

## **Improving Learning Quality through the Merdeka Curriculum at MTs Al-Amin Pamekasan**

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### **A B S T R A C T**

Education plays a crucial role in improving the quality of human resources, and the Merdeka Curriculum represents an innovation that promotes learning autonomy, flexibility, and character development. This study aims to describe the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and to evaluate its effectiveness in improving learning quality at MTs Al-Amin Banyupelle Palengaan Pamekasan. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method with a field research approach. Data were collected through interviews, participatory observation, and documentation involving the principal, vice principal, teachers, and students, and were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the Merdeka Curriculum has been implemented systematically through the development of the School Operational Curriculum (KOSP), preparation of teaching modules, teacher training, and socialization for students and parents, supported by adequate facilities. Learning activities apply project-based learning, outdoor learning, and team-quiz models, while evaluation is conducted through formative, summative, and portfolio-based assessments. The implementation has resulted in increased student participation, enhanced teacher creativity, greater parental involvement, and improved learning outcomes. Overall, the Merdeka Curriculum has been effectively implemented and contributes to meaningful, adaptive, and student-centered learning.

**Keywords:** Merdeka Curriculum, Learning Quality, Islamic Secondary Education



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### **Introduction**

Education is one of the main factors in shaping the quality of human resources that are superior and competitive. In the context of globalization and rapid technological development, the education system in Indonesia is required to be able to adapt to various changes over time. One of the government's efforts to respond to these challenges is through the implementation of the Independent

Curriculum, which has been gradually introduced across various educational levels. The Independent Curriculum emerges as an enhancement of the previous curriculum by emphasizing independent learning, flexibility, and strengthening students' character. Through this approach, teachers are given the freedom to design the learning process according to the needs, potential, and characteristics of their students. In addition, students are also provided opportunities to explore their interests and talents through contextual and student centered learning.

A curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements regarding educational goals, content, learning materials, and methods used as a guideline for conducting activities to achieve educational objectives, where the curriculum is broad in scope and encompasses all school efforts related to students' learning experiences, occurring not only within the school environment but also outside it, and has the potential to influence students' learning; hence it is called a curriculum (Masykur, 2019). The curriculum functions as a guideline and direction in the educational process. By setting clear objectives, the curriculum helps all educational components work in a directed and coordinated manner to achieve these goals (Matabanua, 2024). The curriculum plays a vital role in education as it guides future educational objectives to ensure progress and improvement (Amarta, 2024).

The minister of education, culture, research, and technology introduced the Independent Curriculum as an innovation to provide students with opportunities to learn calmly, comfortably, and enjoyably, free from stress or pressure, so they can express their natural talents. The concept of independent learning emphasizes freedom and creative thinking for students. One of the initiatives revealed by the Ministry during the launch of independent learning is the school driving program, aimed at supporting each school in creating lifelong learners with noble character in accordance with Pancasila values (Zainuri, 2023). This emphasizes the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in primary schools in general, including how students can learn peacefully and express their talents, aligning with the notion of opportunities to learn comfortably and express natural talents (Fadhli, 2025).

Independent learning signifies freedom and autonomy for the educational environment in determining the best methods for the learning process through the concept of independent learning. Schools or madrasahs are granted the right to develop learning orientations according to public needs based on the national curriculum framework (Zainuri, 2023). The foundation for the policy of developing the 2013 Curriculum Revision into the Independent Curriculum is the Decree of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Number 56/M/2022 dated February 10, 2022, concerning guidelines for curriculum implementation in the context of learning recovery, which contains 13 points. This decree serves as a legal basis and reference for schools, madrasahs,

and educational institutions implementing the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia (Khoirurrijal, 2022).

