



THE IMPACT OF INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to explore the contribution of the Independent Curriculum to the improvement of the Human Development Index (HDI) in Indonesia in IRE and to assess the effectiveness of the Independent Curriculum in improving the quality of PAI learning. The method used in this study is literature with a qualitative approach using data collection from related data sources. The results of the study show that the Human Development Index (HDI) is an important indicator to measure the quality of human life. The Independent Curriculum, as the latest initiative in the field of education, is expected to be able to contribute significantly to the improvement of HDI. Evaluation and monitoring of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) is the key to ensuring its effectiveness in improving the quality of education and HDI. Despite the challenges, there is a great opportunity to strengthen HDI through proper adaptation and implementation. The concept of curriculum in the context of IRE requires adjustment and innovation, which in turn encourages the preparation of learning plans based on the Independent Curriculum. Consistent and measurable implementation of the Independent Curriculum in IRE is expected to create a superior and highly competitive generation. In addition, this curriculum also contributes to the improvement in each student's problem-solving and fosters each student's creativity. These findings are expected to provide a basis for more effective education policies to support human development in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Independent Curriculum; Human Development Index; Islamic Education; Indonesia*

ABSTRAK

Tujuan artikel ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi kontribusi Kurikulum Merdeka terhadap peningkatan Indeks Pembangunan Manusia (IPM) di Indonesia dalam PAI dan untuk menilai efektivitas Kurikulum Merdeka dalam meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran PAI. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah literatur dengan pendekatan kualitatif dengan menggunakan pengumpulan data dari sumber data terkait. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Indeks Pembangunan Manusia (IPM) merupakan indikator penting untuk mengukur kualitas hidup manusia. Kurikulum Merdeka sebagai inisiatif terbaru di bidang pendidikan diharapkan dapat berkontribusi secara signifikan terhadap peningkatan IPM. Evaluasi dan pemantauan pelaksanaan Kurikulum Merdeka dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) merupakan kunci untuk memastikan efektivitasnya dalam meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan dan IPM. Terlepas dari tantangan, ada peluang besar untuk memperkuat IPM melalui adaptasi dan implementasi yang tepat. Konsep kurikulum dalam konteks IRE membutuhkan penyesuaian dan inovasi, yang pada gilirannya mendorong penyusunan rencana pembelajaran berbasis Kurikulum Merdeka. Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka di IRE yang konsisten dan terukur diharapkan dapat menciptakan generasi yang unggul dan berdaya saing tinggi. Selain itu, kurikulum ini juga berkontribusi pada peningkatan pemecahan masalah setiap siswa dan menumbuhkan kreativitas setiap siswa.





Temuan ini diharapkan dapat memberikan dasar bagi kebijakan pendidikan yang lebih efektif untuk mendukung pembangunan manusia di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: IPM, Pelaksanaan, Kurikulum, Kemandirian, PAI.

INTRODUCTION

The inculcation of religious values is carried out continuously between teachers and students. This process aims to form the character of students with noble ethics or morals as the ultimate goal of education. Along with the development of the times and rapid social changes, the role of religious education has become increasingly important to equip the young generation with strong moral and spiritual values so that they are able to face various challenges in life (Firmansyah, 2019). In the world of education, the curriculum plays a very important role as a guide and director of the course of education. The curriculum is a learning design that serves as a guideline for teachers in delivering teaching materials to students. A good curriculum must be able to adapt to the development of the times and the needs of students (Probo, 2019). A well-designed curriculum can be an effective tool to achieve better and maximum educational goals. In Indonesia, the curriculum that is currently implemented is the Independent Curriculum. This curriculum emerged as an effort to improve the quality of education in various fields, including in the field of IRE.

The Independent Curriculum can contribute to the improvement of the Human Development Index (HDI) in Indonesia, which includes important components such as education, health, and living standards. The Merdeka Curriculum is designed with a more flexible and adaptive approach, allowing teachers and students to organize the learning process according to their respective potentials, interests, and needs. The curriculum also emphasizes the importance of developing 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication, which are indispensable in the face of ever-changing global dynamics. By giving greater freedom to teachers and students, it is hoped that the learning process can run more effectively and enjoyably. However, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum cannot be separated from various challenges that require attention and solutions. One of the main challenges is the readiness of teachers to implement this new curriculum and the availability of adequate supporting resources. Although it is expected to improve the quality of IRE education, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum still faces significant obstacles.

