

Problems in Implementing the Independent Curriculum in Arabic Language Subjects at Manu Putra Buntet Islamic Boarding School

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Abstract

Society is always changing, so too the curriculum will experience changes and improvements. Indonesia on a large scale in its educational history, has often experienced curriculum changes, this is based on changes and demands and the needs of students and the same society. The curriculum is a tool used to achieve an educational goal and a guideline for educators in implementing learning at all levels and types of education, without a good and correct curriculum it will be difficult to achieve educational goals and objectives. The problems in this study are problems that arise from the implementation of the independent curriculum due to the incompatibility of the field with the conditions that should be. This study uses a qualitative approach. The type of research is a case study. A case study is a detailed examination of the background or a single subject, or a collection of single documents, or a particular event. Case studies can also be interpreted as research conducted to reveal a situation in depth, intensively, both regarding individuals, individuals, and groups, and community institutions. Based on the findings of the study related to the implementation of the independent curriculum MANU Putra Buntet that the independent curriculum is still not one hundred percent implemented in Madrasah, however there are already classes that implement the independent curriculum, for now only class X MA, and only class X implements it. The principal of MANU Putra Buntet is very influential in overcoming teacher problems in implementing the independent curriculum in Arabic language subjects. Various policies are implemented so that the implementation of the independent curriculum can be successful in this institution. The first thing the principal does is solve all existing problems and then find solutions. Based on the results of research conducted in the implementation of the independent curriculum in Arabic language subjects at MANU Putra Buntet, the Islamic boarding school initially had various problems from the independent curriculum that had not been fully implemented. There are several problematic things in the implementation of the independent curriculum that are being resolved little by little. Among them are the principal's efforts to accommodate the aspirations of teachers, especially Arabic language teachers, through coaching and training in the independent curriculum. After going through several phases and processes, everything became more conducive and better.

Keyword: Problems, Independent Curriculum, Arabic

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Introduction

The curriculum is one of the fundamental instruments in achieving educational goals and serves as a primary guideline for educators in implementing learning at all levels and types of education. It is not merely a document outlining subjects to be taught, but rather a comprehensive framework that directs educational processes, defines learning objectives, organizes content, determines teaching strategies, and shapes assessment practices. Without a well-designed and systematically implemented curriculum, it would be difficult to achieve the intended educational goals, whether in formal or informal educational settings. In this sense, the curriculum functions as the backbone of the educational system (Rizki, 2022).

Historically, the concept of curriculum has evolved significantly. In traditional perspectives, curriculum was understood simply as a collection of subjects that students were required to complete in order to obtain a diploma or move to the next level of

education. This narrow interpretation positioned curriculum as a static list of academic content, emphasizing textbooks and predetermined subject matter. However, contemporary educational theories have broadened this definition. The curriculum is now understood as the totality of planned learning experiences provided by educational institutions to facilitate the holistic development of students, including knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values (Priestley et al., 2015).

The shift from a content-centered to a learner-centered perspective reflects the dynamic nature of society. As society changes due to technological advancement, globalization, cultural transformation, and economic development, education must adapt accordingly. Consequently, curriculum reform becomes an inevitable and continuous process. In Indonesia, curriculum changes have occurred repeatedly in response to social demands, political shifts, and educational evaluation outcomes. The Indonesian education system has undergone several curriculum reforms, including the 1968 Curriculum, the 1975 Curriculum, the 1984 Curriculum (CBSA), the 1994 Curriculum, the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK), the School-Based Curriculum (KTSP), the 2013 Curriculum, and most recently, the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka).

Each curriculum reform was introduced with the intention of improving educational quality and aligning learning processes with contemporary needs. However, curriculum change is not merely a matter of replacing documents or adjusting subject structures; it fundamentally affects teachers, students, school management, and educational culture. Curriculum changes inevitably influence teaching and learning processes, workload distribution, assessment systems, and pedagogical approaches. Therefore, every curriculum reform brings both opportunities and challenges (Rukmana, 2025).

The Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) was introduced as a response to the need for more flexible, student-centered, and competency-based learning. It emphasizes differentiated instruction, project-based learning, and the strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile. The philosophy behind this curriculum encourages autonomy for schools and teachers in designing learning experiences that are relevant to students' needs and contextual realities. However, this autonomy also requires high levels of professional competence, creativity, and adaptability from teachers (Noviandari, 2024).

