

The Proficiency of Islamic Religious Education and Ethics Teachers in Malang City in the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum at SMPN 3 and SMPN 22 Malang City

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Teacher Proficiency, Islamic Religious Education and Ethics, Implementation of the Independent Curriculum	<i>Education remains essential to the continuity of human civilization, as history has shown that educated societies are better equipped to address life's challenges. Teachers play a critical role in delivering quality education, so their proficiency must meet established competency standards. The Covid-19 pandemic forced a shift in teaching methods worldwide, including in Indonesia, requiring adaptation to online learning. This study, using a descriptive qualitative approach, focuses on four areas: (1) Teacher Proficiency: assessing current skills and identifying areas for improvement in curriculum implementation, (2) Teacher Response: examining how PAI (Islamic Education) and Ethics teachers perceive the Independent Learning Curriculum, (3) Government Support: evaluating support from local governments to enhance teacher skills, and (4) Necessary Changes: identifying improvements needed to advance teacher proficiency. Findings reveal that teacher qualifications across schools are generally consistent, with support from both central and regional governments through development funds and training initiatives. For instance, in 2023, funding was allocated to improve the competencies of 103 PAI and Ethics teachers through a partnership with UIN Malang. Teachers' responses to the Independent Learning Curriculum were overwhelmingly positive; they appreciated the curriculum's flexibility, which encourages innovative and enjoyable learning. This approach allows teachers the freedom to design contextual lessons, fostering students' enthusiasm and promoting intellectual, spiritual, and moral development.</i>

INTRODUCTION

In any situation, education remains a priority in the sustainability of human civilization as history has proven that with education all solutions to life are better obtained. Teachers in the implementation of education are one of the main factors in the implementation of quality education (Sukmadinata, 2020), so that the proficiency of a teacher must be in accordance with the competency standards that have been set.

Law on Teachers and Lecturers Number 14/2005 states that Teacher Competence includes four aspects of competence, namely pedagogical aspects, personality aspects, social aspects, and professional aspects (Jalaluddin, 2001). From all these aspects, teachers are expected to be able to support the learning process both online and offline which is generally carried out by all teachers, including in the learning of Islamic Religious Education and Ethics in Malang City. Ideal learning cannot run perfectly if it is carried out online, especially in learning PAI and Ethics not only provides material that is knowledge transfer but requires the presence of teachers and students in one classroom that can directly transmit the knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and examples of a teacher to his students so that this can have an impact on the formation of students' ethics (Muhaimin, 2011). Another function of a teacher with four aspects of competence as a professional teacher is to be able to be a translator in every policy in the field of education (Darajat, 2014). One of the policies that is often the focus of change in improving the quality of education is the change in the educational curriculum. Currently, what is happening is a change in the curriculum from the 2013 Curriculum or commonly popular with Kurtilas has shifted its change to the

Independent Learning Curriculum, thus teachers must have the skills in the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum (IKM)

The implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum is a challenge in the world of education in the 21st century so that the skills of teachers as educators must continue to be grown and developed by all parties, especially the Government in handling education as the main priority of national development in the field of Education (Hambali & Mu'alimin, 2020). The researcher will focus his research on the aspects of Islamic Religious Education and Ethics teacher proficiency in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The Independent Curriculum is a curriculum with diverse intracurricular learning where the content will be more optimal, so that students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies,⁴ Implementation of the Independent Curriculum teachers have the flexibility to choose various teaching tools so that learning can be adjusted to the learning needs and interests of students (Kumar, 2018). The Independent Learning Curriculum is stipulated through the Decree of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Number: 56 / M / 2022 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of the Curriculum in the Context of Teaching Recovery which is stated in the decision of the sixth and nineteenth parts. The Decree in the sixth part states that the Independent Curriculum as referred to in the SECOND Dictum letter c is listed in Attachment I which is an integral part of this Ministerial Decree, while the nineteenth part states that the Independent Curriculum as referred to in the SECOND Dictum letter c will take effect in the 2022/2023 school year.⁷ In the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum, there are four components that need to be considered, namely: the characteristic component of the educational unit, the Vision, Mission and Objectives component, the learning organization component, the learning planning component (Suryaman, 2020).