This is in accordance with the research conducted by Roslina, which shows that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in IRE learning provides more contextual, relevant, and character-based results (Roslina, 2024). Another study by Robi Awaludin revealed that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in IRE subjects has been well applied, marked by the use of various learning methods such as discovery learning, cooperative learning, project-based learning, and problem-based learning (Awaludin, 2024). Similarly, Amrazi Zakso showed that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in driving schools has been carried out optimally, although there are still shortcomings and obstacles (Zakso, 2023). Research by Khusnul Maslakhah on IRE learning at SD Alam Baturraden also found that the Independent Curriculum involves three main stages planning, implementation, and evaluation





each of which is crucial in achieving effective outcomes (Maslakhah, 2023). Furthermore, Dina Puspita Sari's findings indicate an increase in student competence through more flexible learning and the cultivation of the Pancasila student profile (D. P. Sari, 2023).

Despite these findings, existing studies remain largely limited to the national context of Indonesia and have not been sufficiently linked to the global discourse on curriculum and human development. International research has extensively examined the relationship between innovative curricula and improvements in HDI for example, Finland's emphasis on student autonomy (Erss, M. 2018)., Korea's integration of STEM education (Lee, H., Ham, H., & Kwon, H. 2022)., and Singapore's competency-based curriculum (Or, C. 2024). However, very few studies have explored how curricula rooted in religious and moral education, such as IRE, can contribute to HDI. This gap in the literature highlights the need to position Indonesia's Independent Curriculum within a broader international framework.

The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to connect the Independent Curriculum, particularly in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), with the Human Development Index (HDI). Unlike global studies that tend to prioritize secular or skills-based curricula, this article demonstrates how a curriculum integrating Pancasila values, religious ethics, and 21st-century competencies can also serve as a driver of human development. By situating Indonesia's educational reform within international comparisons, this study offers a new perspective: that religiously informed curricula can make a meaningful contribution to the global conversation on education and human development

METHOD

This study employed a library research design with a qualitative descriptive approach (Connaway, L. S., & Powell, R. R., 2010). The data sources consisted of academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, policy documents, and official reports relevant to the Independent Curriculum and the Human Development Index (HDI).

To ensure rigor, this study applied specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. Literature was included if it: (1) discussed the Independent Curriculum or comparable educational reforms; (2) addressed the relationship between curriculum and human development (including HDI indicators such as education, health, and standard of living); (3) was published between 2013–2024 to capture both the initial development of the Independent Curriculum and recent global educational reforms; and (4) was available in English or Indonesian. Conversely, sources were excluded if they were (1) opinion-based articles without empirical or theoretical grounding, (2) publications lacking relevance to curriculum or HDI, or (3) duplicate reports of the same study (Greenfield, T., & Greener, S. (Eds.), 2016).

The data collection procedure involved systematic reading, annotation, and extraction of key information from the selected literature. A content analysis method was applied to identify recurring themes, such as curriculum flexibility, 21st-century skills, and links to human development. Thematic coding was then used to group findings into categories that directly informed the analysis: (1) contributions of the Independent Curriculum to IRE, (2) challenges in implementation, (3) international comparisons, and (4) implications for HDI.

Finally, the data were synthesized through comparative analysis to highlight similarities and differences between Indonesian and international contexts. This process ensured that the





findings not only reflected national realities but also positioned the study within the global discourse on curriculum and human development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Independent Curriculum in Its Contribution to Increasing HDI

The Independent Curriculum is an educational innovation designed to provide more flexibility to schools and teachers in developing educational programs. The Independent Curriculum in Indonesia is becoming increasingly important given the dynamic changes in the global education paradigm and local challenges that need to be overcome. Indonesia as a country with a large population and cultural and geographical diversity demands education that not only includes academic aspects, but also skills and adaptability relevant to the digital era and globalization. The Merdeka Curriculum comes in response to the urgent need to streamline the existing curriculum and prepare Indonesia's young generation to face the increasingly complex challenges of the future. It includes the integration of technology in learning, the development of 21st-century skills, and the improvement of the overall quality of teaching and learning. (Siregar et al., 2024) In this Merdeka curriculum, emphasis is placed on developing student competencies through project-based learning and its relevance in real life. The goal of this curriculum is to improve students' ability to think critically, creativity, and skills, including literacy. (Rosadi et al., 2022) In addition, flexibility in curriculum development also provides flexibility to education units and educators to adapt, increase the richness of learning materials, and align the curriculum with the characteristics of students. (Wahyudin et al., 2024)