Teachers play a central role in the success or failure of curriculum implementation. They are not merely policy executors but active agents who interpret, adapt, and transform curriculum frameworks into classroom practices. The concept of teacher agency highlights that teachers' professional judgment, beliefs, and contextual understanding significantly influence how curriculum policies are enacted in practice (Priestley et al., 2015). Therefore, the effectiveness of curriculum reform depends largely on teachers' readiness, competence, and commitment.

Several studies have identified challenges in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Maula et al. (2025) found that obstacles include uneven teacher training distribution, limited educational resources, and insufficient mentoring support from authorities. Similarly, Solihin and Wijaya (2024) reported that teachers experience difficulties in integrating Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) into classroom instruction effectively. These challenges indicate that while the curriculum framework may be conceptually sound, practical implementation often encounters structural and technical barriers.

In the context of Islamic educational institutions, particularly madrasahs, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum presents unique complexities. Madrasahs integrate the national curriculum with Islamic religious subjects, creating a dual framework that must be balanced carefully. Adjusting to curriculum reforms requires

synchronization between national educational standards and the distinctive religious identity of the institution. Burhanuddin et al. (2024) argue that curriculum implementation in Islamic schools demands strategic adaptation to maintain institutional identity while meeting national requirements.

Arabic language learning occupies a significant position within madrasah education. Unlike other foreign languages, Arabic serves not only as a communication tool but also as the language of Islamic scriptures and classical texts. Therefore, Arabic language instruction in madrasahs carries religious, cultural, and academic significance. Implementing the Independent Curriculum in Arabic language subjects requires contextual approaches that integrate linguistic competence with religious understanding.

Research conducted by Baihaqi et al. (2025) indicates that implementing the Independent Curriculum in Arabic learning faces several challenges, including the lack of appropriate teaching materials, limited teacher training, and varying student competencies. Similarly, Yunita et al. (2025) found that Arabic teachers often struggle to design differentiated teaching modules aligned with the new curriculum principles. The delay in distributing textbooks and insufficient socialization of curriculum policies further complicate implementation processes.

Problematics in curriculum implementation generally arise from discrepancies between ideal expectations and actual conditions in the field. Ideally, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum should be supported by comprehensive guidance, systematic socialization, continuous professional development, and adequate infrastructure. However, empirical findings show that such support systems are not always fully operational (Sidik et al., 2024).

Teacher readiness is one of the most crucial determinants of curriculum implementation success. Hidayat and Muniroh (2023) emphasize that teachers who lack a deep understanding of curriculum philosophy and structure encounter difficulties in designing lesson plans, conducting diagnostic assessments, and implementing differentiated instruction. As a result, teachers may experience increased workloads and uncertainty, potentially leading to resistance toward curriculum reform.

Students are also directly affected by curriculum changes. Although the Independent Curriculum aims to reduce academic pressure and provide more meaningful learning experiences, some students perceive increased demands due to new assessment systems and project-based tasks (Ma'wa et al., 2024). This perception reflects the complexity of educational change, where policy intentions do not always align with classroom realities.

Fullan (2007) asserts that educational change is a multidimensional process involving shifts in beliefs, teaching practices, and organizational culture. Successful reform requires not only structural adjustments but also cultural transformation within schools. Without comprehensive change management strategies, curriculum innovation may fail to achieve its intended outcomes.

Madrasah MANU Putra Buntet Pesantren represents one of the Islamic educational institutions currently implementing the Independent Curriculum. As a pesantren-based madrasah, it combines formal national education with traditional Islamic boarding school values. This dual system creates distinctive challenges in adapting to curriculum reform, particularly in subjects such as Arabic language that are closely linked to religious instruction.

Preliminary observations indicate several issues in the implementation process at MANU Putra Buntet Pesantren. These include delays in textbook distribution, uneven teacher training participation, and students' perceptions of increased academic burden.

Such conditions illustrate the gap between policy design at the national level and practical realities at the institutional level.