The policy of implementing the independent curriculum in schools is an essential and urgent step that must be taken by every educational institution, as this new curriculum can encourage creativity and innovation among students. The Independent Curriculum also provides opportunities for students to learn more creatively and innovatively. With an approach that offers freedom in learning, students can develop new ideas, explore their talents, and discover learning methods suitable to their individual styles. In certain conditions, information regarding family background, learning readiness, motivation, and student interests can also be used as considerations in lesson planning (Sufyadi et al., 2022)

Implementing the independent curriculum in schools is a strategic step in improving the quality of national education. This curriculum responds to the demands of changing times and the need for students to learn independently, creatively, and adaptively to technological and informational developments. Through the Independent Curriculum, students are given space to develop their potential through flexible, student centered learning. This aligns with research findings stating that the Independent Curriculum can foster independent learning and creativity through project-based learning activities and strengthening the character profile of Pancasila learners (Wahyuni, 2022). Overall the implementation of the Independent Curriculum can serve as a significant educational transformation tool in realizing meaningful, creative, and character-based learning. This curriculum provides opportunities for teachers and students to collaborate in creating a more humane learning environment relevant to 21st-century challenges. With competent human resources and adequate facilities, the Independent Curriculum is believed to be a crucial foundation for improving the quality of national education.

The implementation of a curriculum requires careful preparation, because if a new curriculum such as the Independent Curriculum is introduced abruptly without adequate preparation, it can lead to several negative impacts on students, such as disruption in learning continuity. Sudden implementation may disrupt students' learning processes, as they may have to adapt to new learning methods without sufficient preparation, affecting their understanding of the material. Learning outcomes consist of a set of competencies and subject matter arranged comprehensively in narrative form. Adjusting to students' developmental stages, learning outcomes mapping is divided by age phases (Anggraena et al., 2022). In addition, educators can use learning objective pathways obtained by designing their own based on learning outcomes, developing and modifying provided examples, and using examples provided by the government (Umam, 2023). One of the challenges in implementing the curriculum is preparing human resources,

emphasizing teachers' and educational staff's understanding and adaptation to the new curriculum (Mulkan & Zunnun, 2024).

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in various educational institutions has shown significant changes in the learning approach. Schools have begun adopting more inclusive, collaborative, and project based methods, which not only focus on academic achievement but also on character development and 21st-century skills. This aligns with the main goal of the Independent Curriculum, which is to create a learning environment that is enjoyable, challenging, and meaningful for students. Additionally, this curriculum encourages teachers to act as adaptive facilitators, capable of adjusting learning strategies to individual students' needs and utilizing local potential and contextual learning resources. Consequently, learning occurs not only in the classroom but also through real interactions with the surrounding environment, community projects, and exploratory activities that foster curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking skills in students continuously. This approach positions students at the center of learning while encouraging them to take initiative in determining the course of their learning according to their interests, talents, and personal development goals.

One of the educational institutions participating in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is MTs Al-Amin Banyupelle Palengaan, Pamekasan. As a private educational institution under the ministry of religious affairs, MTs Al-Amin is committed to improving the quality of learning through the application of this curriculum. In this context, the following paragraphs will discuss further the expectations and positive impacts anticipated from the implementation of the independent curriculum at MTs Al-Amin Banyupelle Palengaan, Pamekasan. The presence of the Independent Curriculum at MTs Al-Amin Banyupelle Palengaan, Pamekasan is an important momentum to review the learning strategies previously applied. The school seeks to build a learning system that is more responsive to differences in students' characteristics, interests, and abilities, while emphasizing the integration of religious values, local culture, and 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies. This approach provides space for teachers to develop creative and contextual teaching methods, and allows students to actively participate in the learning process through projects, discussions, and exploratory experiences. Thus, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum aims not only to improve academic outcomes but also to create an inclusive, collaborative learning environment oriented toward holistic individual potential development.