The improvement in the quality of education resulting from the implementation of the Independent Curriculum has a direct impact on the Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI is a comparative measurement of life expectancy, education, and living standards for all countries around the world. The HDI is usually used to classify whether a country is a developed country, a developing country, or a backward country and also to measure the influence of economic policies on the quality of life, it is used to decide on the quality aspects of development and is useful for countries with relatively low HDI scores to look back at the variables of nutrition, health, and education. (Ilmu et al., 2015) However, the HDI that will be discussed in this article is education, in this case HDI has increased along with the increase in the quality of education obtained by a student. (Yuliani, 2016)

In addition, by encouraging inclusive education, it will further increase equal opportunities for students, including those with special educational needs. This inclusive education aims to be where all individuals can learn together, support each other, and reach their maximum potential. (implementation study) The Independent Curriculum also has a Pancasila student profile that helps develop the character and abilities of students in learning activities (Sugiharto et al., 2024) Here, the Pancasila Student Profile serves as the main reference that directs educational policies, including being a reference for educators in building student character. This profile needs to be simple and easy to remember in its application both by educators and students so that it can be brought to life in daily activities. (Kemendikbudristek, 2022)

The Independent Curriculum contributes to the reduction of educational gaps and the improvement of HDI as a whole. However, in this case, the school's adaptation to this new approach and support from the government are also important aspects that determine the

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success of implementation. The importance of continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure the effectiveness of the Independent Curriculum in improving the quality of education and HDI cannot be ignored. Case studies from schools that have successfully implemented the Independent Curriculum show positive results in improving the quality of education and HDI. Empirical data also shows significant changes in the quality of education and HDI in areas that have implemented the Independent Curriculum. Therefore, with the right implementation, the Independent Curriculum has great potential to contribute to improving HDI in Indonesia.

Human Development Index in Education

Education is the key to the development of a nation. Education is carried out through efforts to demand all the nature of children, both as human beings and as members of society to achieve the highest safety and happiness. Ki Hadjar Dewantara, an Indonesian education figure, has expressed how important education is in building the character and future of a nation. Education is not only about the transfer of knowledge, but also about forming noble ethics and morals. Ki Hadjar Dewantara emphasized that learning must be in accordance with three main aspects, namely creation, taste, and karsa. These three aspects must be developed in a balanced manner to create individuals with complete and character. The things that must be met to achieve educational goals include several important elements. First, the availability of competent and dedicated teachers. Teachers are the spearhead in the educational process and have a huge role in motivating and guiding students. Second, a relevant and adaptive curriculum. The curriculum must be able to adapt to the development of the times and the needs of the world of work. Third, adequate facilities and infrastructure. Fourth, active participation from parents and the community. Education is not only the responsibility of the school, but also involves the participation of all components of society. By fulfilling these elements, the expected educational goals can be achieved, namely producing a generation that is not only academically intelligent, but also has a strong character, good morals, and is ready to face global challenges. Good education will give birth to individuals who are able to contribute positively to the development of the nation and the welfare of the community. (Mujito, 2014)

Education plays a very important role in measuring the Human Development Index (HDI). The index describes the level of human development in a country based on three main dimensions: health, education, and a decent standard of living. The education referred to in this context is formal education that covers various levels of learning, ranging from elementary to upper level education. Basic education includes elementary school (SD), junior secondary education includes junior high school (SMP), and upper secondary education includes senior high school (SMA), vocational high school (SMK), or equivalent. All levels of education are under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education (Kemendiknas), the Ministry of Religion (Kemenag), and other agencies, both public and private. Each educational institution has the responsibility to ensure that the curriculum implemented is in accordance with national standards and can produce quality graduates. In the context of education, formal education that is organized systematically and in stages plays a very important role in determining the quality of a country's human resources. With a good education, individuals can develop their potential to the fullest, which will ultimately contribute to increasing HDI.





A quality education provides not only academic knowledge, but also social and emotional skills that are essential for facing global challenges. Therefore, investment in education is one of the main keys to achieving sustainable human development.(Augustpaosa Nariman, 2019)

Evaluation and monitoring of the implementation of Kumer in IRE for its effectiveness in improving the quality of education and HDI

Evaluation and monitoring of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) is very important to ensure its effectiveness in improving the quality of education and the Human Development Index (HDI). A comprehensive evaluation includes various aspects such as evaluation methods, success indicators, stakeholder engagement, data analysis, barriers and solutions, policy recommendations, case studies, and long-term impact measurement. According to research by Rizal Khoirul Umam (2023), the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMPN 13 Malang involves learning planning, learning implementation, learning evaluation, and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5). Supporting factors for implementation include an open mindset from teachers, the availability of adequate infrastructure, and contextual and relevant learning. However, there are also barriers such as limited budgets and facilitators teaching outside their area of expertise(Zakiyah et al., 2024).

