Nabila⁴

^{1*} Universitas Darul Ulum Islamic Centre Sudirman Semarang; Indonesia; ayshaandaratitaniaa@gmail.com

² Universitas Darul Ulum Islamic Centre Sudirman, Semarang; Indonesia; indhnrn25@gmail.com

³ Universitas Darul Ulum Islamic Centre Sudirman, Semarang; Indonesia; farizkadeviadheliasabrina@gmail.com

⁴ Universitas Darul Ulum Islamic Centre Sudirman, Semarang; Indonesia; nabilakafitazahrotun@gmail.com

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Abstract. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum is the government's effort to improve the quality of learning through a student-centered, flexible, and contextual approach. This study aims to describe the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in the learning process at MA Al ZamZam Al Hazim Ungaran and identify obstacles faced by teachers in their implementation. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type of research. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies. The research subjects include madrasah heads, teachers, and students. Data analysis is carried out through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study show that the

implementation of the Independent Curriculum at MA Al ZamZam Al Hazim Ungaran has gone quite well, characterized by the implementation of student-centered learning, the use of teaching modules, and the implementation of project-based learning. However, there are still several obstacles, such as the limited understanding of teachers towards differentiated learning, limited supporting facilities, and administrative burdens. Therefore, it is necessary to improve teacher competence and institutional support to optimize the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in madrasahs.

Introduction

Education is a strategic process in shaping the quality of human resources that are competitive and have character. In the context of globalization and the development of the 21st century, the education system is required to be able to adapt to social, technological, and increasingly diverse student changes. The curriculum as the heart of education has a central role in directing the learning process to be in line with the goals of national education and the challenges of the times (Darling-hammond et al., 2020)

Theoretically, the development of the modern curriculum is based on the theory of constructivism, which emphasizes that knowledge is actively built by learners through meaningful learning experiences (Education et al., 2016). This theory is then strengthened by student-centered learning theory and meaningful learning theory which emphasizes the importance of student active involvement, learning differentiation, and the relevance of the material to real-life contexts (Ahmad et al., 2024). In the context of the curriculum, these theories demand flexibility, teacher autonomy, and recognition of the diversity of students' potential.

In response to the challenges of the educational curriculum, the Indonesian government launched the Independent Curriculum as an education transformation policy that emphasizes student-centered learning, character strengthening through the Pancasila Student Profile, and flexibility in learning planning and implementation (Rizki & Fahkrunisa, 2022). The Independent Curriculum provides space for educational units and teachers to adapt learning to the needs, interests, and abilities of students, in line with the principles of differentiation and contextual learning (State & Bangkalan, n.d.).

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum practically reflects the application of constructivism and humanistic theories in learning. Teachers act as facilitators who design meaningful learning experiences, while students become active subjects in the learning process (Hadi & Sriwidjaya, 2025). Project-based learning, diagnostic assessment, and continuous reflection are concrete forms of the implementation of the grand theory in the Independent Curriculum (Darling-hammond et al., 2020).

However, various studies show that the implementation of the new curriculum often faces challenges at the practical level. Previous research revealed that teachers still have difficulties in understanding the concept of differentiated learning, compiling teaching modules, and integrating the Pancasila Student Profile into daily learning (Update et al., 2024). Other studies show that there is a gap between curriculum policies and the readiness of human resources in schools, especially in religious-based educational units such as madrasahs (Suryani et al., 2024).

Qualitative research conducted by (Di et al., 2023) It was found that teachers' perceptions and experiences greatly determine the success of curriculum implementation, because teachers are the main actors in translating policies into learning practices. Other research also confirms that the school context, organizational culture, and managerial support have a significant influence on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum (Fadilah et al., 2024). However, most of the research still focuses on public schools and has not explored much about the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in madrasah aliyah in depth.

Based on the study of previous research, there is a research gap in the form of limited qualitative studies that comprehensively explore the experiences, strategies, and challenges of implementing the Independent Curriculum in learning in the context of madrasah aliyah, especially at the local level. In addition, there has not been much research that explicitly links the grand theory of learning with the real practice of teachers in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in madrasahs (Update et al., 2024)

MA Al Zamzam Al Hazim Ungaran as one of the madrasah education units has distinctive characteristics that combine the national curriculum with Islamic values. This condition makes MA Al Zamzam Al Hazim Ungaran a relevant context to examine how the Independent Curriculum is implemented in learning, as well as how teachers interpret and translate the policy in classroom practice. This research is important to understand the dynamics of curriculum implementation in the context of madrasahs that have their own challenges and opportunities.