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive field data collection, to uncover social problems, with the type of Multi-Case Study,⁵⁶ research with multiple sites, and which are far different geographically. SMPN 3 is in the center of the city and SMPN 22 is on the outskirts of the city. This research consists of two research focuses, both of which require qualitative data, ⁶⁹ or known as nonmetric data, ⁷⁰ which function to answer each research focus in depth (Moleong, 2012). ⁷¹ The first focus of the research is related to the competence of teachers, the data needed is related to the competence of teachers in the implementation of the independent learning curriculum in both schools. Researchers to support the results of the research need data Profile of SMPN 3 Malang, Curriculum Documentation, Student Documentation, Documentation of Facilities and Infrastructure, Documentation of Education and Education Personnel, Documentation of Learning Tools (Usman & Akbar, 2008). In addition, data that can be obtained through the School Data Board, Images, Graphics, Manuscripts, Videos and Audio) with the support of primary and secondary data sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results of previous research from Tiarmayanti Novita Sonia (2019) discussed the challenges faced by teachers in facing the development of education in the 21st century, especially in the context of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. He emphasized that the role of teachers is increasingly complex, where they are not only teachers, but also as managers of the learning process that require critical thinking skills, social responsibility, as well as the ability to build networks and discipline.

One of the main focuses in educational change is the transition from the 2013 Curriculum (Kurtilas) to the Independent Learning Curriculum. The Independent Curriculum is designed to provide flexibility to teachers in compiling and implementing learning that suits the needs and interests of students (Hashim & Langgulang, 2008). Thus, teachers need to have adequate competence to implement this curriculum effectively.

This research focuses on teachers' proficiency in implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum, which is considered a big challenge in the world of education in the 21st century (Ary et al., 2010). Within the framework of the 21st Century National Education paradigm, some of the skills that teachers need to have include critical thinking skills, communication and cooperation skills, creative and innovative skills, information and communication technology literacy, contextual learning skills, and media literacy.

The Independent Learning Curriculum encourages diverse learning and allows teachers to choose appropriate teaching tools, so that students can delve deeper into concepts and strengthen their competencies (Mun'im Amaly et al., 2021). The learning aspect in the Independent Curriculum also includes a more flexible

mapping of competency standards and minimum competency assessments, providing space for educators to design learning according to the characteristics of students.

Furthermore, this study also conveyed that the Independent Learning Curriculum was established through a decision of the Ministry of Education and Culture and has been implemented in Junior High Schools (SMP) in Malang City. The results of an interview with the Head of the Curriculum Section of the Malang City Education and Culture Office show that all junior high schools in the city, both public and private, have implemented this new curriculum. The researcher chose two public schools—SMP Negeri 3 and SMP Negeri 22—as research locations to explore the skills of Islamic Religious Education and Ethics teachers in the implementation of the independent curriculum.

By comparing two schools located in the city center and suburbs, this study not only focuses on the end result, but rather on understanding the implementation process and the challenges faced by teachers in each context. Thus, this paper provides in-depth insight into how teachers' skills are influential in the successful implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum in today's educational environment.

Discussion

A. Skills that PAI teachers already have and do not have in the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum at SMPN 3 Malang City and SMPN 22 Malang City

This study aims to analyze the skills that have and have not been possessed by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Ethics teachers in implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum at SMPN 3 and SMPN 22 Malang City. The research method used is qualitative with a case study approach, where data is collected through in-depth interviews with teachers who are experienced in teaching with this new curriculum.

The results of the study show that the majority of PAI and Budi Pekerti teachers in SMPN 3 and SMPN 22 have sufficient proficiency in implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum. The skills that are already possessed include: a deep understanding of the concept of the Independent Learning Curriculum, the ability to develop relevant and contextual learning materials, and skills in applying active and collaborative learning methods.

In terms of educational qualifications, PAI and Budi Pekerti teachers at SMPN 3 consist of three people, of which one person has an S1 qualification and two people have an S2 qualification. At SMPN 22, two people are qualified for S1 and one person is qualified for S2. This qualification shows that the minimum educational standards have been met. However, the ownership of a professional certificate is still an important indicator to assess the professionalism of teachers (Al-Naquist al-Attas, 1979). At SMPN 3, only two out of three teachers have a professional certificate, while at SMPN 22, all PAI and Budi Pekerti teachers have been certified, showing differences in meeting the criteria of professionalism.

The research also found that there are skills that teachers do not have, including: mastery and use of technology in learning, creativity in designing learning projects, and participation in continuous training (Dewey, 2012). This shows the need for continuous professional development so that teachers can adapt to the demands of the Independent Curriculum (Sutiah, 2016).

In the interview, the teachers emphasized the importance of competencies that must be possessed for the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum, which include pedagogical competence, personality competence, social competence, professional competence, and leadership competence. In addition, mastery of technology and the ability to design competency-based learning are also recognized as important aspects that need to be improved.

From the perspective of education management, school principals at SMPN 3 and SMPN 22 play an important role in facilitating the development of teacher competence. They held socialization and workshops with resource persons who are experts in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, so that all teachers, including PAI and Budi Pekerti teachers, can be involved in competency improvement activities.