The evaluation methods used include tests, observations, interviews, and questionnaires to collect valid and reliable data about the learning process and outcomes. Additionally, formative and summative assessment methods can be used to provide a comprehensive picture of student progress and learning effectiveness. Success indicators include improving academic grades, developing students' character, and mastering 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. The involvement of stakeholders such as teachers, principals, students, and parents is very important to get diverse input and the support needed in the evaluation process. Collaboration with other educational institutions and external parties can also enrich the evaluation process and provide a broader perspective.(Alkire, 2015) Data analysis was carried out to determine trends and patterns of improvement or decline in the quality of education, as well as to identify factors that affect the success of curriculum implementation. The use of information and communication technology can be very helpful in data collection, processing, and analysis. Thus, the data produced is more accurate and can be used as a basis for better decision-making(Zakiyah et al., 2024)

Obstacles encountered in evaluation and monitoring need to be overcome with appropriate solutions, such as additional training for teachers to improve their competence in teaching with the new curriculum, the development of adequate educational resources, and the use of technology in data collection and analysis. In addition, it is important to create a culture of continuous evaluation in schools, where teachers and students are accustomed to reflecting on the learning process and its outcomes. Policy recommendations based on the results of the evaluation can help improve the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in the future. This policy can include the provision of adequate budgets, teacher capacity building through continuous training, and the provision of facilities and infrastructure that support learning. Case studies from schools that have successfully implemented the Independent Curriculum can provide valuable learning about best practices that can be adopted by other schools. The study

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can include an analysis of the key success factors, strategies used to overcome obstacles, and the positive impact felt by students and the surrounding community. Measuring the long-term impact is also important to evaluate the ongoing effects of the Independent Curriculum on the quality of education and HDI. Further research can be conducted to see student progress after several years of curriculum implementation and identify significant changes in HDI indicators. (Alkire, 2015)

In addition, a report from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) shows that improving the quality of education through innovative curricula can have a significant impact on a country's HDI. Thus, continuous evaluation and monitoring are needed to ensure that the Independent Curriculum can provide optimal benefits for students and society as a whole. The importance of the participation of all parties, both the government, schools, teachers, students, and the community, in supporting the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum cannot be ignored. (Alkire, 2015)

Challenges and Opportunities of the Human Development Index in Education

One of the indicators of the quality of education of a country can be seen from its Human Development Index (HDI) issued by the world agency that handles development programs, namely the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Human Development Index (HDI) is a measurement index that shows how much progress a region has made in terms of its human resource development. HDI reflects people's quality of life as measured by three main standard measures: (Prof. Dr. Bujang Rahman, n.d.)

1. Life Expectancy Index or Figure: Measures the average age a person is expected to achieve, which reflects the level of public health.
2. Education Index: Calculated from Literacy Rate and Average Length of School: this indicator reflects the access and quality of education available to the community.
3. Purchasing Power Index: Measures people's living standards and economic well-being levels based on adjusted per capita income.

Indonesia's biggest challenge today is how to encourage an increase in the average length of schooling for the adult population as one of the HDI indicators. Thus, the Indonesia Smart program must be a form of government efforts to increase the average length of school and reduce the dropout rate. Improving access and quality of education will have a significant impact on the quality of Indonesia's human resources, which will ultimately contribute to the improvement of the Human Development Index.

Curriculum Concept in the Context of Pie

Education is inseparable from several things that can affect its quality and effectiveness. One of the most important elements in the world of education is the curriculum. The curriculum plays a role as a guide for future educational goals so that the learning process runs well and achieves maximum results. According to Prabowo (2019), the curriculum is the main foundation in designing and implementing quality education. The current curriculum in Indonesia is the Independent Curriculum. (Probo, 2019) The Independent Learning Curriculum, as explained by the National Standards Agency in the article Evi Susilowati (2022), is a learning curriculum related to the talent and interest approach. In this curriculum, students, both male and female,