The Independent Curriculum issued by the government also brings new hopes for MTs Al-Amin Banyupelle Palengaan, Pamekasan. With this new curriculum, the school hopes to create a positive impact by fostering an inclusive, supportive learning environment that motivates students to achieve their best potential and improves the quality of learning at MTs Al-Amin. Through this approach, it is expected that the learning process at MTs Al-Amin Banyupelle

Palengaan, Pamekasan can become more engaging, relevant, and provide meaningful learning experiences for students. Moreover, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum can serve as a means to enhance the quality of learning at the school, as it represents an educational approach aimed at improving learning quality through the development of skills and a more holistic understanding. This approach gives students the freedom to choose and manage their own learning, enabling them to learn according to their interests and needs.

### **Research Method**

Qualitative descriptive research is a research method aimed at providing a comprehensive and in depth description of social realities and various phenomena occurring in the community, which are the subjects of the study, so that the characteristics, traits, nature, and patterns of these phenomena can be captured (Sanjaya, 2015). his study uses field research, which involves conducting research on the targeted objects to obtain accurate and reliable data regarding the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in improving the quality of learning at MTs Al-Amin. Research conducted in the field is qualitative in nature, producing descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from the principal, vice principals of student affairs and curriculum, teachers, and students. Therefore, the researcher obtains information from actual data in the field regarding the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in improving learning quality at MTs Al-Amin. Consequently, the results of this study can provide benefits that are felt collectively and have a positive impact on the public.

The main sources of data in qualitative research are words and actions, while the remaining are supplementary data such as documents and others (Moeloeng., 2017). The data sources are divided into primary data, which refers to data obtained directly from the original sources (not through intermediaries). The primary data sources in this study are the foundation chairman, principal, vice principals of curriculum and student affairs, teachers, and students of MTs Al-Amin. Data were obtained using interview methods, while other data were collected through the researcher's observation of the research site. In simple terms, primary data are data obtained directly by the researcher from respondents or informants (first hand data). The researcher collaborated with the foundation chairman, principal, vice principals of curriculum and student affairs, teachers, and students of MTs Al-Amin to request the necessary data. Required data include school identity, implementation of Independent Curriculum learning, as well as student learning outcomes before and after the curriculum implementation. With these data, the study can produce comprehensive findings regarding the implementation of the independent curriculum in improving learning quality at MTs Al-Amin Banyupelle Palengaan Pamekasan, and secondary data are data obtained by the researcher from existing sources, which are referred to as

documentation data, such as management documents, school structure, activity photos, and others. In this case, the researcher directly visited the educational management site at MTs Al-Amin.

The data collection procedures used in this study are observation, interviews, and documentation. In this study, the researcher employed participant observation. This type of observation is generally used for exploratory research. Participatory observation allows the researcher to communicate directly and freely with the observers, making it possible to ask more detailed and thorough questions about the effectiveness of learning at MTs Al-Amin. In this study, the researcher used unstructured interviews, because respondents were selectively chosen based on their unique characteristics, knowledge, and deep understanding of the situation, making them more aware of the necessary information. Questions were not prearranged, but adapted to field conditions, and the question and answer process flowed like everyday conversation. These interviews involved several informants to help the researcher collect extensive information in a relatively short time, among the informants were the foundation chairman, principal of MTs Al-Amin, and vice principal of curriculum at MTs Al-Amin.

Documentation, derived from the word document refers to written items. In implementing documentation, the researcher examined written items such as books, documents, magazines, and others available in the school or school environment as supplementary data (Nilamsari, 2014). The documentation used by the researcher included recorded interviews. Recorded interviews were used to examine in more detail the information conveyed by the informants. The researcher documented directly the activities related to the school its structure, and so forth.