From a theoretical perspective, curriculum implementation must adhere to several fundamental principles, including goal orientation, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, continuity, flexibility, integration, synchronization, objectivity, and democracy. When these principles are not fully realized, curriculum development risks failing to meet societal needs. In practice, pros and cons inevitably accompany curriculum reforms, and challenges are part of the transformation process.

Therefore, investigating the problems in implementing the Independent Curriculum in Arabic language subjects at MANU Putra Buntet Pesantren is both relevant and necessary. This study aims to analyze the challenges encountered, identify contributing factors, and propose constructive solutions. By examining real conditions in the field, the research seeks to provide a balanced and evidence-based perspective on curriculum reform implementation.

Moreover, this study contributes to the broader discourse on curriculum change in Islamic educational contexts. While national policies are designed to be universally applicable, local contexts significantly shape implementation outcomes. Understanding these contextual factors can help policymakers design more effective support systems for madrasahs and similar institutions.

In conclusion, curriculum reform is an inevitable aspect of educational development in a dynamic society. The Independent Curriculum represents a progressive effort to create more flexible and student-centered learning environments. However, its successful implementation depends on teacher readiness, institutional support, infrastructure availability, and effective change management. Problematics arising from curriculum implementation should not be viewed merely as obstacles but as opportunities for evaluation and improvement.

By focusing on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Arabic language subjects at MANU Putra Buntet Pesantren, this research seeks to provide practical recommendations and theoretical insights that can enhance curriculum effectiveness in madrasah settings. Ultimately, understanding and addressing these challenges is essential for achieving the broader goals of national education and fostering meaningful learning experiences for students.

Method Study

This research uses a Qualitative approach. The type of research is a case study. A case study is a detailed examination of a single subject or background, or a single set of documents, or a particular event. A case study can also be interpreted as research conducted to reveal a situation in depth, intensively, both regarding individuals, individually, or groups, and community institutions.

According to Sukmadinata, a case study is a research conducted on a system unit. This system unit can be an event, activity, group of individuals, or program bound by time, place or certain ties. A case study is a research that is directed to collect data, take meaning, and is directed to gain an understanding of a particular case. The case can consist of one unit or even more, but is a unit. The case faced can be one individual, one group, one madrasah, or several madrasahs but in one office, one region, and so on. Data collection techniques in this case use observation, interview, and documentation methods, and all are focused on obtaining unified data conclusions. (Untung, Slamet:2019).

This study investigates the implementation activities of the Independent Curriculum at the Putra Buntet Islamic High School (MANU PUTRA Buntet) located in

the village of Astanajapura Buntet Pesantren, the investigation of these activities aims to determine the problems in implementing the independent curriculum at MANU Putra Buntet, as well as what policies are taken by the head of the Madrasah and teachers regarding the existing problems.

Results And Study

Implementation of the Independent Curriculum

Based on the results of research findings related to the implementation of the MANU Putra Buntet independent curriculum, the independent curriculum has not been implemented one hundred percent in the Madrasah, however, there are already classes that implement the independent curriculum, for the time being only class X MA, and only class X is implementing it, because at that time the madrasah that implemented the independent curriculum was directly targeted by the government and the madrasah was appointed for the project and trial and pilot. (Siti Julaha:2019).

The results of the information obtained by researchers are as follows:

1. Teacher

The independent curriculum provides direct assistance to the head of the madrasah, teachers and students to carry out reforms in the madrasah related to curriculum issues, learning and so on that grow from the activities, creativity and potentialism that they have. Based on the results of observations and interviews, most teachers at MANU Putra Buntet have participated in training and socialization of the independent curriculum.

At first, teachers felt confused about implementing this independent curriculum. Meanwhile, implementing the independent curriculum is not easy, so teachers must first take part in training and coaching, where the training is not enough if only followed once. The implementation of the independent curriculum at MANU Putra Buntet since early 2023 with various efforts made by the head of the madrasah to hold training related to the independent curriculum.

In the independent curriculum teaching and learning activities at MANU Putra Buntet, it went quite well. This can be seen from the activities of teachers and students. Where the teacher will enter the class, but before entering the class the teacher must first prepare the lesson plan, annual program, semester program and syllabus. In addition, the teacher makes preparations in advance before teaching the material in class. This is intended so that the teaching and learning activities are focused and in accordance with the objectives to be achieved.