Lailatul badriah, The Impact of Independent Curriculum

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are given the freedom to choose the subjects they want to study according to their talents and interests. The Independent Learning Program was established by Nadiem Makarim, Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Mendikbud Ristek), as a form of improvement to the 2013 Curriculum. The Independent Curriculum aims to strengthen student independence and facilitate student-centered learning, with an emphasis on empowerment and development of 21st century skills. (Susilwati, 2022) In addition, the Independent Curriculum also aims to free students from the shackles of a curriculum that is too theoretical and promote learning that is more contextual and relevant to the real world. According to Tuerah and Tuerah (2023), this curriculum is designed to provide space for students to develop critical, creative, collaborative, and communicative thinking skills. Students are invited to be more active in the learning process and apply the knowledge gained in daily life. (Tuerah et al., 2023)

In addition to the above goals, the Independent Curriculum also has another goal, which is to create a pleasant learning atmosphere for all parties involved in the educational process, including teachers, students, and parents. According to Nasution (2023), Freedom of Learning means that the educational process must create a fun, happy, and motivating atmosphere for teachers, students, parents, and everyone involved. A pleasant learning atmosphere is expected to increase student learning motivation and teacher performance. (Nasution, 2023) In addition to having goals, the Independent Curriculum also has principles in its design, namely competency and character development, flexibility, and focus on essential content. This principle emphasizes the importance of developing basic competencies and character values of students, as well as providing freedom for teachers to adjust teaching materials according to the needs and conditions of students. The Independent Curriculum also has distinctive characteristics, including utilizing assessments to understand the learning needs and development of the learning process of students, using an understanding of the needs and positions of students to make learning adjustments, prioritizing the learning progress of students over covering all curriculum contents, and based on reflection on the learning progress of students carried out collaboratively with other educators. The Independent Curriculum is expected to have a significant positive impact on the quality of education in Indonesia. With a more flexible approach and focusing on character development as well as 21st century skills, it is hoped that students can become competent, characterful, and ready to face future challenges. (Wahyudin et al., 2024)

Developing an Independent Curriculum-Based Learning Plan

The preparation of a learning implementation plan is very important for teachers and prospective teachers in the learning process. A good lesson plan will be an effective guide in achieving the desired educational goals. The Independent Curriculum, which is an innovation in the Indonesian education system, adopts a flexible and student-oriented approach. In this curriculum, the preparation of learning plans or open modules is carried out through three main stages, which are carried out backwards, namely: (D. L. Sari et al., 2024)

a. Identify expected outcomes

The first stage in the preparation of a lesson plan begins with identifying the expected outcomes of the learning process. Teachers need to determine competency standards, basic competencies, indicators, and learning objectives. Competency standards reflect the abilities





that must be possessed by students after participating in learning. Basic competencies are an elaboration of more specific and measurable competency standards. Indicators are signs or evidence that students have achieved basic competencies. Learning objectives are the expected end outcomes of the learning process, which include cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. By identifying the expected outcomes at the beginning, the process of creating open modules will become more directed and effective for teachers.

b. Define benchmarks

Once the learning objectives are established, the next step is to determine acceptable benchmarks or evidence to evaluate learners' understanding. This benchmark will later be a reference to see how far students have achieved learning goals. Determining benchmarks is also important for making assessments that will be carried out at the end of learning. Assessments can be in the form of tests, observations, portfolios, or project assignments that are relevant to the learning material. Clear and measurable benchmarks will help teachers identify students' learning needs and provide constructive feedback for the improvement of the learning process.

c. Plan your lessons

The last stage in the preparation of a learning plan is to plan the steps of learning activities. This step is also the core and most important stage in compiling the open module. Learning planning includes determining the steps of activities that will be carried out during the learning process, starting from preliminary, core, to closing activities. Teachers need to design learning strategies and methods that are in accordance with learning objectives and student characteristics. In addition, teachers also need to prepare instructions and teaching materials that will be used in learning. The preparation of this learning plan must refer to the learning objectives and assessments that will be carried out in the future to ensure that the entire learning process runs well and achieves the expected results.

Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in IRE

The Merdeka Learning program is a flexible initiative and is designed to provide greater freedom in the learning process. The implementation of the Independent Learning program is very in accordance with the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teaching material, because the learning in this program takes place gradually and continuously from one process to the next. With this approach, it is hoped that students can experience learning that is more contextual and relevant to real life, so that they are able to internalize religious values better. (Widodo et al., 2023) The implementation of the Independent Curriculum involves various interrelated components, so it requires effective collaboration between all parties involved. The success of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is highly dependent on the active role of teachers as learning facilitators. Teachers not only function as material presenters, but also as guides who are able to facilitate students in developing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to face future challenges. (Tuerah et al., 2023) The implementation of the Independent Curriculum contains three main stages, namely planning, implementation, and evaluation.