In this study the data analyzed were those collected in interview transcripts, field observation notes, and documents. In this regard, the researcher employed two commonly used analysis models, namely pre field analysis and in field analysis using the Miles and Huberman model: pre field analysis and in field data analysis according to the Miles and Huberman model. The stages in data analysis include Data Reduction, where data from all interviews and the results of questionnaires conducted were grouped according to the interview questions. Interview results were then grouped with observation results and documentation studies related to them. Therefore, data analysis through data reduction must be carried out immediately. Data reduction means summarizing, selecting main points, focusing on important aspects, identifying themes and patterns, and discarding unnecessary information. Thus, the reduced data will provide a clearer picture and facilitate the researcher in further data collection and retrieval if needed. Data Display: The reduced data were then organized into specific patterns according to themes or main issues, so that the data could provide clear and understandable information. The data summarized based on research questions were then presented in

narrative form according to the research focus. Conclusion Drawing: Drawing conclusions involves taking the data presented in the data display and then presenting them in the research results. The presentation of research findings is accompanied by field evidence from interviews, observations, and documentation. The research results were then compared with theory (Yusuf, 2014).

## **Results and Discussion**

In this chapter the researcher will present the data and research findings obtained from the research location, in the form of direct observation, interviews, and documentation related to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at MTs Al-Amin Banyupelle Palengaan Pamekasan in improving the quality of learning. The researcher will present this according to the sub focus and research objectives studied at the location.

### **Implementation of the Independent Curriculum at MTs Al-Amin**

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum is a manifestation of Ki Hajar Dewantara's idea about education that is child-centered (student centered education). Ki Hajar emphasized that education must liberate humans physically and spiritually, so that students can grow according to their natural disposition freely (Dewantara, 1935). This principle serves as the philosophical foundation of the Independent Curriculum, which gives freedom to teachers and students to adjust the learning process according to each individual's potential, interests, and learning environment. This is in line with the statement of Nadiem Anwar Makarim, Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, that the Independent Curriculum aims to create a learning ecosystem that is more relevant, simple, and profound, so that students can become lifelong learners (RI., 2022). According to Tahar et al (2024) the implementation of the Independent Curriculum still faces challenges in teacher training and limited facilities, so ongoing mentoring and academic supervision strategies are needed. This is also in line with the findings of research by Baidhawi et al (2024) and Hartono (2025) which emphasize that before implementing the Independent Curriculum, educational institutions need to prepare administrative completeness, request approval from the foundation or policy holders, and adjust teaching modules according to the needs of students and the institution's vision.

From data obtained through interviews observations and documentation it shows that the process of implementing the Independent Curriculum at MTs Al-Amin is carried out with several preparations, both from preparations not included in submission documents such as requesting approval from the foundation chairman and preparations required for the submission process such as document preparation and administrative readiness. Preparations carried out by MTs Al-Amin in preparing documents and administration required for the implementation of the Independent Curriculum include: preparation of the Operational School

Curriculum (KOSP) and creation of teaching modules. This finding is in line with Fullan (2007) who emphasized that the success of implementing educational policies is highly determined by organizational readiness in three main aspects: institutional capacity, human resource readiness, and completeness of curriculum documents. This means that MTs Al-Amin's steps in preparing administrative tools and institutional coordination are an important part of a planned and systematic curriculum change process.

The KOSP contains all learning process plans that serve as guidelines and references for daily learning. This aligns with the planning stage expressed by Anggraena et al (2022) stating that the preparation of the operational school curriculum is necessary to create a dynamic document that is continuously updated and serves as a reference in the learning process. This document contains context analysis of the characteristics of the educational institution, formulation of vision, mission, and goals, as well as learning plans. In the process or stages of implementing the Independent Curriculum, many things must be prepared, including school readiness in applying it. Therefore, staff and teachers are required to attend socialization/training sessions. As stated by the Vice Principal of Curriculum at MTs Al-Amin:

“The stages that must be prepared before implementing the Independent Curriculum include preparing the operational school curriculum or KOSP. Next, we create a request letter and a statement of readiness to be submitted to the Ministry of religious affairs, conduct socialization/training, and teachers must also create teaching modules. After all requirements are met, we submit them online via the PDUM Application or madrasah examination database. Also, outside the documents that must be submitted, we also make improvements to facilities that will support the future. But before that, we have informed all related parties, including teachers, students, and parents about the implementation of the independent curriculum at this school”

In line with this, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, through Ministerial Decree Number 347 of 2022, stated that madrasahs implementing the Independent Curriculum need to prepare a request letter and a statement of readiness, and submit them online via the PDUM application (madrasah examination database) as a form of administrative verification before obtaining implementation approval. According to Aransyah et al (2023) schools that implement the independent curriculum must first prepare teaching modules, train teachers, and conduct preliminary evaluations to ensure an effective process.