According to the head of the madrasah, in implementing the independent curriculum, not all teachers are optimistic about implementing it. In the sense that some are ready, some are not. This is because the teachers themselves are not emphasized enough to implement the independent curriculum in its entirety. So it is necessary to supervise and emphasize the teachers themselves. However, teachers have instilled values that are in accordance with the objectives of the independent curriculum.

2. Textbooks

The textbooks owned by teachers greatly influence the teaching and learning process, because a teacher in delivering his/her materials must not be separated from books. So books are very necessary in the teaching and learning process in order to achieve better learning outcomes. Likewise, in MANU Putra Buntet, there are no suitable textbooks available. To overcome this problem, some educators make every effort to buy

relevant books themselves as a reference or guideline in the teaching and learning process. Currently, textbooks published by the Ministry of Religion have not been evenly distributed throughout Indonesia, as well as in MANU Putra Buntet. Because of this, the teachers finally took the initiative to procure the books by buying them outside the region/city in order to meet these primary needs.

3. Teaching Methods

The methods used by MANU Putra Buntet have various ways, ranging from lecture methods, question and answer methods, discussion methods. However, the method that is often used is the lecture method. In the implementation of the independent curriculum, the appropriate methods to use are the PBL (Problem Based Learning) method, the experimental method, the pre-teaching method and the contextual method with an integrative learning model. The integrative learning method is a learning model that is conceptually inductive based on the constructivist school of thought in terms of learning, such as learning the skills of *istima* and *kalam* or *Qiroah* with *Kitabah*. Thus, there are still many methods in the independent curriculum that have not been applied.

Based on the interview results above, it can be said that there are still many methods that have not been studied globally by teachers at the Madrasah so that in practice they still do not meet the criteria for using the independent curriculum.

4. Media Used

The media that has been used in the teaching and learning process at MANU Putra Buntet Pesantren, namely in Arabic language lessons, uses an LCD projector. By using an LCD projector, students can observe, listen to videos, images, and writings containing lessons, which can be heard, seen and observed by students so that students are more active as expected in the independent curriculum.

With the learning media available at MANU Putra Buntet Pesantren, students can be more active in learning and can understand what has been taught, and can implement their knowledge in everyday life.

5. Learners

The condition of students at MANU Putra Buntet Pesantren is dominated by students who live in the pesantren environment even though their backgrounds are different, ranging from family environment, economic factors, and regional backgrounds, where students come from within the pesantren environment itself, from outside the pesantren, and even some from outside West Java such as students who come from Central Java, from Jakarta and Bekasi. From these different backgrounds, there are different impacts on thinking abilities. From there teachers must be good at using teaching methods and using good and appropriate learning media. That way, students who have below average abilities do not lag behind their friends who have higher abilities.

In implementing this independent curriculum, students experience many changes, such as in their attitudes, knowledge, and have high self-confidence in learning and can implement it in everyday life.

6. Assessment of learning outcomes

From the various differences in student backgrounds have affected the cognitive and psychomotor equality of students. So if the results of the student assessment or evaluation show that one of the students is lacking one of the standards, then what the teacher does is remediation either verbally or in writing. And in the independent curriculum, the assessment uses authentic assessment. So a teacher must be really careful and creative.

The sincerity, skill, creativity and perseverance of teachers are the first foundation in implementing the independent curriculum, therefore teachers should be able to select teaching materials and encourage students to be better and should also be able to compile, select and carry out evaluations, both being able to evaluate student learning outcomes or their development to see the effectiveness of its implementation itself. Likewise with students who implement the independent curriculum. Students are not only encouraged and understand the teaching materials or competencies obtained in the madrasah but are able to apply their teaching materials or competencies into everyday life according to the competencies they have.

From the above explanation and analysis of the data obtained, it is classified that the implementation of the independent curriculum in Arabic language subjects at MANU Putra Buntet Pesantren has not been able to be implemented one hundred percent as expected.