Thus, the research entitled "Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Learning at MA Al ZamZam Al Hazim Ungaran" has academic and practical urgency. Academically, this research is expected to enrich the study of curriculum implementation with a qualitative perspective based on the context of madrasahs. Practically, the results of this research are expected to be a reflection material for teachers, madrasah heads, and policy makers in improving the quality of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in a sustainable and contextual manner. (Darling-hammond et al., 2020)

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, which aims to understand and describe in depth the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in the learning process at MA Al Zam zam Al Hazim Ungaran.



Figure 1. Qualitative research flow with a descriptive approach

The qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on social phenomena and learning processes that take place naturally, and emphasizes the meaning, understanding, and experience of the research subjects. The subjects of the study include madrasah heads, teachers, and students who are directly involved in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Data collection techniques are carried out through in-depth interviews, observation of learning activities, and documentation studies related to learning planning and implementation.

Data analysis in this study was carried out interactively and continuously, including the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The validity of the data is maintained through source triangulation techniques and techniques, so that the data obtained has a high level of trust. The results of the data analysis are then used to systematically describe the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, the obstacles faced by teachers, and the efforts made to overcome these obstacles.

Results and Discussion

1. Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in the Learning Process

The results of the study indicate that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in the learning process has begun to run gradually through more flexible learning planning and implementation. Teachers design teaching tools, such as teaching modules and initial diagnostic assessments, by referring to learning outcomes while considering the characteristics, needs, and abilities of students. In classroom learning practice, teachers no longer focus on lecture methods alone, but encourage active student involvement through discussion activities, group work, and project-based learning, so that the learning process becomes more participatory and student-centered. (Himawan et al., 2025)

In addition, teachers open wide opportunities for students to convey ideas, explore the material independently, and relate the concept of learning to the reality of daily life. This condition reflects the change in the learning paradigm from teacher-centered to student-centered, in line with the principles and characteristics of the Independent Curriculum (Alimuddin, 2023).

The findings of this study are in line with the concept of the Independent Curriculum which emphasizes the importance of student-oriented learning and flexibility in learning planning (Azzahra et al., 2023). The application of project-based learning and contextual activities shows the implementation of constructivism theory, where learners actively build knowledge through meaningful learning experiences that are relevant to their lives (Saniah et al., 2024)

The results of this study are in line with the findings (Budiono & Hatip, 2023) which reveal that the Independent Curriculum provides flexibility for teachers to innovate learning, so as to be able to encourage an increase in students' learning activity and independence. Therefore, the application of the Independent Curriculum in the learning process shows positive potential in improving the quality of learning, although it still needs strengthening, especially in maintaining the consistency of its implementation in the field.

2. Obstacles and Efforts of Teachers in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum

Although the implementation of the Independent Curriculum has been ongoing, this study identifies a number of obstacles faced by teachers. The dominant obstacles include the limited understanding of teachers of the concept of differentiated learning, the limited facilities and learning media, and increasing administrative demands in the preparation of teaching tools. In addition, there is a difference in the level of readiness between teachers causing the implementation of the Independent Curriculum to not be carried out optimally and evenly (Azzahra et al., 2023).

In an effort to overcome these various obstacles, teachers take a number of strategies, including by participating in training and workshops, utilizing the Merdeka Mengajar platform as a learning resource, and establishing discussions and collaborations with peers through the learning community.

The findings of the constraints in this study are in line with the results of the study (Hartawati, 2024) which emphasizes that teacher readiness is a determining factor in the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The limitations in terms of understanding and infrastructure show that curriculum changes are not enough to focus only on adjusting documents, but also demand increased competence and changes in teachers' work culture.

Teachers' efforts in developing professional capacity through participation in training and learning communities demonstrate the importance of continuous professional development as stated by (Manalu et al., 2022). With consistent support from education units and policy makers, various obstacles in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum can be minimized, so that the curriculum's goals to realize meaningful and student-oriented learning can be achieved more optimally.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in learning at MA Al Zamzam Al Hazim Ungaran has been carried out in accordance with the basic principles of the Independent Curriculum, namely student-centered, flexible, and contextual learning. Teachers have sought to implement various active learning strategies, such as discussions, group work, and project-based learning to increase student participation and learning independence.

However, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum still faces several obstacles, especially related to the limited understanding of teachers regarding differentiated learning, limited facilities and infrastructure, and high administrative demands. Therefore, continuous support from madrassas and policy makers is needed through training, mentoring, and the provision of adequate facilities so that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum can run more optimally and sustainably.

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