This study emphasizes that although the skills possessed by PAI and Budi Pekerti teachers in SMPN 3 and SMPN 22 have met the minimum standards, there are still some areas that need to be improved. Skills that are not yet possessed, such as mastery of technology and innovation in learning, must continue to be developed through training and workshops.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that schools and the government provide more support in the form of relevant training, resources, and access to the latest technology. This is important to improve the quality of education and assist teachers in implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum more effectively. With

this support, it is hoped that the quality of education can be improved, and students can receive learning that is more meaningful and relevant to the needs of the times (Tan, 2011).

Overall, this study shows that the development of teacher competencies in the context of the Independent Learning Curriculum is very important to achieve better educational goals. Strengthening digital literacy and the ability to adapt to curriculum changes is the focus, so that teachers can play an effective role as facilitators in a responsive and innovative learning process (Stake, 1995). Through continuous development and collaboration between teachers, principals, and other related parties, it is hoped that education in Indonesia can develop in accordance with the challenges and demands of the changing times.

B. Response of Islamic Religious Education and Ethics Teachers to the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum

During the current of change that is squirming in the world of Indonesian education, the Independent Learning Curriculum is present as an innovation that arouses the enthusiasm of educators, especially teachers of Islamic Religious Education and Ethics. The implementation of this curriculum is not only a challenge, but also brings interesting opportunities for those who have been dedicated to instilling religious and moral values in students.

The Independent Learning Curriculum provides space for teachers to innovate, adapting their teaching methods to the needs and characteristics of students. In a more flexible atmosphere, many teachers feel that they now could deepen and integrate religious values in contexts relevant to daily life. For example, they are no longer tied to a rigid syllabus but can relate religious lessons to evolving social and cultural issues, thus making the material more contextual and engaging for students (Hattie, 2009).

However, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum also presents its own challenges. Some teachers find it difficult to balance the freedom given with the obligation to maintain the integrity of religious teaching materials. In this process, they are required to be careful in designing learning that meets competency standards while prioritizing fundamental religious principles. The teaching of Islamic Religious Education and Ethics is experiencing a similar dynamic, with opportunities to develop a more personalized and relevant approach (Gardner, 1983).

The response of teachers at SMPN 3 and SMPN 22 Malang City shows significant alignment. The curriculum change from the 2013 Curriculum to the Independent Learning Curriculum has had a tremendous positive impact, with learning tailored to the needs of students and freedom for teachers to determine the right learning model. However, they also acknowledged that there are negative impacts, such as a reduction in effective lesson hours for Islamic Religious Education.

At SMPN 22, the enthusiasm of teachers in welcoming this change is clearly visible. They see the Independent Curriculum as an opportunity to update teaching methods and adjust the curriculum to the times. The flexibility offered allows them to create active, creative, and innovative learning.

Meanwhile, challenges remain. Many teachers expressed the need for additional training to understand the philosophy and technicalities of the Independent Learning Curriculum in depth. The availability of resources and support from educational institutions is key to effective implementation. The teachers also hope that there will be a more intensive dialogue with fellow educators and policymakers to share experiences and strategies.

In the context of these changes, the principals of the two junior high schools also stated that the Independent Curriculum provides space for flexibility and wider learning opportunities. They underlined the importance of character education that is strengthened in the learning process.

The Independent Learning curriculum not only focuses on academic knowledge, but also helps to develop the necessary skills, attitudes, and values personally and professionally. With a more open approach, teachers can guide students to understand the values of tolerance, justice, and responsibility according to Islamic teachings.

Overall, the response of Islamic Religious Education teachers to curriculum changes shows a great opportunity to make learning more relevant to the contemporary world. By combining a deep understanding of religious teachings and expertise in education, they are committed to producing a better generation in terms of spirituality and morality, while also facing challenges on the way to a better education.

In the era of education that continues to develop, the role of local governments is very crucial in supporting the improvement of the skills of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers through the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum. Through various initiatives and programs, local governments have created a supportive environment for PAI teachers to meet the quality standards and competencies needed to meet the challenges of 21st century learning.

One of the important policies is the allocation of at least 20% of the State Budget, Regional Budget, and Regional Budget for education. From this allocation, there needs to be a significant distribution to increase the capacity of educators and education personnel. Teachers, as State Civil Apparatus (ASN) in the education sector, have the right to obtain a capacity increase of at least 20 hours of meetings every year.