Problems of Implementing the Independent Curriculum in Arabic Language Subjects Field data shows that many teachers at MANU Putra Buntet Pesantren are still having difficulty implementing the independent curriculum. Therefore, all teachers must participate in coaching or training on the independent curriculum, as a solution to this problem. Because if you do not immediately find a solution, it will result in less than optimal implementation of the curriculum in the teaching and learning process. Siti Juliaha:

The problems experienced by teachers in implementing the independent curriculum at MANU Putra Buntet Islamic Boarding School are as follows:

1. **Teacher Problems in Lesson Implementation Plans** It should be noted that in preparing lesson plans, teachers need to determine the scope of which subtopic material will be taught in each session by looking at the estimated time in the syllabus. If a subtopic in the syllabus requires more than one or more sessions, the subtopic needs to be determined again. If this is not possible because it will disrupt the integrity of the material, then the lesson plan can be developed to serve two or more sessions. Lesson plans must be prepared systematically, completely and comprehensively, and there are several possible adjustments that are in accordance with the actual learning situation. Therefore, lesson plans can function to facilitate the learning process according to plan. Lesson plans must be written simply or flexibly, and can be implemented in learning activities to develop student abilities.

The RPP in the independent curriculum has changes in words or sentences that teachers feel are new and need to be adjusted to the old implementation plan (RPP). This is also an obstacle for teachers because teachers are already busy with various educational polemics, starting from compiling the Syllabus, Protas Prosem, RPP, portfolio, participating in PLPG, thinking about materials, compiling KKM and so on.

For example, the change in the existing word is maharoh which in Arabic means skill, so in the independent curriculum it changes to element, then basic competency becomes learning achievement and indicator becomes rationalization and so on.

2. **Teachers' Problems in Determining Teaching Methods and Techniques** In order to achieve teaching goals, teaching methods and techniques must be used in the teaching and learning process. The number of teaching methods is very diverse, and teachers are required to choose methods that are appropriate to the material being

taught.

Being a teacher who has a teaching task does not mean just teaching, because teaching students requires thorough preparation, teachers are required to have qualified competencies, besides that teachers are also required to follow the flow of developments in the world of education. There are many other components that teachers need to prepare in teaching, one of which is the learning method. (Harun Nasution:2019).

To implement the learning method is very important, in addition to making the atmosphere in the classroom more enjoyable, the use of learning methods and techniques will also produce many other benefits. Learning methods can help students stay focused on following and understanding what the teacher is saying. Learning methods and techniques can also be able to develop students' cognitive abilities constructively. In addition, learning methods can also help teachers manage the class. Some types of learning methods in the independent curriculum include the Project Based Learning (PBL) method. Project based learning is an effort to approach learning where students are given various opportunities to explore and explore the learning material that has been taught along with developing skills or abilities with problem solving efforts (Problem Solving).

Another method that can be used is active learning. The concept applied to active learning is to make students more actively participate in learning. The series of processes of this method are thinking or the process of thinking about something, then investigation or investigating, and finally the process of creating or creating something. All processes are applied in class when using this method.(Mira Marisa:2020)

And it can be analyzed that in implementing the independent curriculum, it still requires quite a lot of time for teachers so that the methods applied are in accordance with the subject matter and adequate facilities. In other words, teachers are required to be able to manage the time, materials and methods used. While for teachers who do not understand each method, they are expected to find out either from books or from fellow teachers. Thus, this is a problem in itself in using teaching methods and techniques that are in accordance with the independent curriculum, even from that, because Arabic language subjects have different characteristics and are still considered foreign languages in Indonesia, of course the methods and techniques that will be used also need a process in practicing them.

3. Teacher Problems in Changing Assessment Paradigms Assessment (Assessment) so far the implementation of assessments carried out by teachers tends to focus on summative assessments where it is a reference in filling out student learning outcome reports. These learning outcomes have not been utilized by teachers as feedback in improving learning. In this independent curriculum, teachers or educators are expected to be able to focus more on formative assessments than summative assessments, and use the results of these formative assessments for improvements in the ongoing future learning process.