In its implementation, schools are given three alternative options regarding the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. First **Independent Learning**, that is, schools are allowed to apply part of the principles of the Independent Curriculum without changing the

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existing curriculum in the school. Second Independently change, that is, schools can implement the Independent Curriculum by using the available teaching tools. Third Independently change, that is, schools can implement the Independent Curriculum by developing their own teaching tools according to the needs of students and school conditions.(Noor et al., 2023)

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning must at least pay attention to the following things: the ability to develop students' critical thinking, content related to the current context and usefulness, foster students' creativity, and hone collaborative skills. In this case, Islamic Religious Education based on the Independent Curriculum must be oriented to the interests of students. Thus, it is hoped that the ability to think critically, creatively, communicatively, collaboratively, and confidently can be created or further developed.(Keuangan et al., 2024)

However, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum also has advantages and disadvantages. Its advantages include increasing teacher creativity and active involvement of students in the learning process. Teachers have the flexibility to develop innovative and engaging teaching methods, so that they can motivate students to be more active and engaged in learning. On the other hand, there are shortcomings such as lack of effort from teachers, lack of adequate understanding and skills, and the need for continuous training and professional development.(Aziz et al., 2022) In addition, the challenges faced in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum are also diverse, including the readiness of the mindset of educators. The function of educators in the Independent Curriculum has changed from the previous one using a uniform teaching approach to educators who are able to produce students as lifelong independent learners. Therefore, educators are required to actively become mentors, facilitators, or coaches in project-based learning.(Noor et al., 2023) To overcome the challenges in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, various solutions are needed such as providing sufficient training and support for teachers, parental involvement in the educational process, special support to students in need, and effective communication between all parties involved. With these efforts, it is hoped that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum can run more smoothly and have a significant positive impact on improving the quality of education in Indonesia.(Sdit et al., 2024)

This study aims to explore the contribution of the Independent Curriculum to the improvement of the Human Development Index (HDI) in Indonesia in PAI and to assess the effectiveness of the Independent Curriculum in improving the quality of PAI learning. The results of the study show that the Human Development Index (HDI) is an important indicator to measure the quality of human life. The Independent Curriculum, as the latest initiative in the field of education, is expected to be able to contribute significantly to the improvement of HDI. Evaluation and monitoring of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is the key to ensuring its effectiveness in improving the quality of education and HDI. Despite the challenges, there is a great opportunity to strengthen HDI through proper adaptation and implementation. The concept of curriculum in the context of PAI requires adjustment and innovation, which in turn encourages the preparation of learning plans based on the Independent Curriculum. Consistent and measurable implementation of the Independent Curriculum in IRE is expected to create a superior and highly competitive generation.

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The Independent Curriculum also has a positive impact on the quality of education through a more adaptive and inclusive approach and shows that the Independent Curriculum is able to increase student involvement and motivation in learning and provide new learning experiences for them. This research compared to previous research lies in the content of the material and different sub-chapters, with the theoretical study of the application of the Independent Curriculum in IRE supporting constructivist theories that emphasize the importance of active and contextual learning experiences. And practically, this curriculum allows them to apply the knowledge they have gained in their daily lives. (Puspita et al., n.d.) The limitations of this study include limitations in the time of conducting the research. The recommendation for further research is to increase the duration of the study to obtain more comprehensive results. In addition, further research is needed to evaluate the long-term impact of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in IRE.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Independent Curriculum, when consistently implemented and supported by adequate resources, has the potential to significantly improve the quality of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and contribute to the broader Human Development Index (HDI) in Indonesia. By integrating flexibility, 21st-century competencies, and moral-religious values, the curriculum provides a distinctive model of education that goes beyond conventional approaches focusing solely on skills and technology.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the global discourse on curriculum and human development by positioning Indonesia's Independent Curriculum as an alternative framework that links religious and moral education with HDI outcomes. This novelty highlights that human development can be advanced not only through secular and competency-based reforms, but also through value-driven curricula rooted in local cultural and spiritual contexts.

Future research should move beyond descriptive analyses and employ comparative or longitudinal designs to assess the long-term impact of the Independent Curriculum on HDI indicators such as average years of schooling, literacy, and educational equity. In addition, cross-country studies could further explore how religiously informed curricula might complement global educational reforms, thereby enriching international scholarship on the relationship between curriculum innovation and human development.

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