This process is not decided unilaterally; students and parents are also gathered to provide information regarding the agenda of implementing the independent curriculum at MTs Al-Amin. This is also intended to provide understanding to students and parents about the independent curriculum so that

the learning process can run smoothly. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at MTs Al-Amin has been running for one year, meaning all stages have been completed and approved by the government. Teachers and students seem to have begun to get used to the concept of independent curriculum learning, and project based learning has been applied to improve students' critical thinking abilities in problem solving. One of the examples found by the researcher is project based learning in English with the method of creating analytical exposition texts for eighth and ninth grade students. According to Purba & Yonggom (2024) active involvement of parents and students through socialization activities and open communication with the school significantly affects the success of the independent curriculum implementation. They emphasized that schools need to invite parents to understand curriculum changes so that adaptation runs effectively. Similarly Ramadhan (2023) in his research on the adaptation of the independent curriculum at the high school level, also found that the involvement of teachers, students, and parents in socialization processes and project based learning is key to developing students' character and critical thinking skills.

Furthermore, learning outside the classroom was also observed in biology subjects where students were asked to observe the environment and see the behavior of animals around them directly guided by the subject teacher while explaining material related to the animals or environment they observed. Observations also show that each teacher creates teaching modules and conducts evaluations throughout one semester, and the principal routinely checks each teaching module created by teachers. According to Nuraini et al (2024) contextual learning conducted outside the classroom, such as environmental and animal ecosystem observation, has been proven to improve understanding of biological concepts while fostering students' curiosity about natural phenomena. They explained that outdoor learning activities are part of the independent curriculum strategy emphasizing real learning experiences. Similarly Sari & Hidayat (2023) emphasized that the implementation of outdoor learning in science subjects under the Independent Curriculum can foster students' critical and collaborative thinking skills. They also found that teachers play an important role as facilitators directing observations and learning reflections.

Moreover, it was found that the facilities are sufficiently complete and new to support learning, such as adding books to the library and small cabinets in front of teachers' desks. Thus, these observations show that the implementation of the independent curriculum at MTs Al-Amin runs smoothly, and with the teaching modules created by each teacher, the teaching learning process improves, also supported by adequate facilities. According to Rahmawati & Santosa (2024)

the success of the independent curriculum implementation is greatly influenced by the availability of supporting educational facilities, including learning facilities, instructional media, and relevant teaching materials. They

emphasized that the renewal of facilities such as reading rooms, supporting books, and teacher equipment improves the quality of learning at schools. Furthermore, the preparation of teaching modules at MTs Al-Amin is mandatory for each subject teacher. This document serves as a guideline for teaching for each subject teacher. At MTs Al-Amin, developing teaching modules consists of two stages analyzing learning outcomes, formulating learning objectives, and designing the flow of learning objectives. This has been in accordance with the stages of developing teaching modules expressed by Susanti Sufyadi, that in the creation and development of independent curriculum teaching modules there are three stages as follows: First, analyzing learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are learning competencies that must be achieved at each developmental stage for each subject. Second, formulating learning objectives. This formulation serves to facilitate teachers in conducting learning activities as they already have guidance. Third, designing the flow of learning objectives. The flow of learning objectives functions as planning and organizing learning in general for one year (Sufyadi et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the research results also show that MTs Al-Amin has implemented the independent curriculum, as evidenced by observations showing that teaching and learning activities at MTs Al-Amin have implemented intracurricular learning and project based learning to strengthen the Pancasila student profile, packaged in project based learning and team quizzes that encourage students to be more active and think critically in problem solving. This aligns with the concept and characteristics of independent curriculum learning expressed by Khoirul Umam, stating that the structure of Independent Curriculum learning is divided into two, namely: a) Intracurricular learning. This activity is learning conducted to fulfill the curriculum, a series of student learning activities that take place in school according to the subjects listed in the curriculum at each educational level. b) Project based learning to strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile is interdisciplinary learning to observe and think about solutions to problems in their surrounding environment. This concept uses a project based learning approach in its implementation (Umam, 2023).