The assessment in the independent curriculum must look at the assessment principles in material 1 then processed into material 2 with assessment processing and enter material 3 where the assessment is used as a learning outcome report, and things like this are considered very detailed and ideal but all of that will burden teachers, therefore it must be made more practical. (Lestari, DY, Kusnandar, I., &

Muhafidin, D. 2020)

Things that must be considered in implementing formative are that formative texts must be carried out continuously (continuously) along with the learning process, using techniques that are in accordance with the target of the intended learning, also providing feedback for both students and educators themselves, as well as learning must be oriented towards change, not just fulfilling the quantity of values contained in the report card and being informative.

Meanwhile, the thing that must be considered in the implementation of summative is that summative is carried out by teachers to inform learning outcomes (CP) for students in a certain period (end of material stage, at the end of semester or end of level), the results of which will later be used as material for processing student learning outcome reports, feedback is still provided even though measurement data has been obtained and using various assessment techniques. (Nuraini, D., Anggraini, L., Misiyanto, & Mulia, KR2022).

Every material that has been taught must be assessed by the teacher in the independent curriculum, the assessment uses formative and summative assessments, in this case the teacher finds it difficult to assess using these assessments, possibly due to the lack of special socialization in this area of assessment. The assessments in their curriculum are still too many and need to be made more practical because teachers still have difficulty in this assessment. (Pupuh Fathurahman:2012).

The Policy of the Head of MANU Putra Buntet Islamic Boarding School in Overcoming Problems in Implementing the Independent Curriculum

The head of MANU Putra Buntet is very influential in overcoming the problems of teachers in implementing the independent curriculum in Arabic language subjects. Various policies are carried out so that the implementation of the independent curriculum can be successful in this institution. The first thing the head of the madrasah does is solve all the existing problems and then find solutions. (Evi Hasim:2020)

The policies implemented by the head of MANU Putra Buntet Islamic Boarding School to overcome the problems in implementing the independent curriculum in Arabic language subjects are:

1. Grouping existing problems and then looking for solutions
2. Holding independent curriculum training sessions
3. Completing inadequate and necessary infrastructure suggestions
4. Carry out full supervision over the course of teaching and learning activities.

In addition to the policies implemented by the madrasah principal, teachers also have their own policies to overcome problems in implementing the independent curriculum, both individual policies and those implemented in groups.

The policies implemented by MANU Putra Teachers are as follows:

1. Participate in training and briefing on the independent curriculum.

By participating in training and briefing on the independent curriculum, it is hoped that teachers can increase their knowledge about the independent curriculum and its elements so that teachers can understand and apply the independent curriculum to their students.

2. Procurement of Infrastructure Facilities.

Essentially, most problems in educational institutions are due to inadequate infrastructure. Therefore, to add to or complement existing infrastructure, teachers must be actively involved in creating and designing the infrastructure at MANU Putra Buntet

Islamic Boarding School, so that it can be developed and maintained. Holding an Arabic Language MGMP (Arabic Language Subject Teachers Conference). In this MGMP, subject teachers are expected to be able to discuss matters by contributing positive thoughts and actions to ensure good teaching and learning activities are carried out, and if there are individual problems, they can be solved together.

With the above policies, it can be ensured that all problems in the implementation of the independent curriculum at MANU Putra Buntet Pesantren can be overcome by professionalizing teachers, completing facilities and infrastructure, holding MGMP and supervising the implementation of the Teaching and Learning Process, training on the independent curriculum and other policies that are individual or group in nature, in order to solve the problems that occur. (Efendi, S., Lubis, SA, & Nasution, WN 2018)

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research conducted, in the implementation of the independent curriculum in Arabic language subjects at MANU Putra Buntet Pesantren, initially there were various problems from the independent curriculum which had not been fully implemented. However, after going through several phases and processes, things changed to be more conducive and better.

There are several things that have made the problem of implementing the independent curriculum solved little by little, including the efforts of the head of MANU Putra Buntet Pesantren in accommodating the aspirations of teachers, especially Arabic language teachers, through coaching and training on the independent curriculum, completing inadequate facilities and infrastructure, and supervising the implementation of the teaching and learning process at the Madrasah.

The teachers formed a subject teacher deliberation team whose function was to provide input to each other in strengthening teaching and learning activities, both in the form of preparing lesson implementation plans (RPP), selecting and choosing appropriate teaching methods and techniques and participating in training mandated by the head of the NU Putra Buntet Pesantren Madrasah.

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