The observation results show that SMPN 3 Malang City has carried out various activities to support the development of PAI teacher competence. This school actively holds socialization and workshops, as well as utilizing the Merdeka Teaching platform to increase understanding of the Independent Curriculum. All PAI teachers are actively involved in these activities, both in workshops and in the Subject Teacher Conference (MGMP).

At SMPN 22 Malang City, the support provided was very positive. This school routinely carries out socialization and workshops related to the Independent Curriculum, which involves all PAI teachers. This activity helps teachers to improve their competencies and better implement them in PAI learning. The school also included teacher representatives in socialization activities and technical guidance organized by the Malang City Education Office.

The local government has taken concrete steps to improve teacher competence, including supporting the driving teacher program. In Malang City, as many as 321 teachers have become driving teachers, of which 9 are PAI and Budi Pekerti teachers. The government provides a budget for teacher career development, as well as supports career path policies for driving teachers in the process of selecting school principals and supervisors.

In terms of certification, the local government is also committed to completing the certification of PAI teachers through the In-Service Teacher Professional Education Program. Of the total 220 PAI teachers who have not been certified, 103 of them have participated in this program with a budget of Rp 545,000,000.

Training and professional development for PAI teachers is a priority, where training programs are designed considering the latest educational trends and innovative teaching methods. Teachers are given the opportunity to participate in various workshops, seminars, and courses on a regular basis. With adequate budget support, schools have been able to provide learning materials and technology that support the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

Collaborative support is also evident in efforts to facilitate cooperation between PAI teachers and higher education institutions and religious communities. This allows teachers to access the latest knowledge and expand their professional network. In addition, the local government also encourages a transparent and fair evaluation system for PAI teachers, as well as providing incentives for those who successfully integrate the principles of Freedom of Learning well.

With all this support, PAI teachers are expected to be more confident and skilled in implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum. This is expected to have a positive impact on the quality of Islamic religious education, as well as the holistic development of students' character and morals, in line with the demands of the ever-changing times. Through this approach, it is hoped that individuals with noble character and ready to face global challenges can be formed.

C. Regional Government Support for Improving the Proficiency of PAI Teachers in the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum

In the era of education that continues to develop, the role of local governments is very crucial in supporting the improvement of the skills of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers through the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum. Through various initiatives and programs, local governments have created a supportive environment for PAI teachers to meet the quality standards and competencies needed to meet the challenges of 21st century learning.

One of the important policies is the allocation of at least 20% of the State Budget, Regional Budget, and Regional Budget for education. From this allocation, there needs to be a significant distribution to increase the capacity of educators and education personnel. Teachers, as State Civil Apparatus (ASN) in the education sector, have the right to obtain a capacity increase of at least 20 hours of meetings every year. This is the foundation for the development of teacher professionalism, which in turn has a positive impact on the learning process in the classroom.

The observation results show that SMPN 3 Malang City has carried out various activities to support the development of PAI teacher competence. This school actively holds socialization and workshops, as well as utilizing the Merdeka Teaching platform to increase understanding of the Independent Curriculum. All PAI teachers are actively involved in these activities, both in workshops and in the Subject Teacher Conference

(MGMP). This initiative not only enriches teachers' knowledge, but also creates a strong spirit of collaboration between them.

At SMPN 22 Malang City, the support provided was very positive. This school routinely carries out socialization and workshops related to the Independent Curriculum, which involves all PAI teachers. This activity helps teachers to improve their competencies and better implement them in PAI learning. The school also includes teacher representatives in socialization and technical guidance activities organized by the Malang City Education Office, creating synergy that is beneficial for all parties.

The local government has taken concrete steps to improve teacher competence, including supporting the driving teacher program. In Malang City, as many as 321 teachers have become driving teachers, of which 9 are PAI and Budi Pekerti teachers. The program not only provides training, but also provides a space for teachers to develop leadership and innovation in education. The government provides a budget for teacher career development, as well as supports career path policies for driving teachers in the process of selecting school principals and supervisors.

In terms of certification, the local government is also committed to completing the certification of PAI teachers through the In-Service Teacher Professional Education Program. Of the total 220 PAI teachers who have not been certified, 103 of them have participated in this program with a budget of Rp 545,000,000. This financial support is essential to ensure that PAI teachers can improve the quality of their teaching.

Training and professional development for PAI teachers is a priority, where training programs are designed considering the latest educational trends and innovative teaching methods. Teachers are given the opportunity to participate in various workshops, seminars, and courses on a regular basis. With adequate budget support, schools have been able to provide learning materials and technology that support the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

In addition, the local government also focuses on providing teaching materials and learning resources that are in accordance with the Independent Learning Curriculum for PAI subjects. This helps teachers create diverse and engaging learning experiences for students, thereby increasing student engagement in the learning process. Collaboration between schools is also encouraged by local governments, allowing PAI teachers to share experiences and best practices in facing curriculum implementation challenges.

This collaborative support is evident in an effort to facilitate cooperation between PAI teachers and higher education institutions and religious communities. This allows teachers to access the latest knowledge and expand their professional network. The local government also encourages a transparent and fair evaluation system for PAI teachers, as well as providing incentives for those who successfully integrate the principles of Freedom of Learning well. These incentives are not only in the form of financial rewards, but also public recognition and opportunities for further career development.

With all this support, PAI teachers are expected to be more confident and skilled in implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum. This is expected to have a positive impact on the quality of Islamic religious education, as well as the holistic development of students' character and morals, in line with the demands of the ever-changing times. Through this approach, individuals with noble character and ready to face global challenges can be formed.

Finally, the success of the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum is expected not only to be seen from the improvement of teacher competence, but also from the better student learning outcomes. With strong government support, it is hoped that Islamic religious education can develop rapidly, adapt to the changing needs of society, and equip students with knowledge and character in accordance with the noble values of Islam.

D. Changes that must be addressed in improving Teacher Proficiency for the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum

The Independent Learning Curriculum (IKM) is present as a response to the need for more flexible and adaptive education in Indonesia. This curriculum focuses on developing students' competencies, empowering them to become independent and creative learners. To achieve this goal, improving teachers' proficiency is a crucial factor. Here are some important aspects that teachers need to pay attention to in the implementation of IKM:

1. In-Depth Understanding of the Independent Curriculum:

- a) Teachers need to have a strong understanding of the concepts, goals, and principles of the Independent Curriculum. It involves student-centered learning, where teachers must be able to design and implement learning strategies that are flexible and responsive to the individual needs of students.

- b) Structured training and workshops should be a priority to help teachers internalize and apply curriculum principles in daily practice.
- 2. Adaptation of Teaching Methods:
 - a) A change from traditional one-way teaching methods to an interactive and project-based approach is urgently needed. Project-based learning (PBL) that encourages student involvement in real-life tasks can improve creativity and problem-solving skills.
 - b) A personalized approach to learning, where the material is tailored to the interests and needs of students, must be integrated into teaching strategies.
- 3. Technology Skills Development:
 - a) In the digital era, the ability to utilize educational technology is essential. Teachers need to be skilled in using digital tools and platforms that support learning, including educational applications and online learning platforms.
 - b) The integration of technology not only improves student engagement, but also makes it easier to manage and assess learning.
- 4. Innovation in Assessment and Evaluation:
 - a) The Independent Curriculum encourages a more holistic and authentic assessment. Teachers must master formative assessment techniques that allow for continuous monitoring of student progress.
 - b) Authentic assessments, such as project assignments and portfolios, should be an integral part of the evaluation, helping teachers understand progress and areas that need improvement for each student.
- 5. Ongoing Professional Development:
 - a) The improvement of teachers' skills does not stop at the initial training. Teachers need to keep their skills updated through additional courses, training, and certifications.
 - b) Joining learning communities and discussion groups is essential to share best practices and solutions related to curriculum implementation.
- 6. Classroom Management and Learning Environment:
 - a) The ability to manage the classroom effectively is the key to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Teachers need to develop classroom management strategies that support active and collaborative learning.
 - b) Creating a positive and supportive classroom environment is an important step to encourage student engagement.
- 7. Collaboration and Communication:
 - a) Collaboration with fellow teachers and parent involvement are important aspects of curriculum implementation. Teachers must work together in planning and implementing learning activities.
 - b) Productive communication with parents is also important to support the learning process of students at home.
- 8. Reflection and Adaptation:
 - a) Teachers must reflect regularly on teaching methods and learning outcomes. By self-evaluating and adjusting approaches based on feedback, teachers can continue to improve their practice.
 - b) A flexible and adaptive attitude to emerging changes is essential for the success of this curriculum.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the critical role of teachers in the successful implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education and Character Education in Malang. It reveals that while teachers possess essential skills and qualifications, there are still areas needing improvement, particularly in technology utilization and innovative teaching methods. The positive responses from teachers indicate a readiness to adapt to the new curriculum, which fosters a more flexible and contextual learning environment. Furthermore, the support from local government through training and resources is essential in enhancing teachers' competencies. Continuous professional development is necessary to equip educators with the tools and knowledge required for effective curriculum implementation. Overall, the findings suggest that with adequate support and training, teachers can significantly contribute to the advancement of quality education, aligning with the demands of the 21st-century learning landscape.

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