Furthermore, curriculum evaluation and learning assessment are also conducted routinely. In learning evaluation, teachers conduct it through formative and summative assessments to find evidence or considerations regarding the achievement of learning objectives. This aligns with learning evaluation in the Independent Curriculum expressed by Susanti Sufyadi et al., stating that in learning evaluation under the Independent Curriculum, two assessments are conducted, namely formative and summative assessments. Formative assessment aims to provide information or feedback for education and students to improve the learning process, whereas summative assessment aims to ensure the overall achievement of learning objectives (Sufyadi et al., 2022) According to Arofah (2021) in her article, curriculum evaluation is a systematic study of the benefits,

appropriateness, effectiveness, and efficiency of the implemented curriculum.

There is concrete evidence in the form of teaching modules prepared by teachers at MTs Al-Amin, where teachers have prepared teaching modules as evidence of their readiness in the learning process. These teaching modules function as guides for teachers in designing and conducting learning activities, as well as a framework organizing learning steps according to the Independent Curriculum objectives. The existence of these modules confirms that teachers have prepared materials and learning strategies thoroughly for each subject. According to Rismawanda (2024) teaching modules are the most important learning tools because they contain the learning plans to be carried out by teachers, so that learning is more directed.

Overall, the implementation of the independent curriculum at MTs Al-Amin reflects a progressive, participatory, and reflective educational paradigm. This institution not only shows structural and administrative readiness but also cultural readiness, namely a shift in the mindset of school members toward collaborative and student centered learning. Therefore, MTs Al-Amin can be considered a real example of the successful implementation of the independent curriculum at the madrasah level, where the integration of national policy, teacher innovation, facility support, and community participation becomes the main foundation for achieving truly liberating education.

In addition, the implementation of the independent curriculum at MTs Al-Amin also reflects the successful transition of educational paradigms from a structural-bureaucratic approach to a school autonomy and innovation based approach. This shows strong institutional agency, where schools not only implement central policies but also actively contextualize the curriculum according to student characteristics and social environment. This phenomenon illustrates the creation of adaptive governance in the madrasah education system, where national policies are flexibly and contextually translated by local implementers. Furthermore, project based learning, parental involvement, and teacher reflection on teaching modules indicate transformative learning practices, which are learning processes that are not only oriented toward knowledge transfer but also toward the formation of critical awareness, social empathy, and independent thinking of students. Thus, the implementation of the independent curriculum at MTs Al-Amin is not merely an administrative fulfillment of government policy, but a concrete form of educational reform toward a sustainable and adaptive learning organization.

### **Effectiveness of the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Improving the Quality of Learning at MTs Al-Amin**

The effectiveness of the implementation of the independent curriculum at MTs Al-Amin can be seen from the institution's ability to optimize the student centered learning process and the improvement of learning outcomes measured

through observation, interviews, and academic evaluations. The implementation of this curriculum has proven effective not only in administrative aspects, such as the preparation of KOSP, teaching modules, and other learning tools, but also substantively in enhancing students' active participation, teacher creativity, and collaboration among school members. This effectiveness is evident from the increased involvement of students in project based learning and field observation activities, which foster critical thinking, analytical skills, and problem solving abilities.

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and document analysis, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at MTs Al-Amin has been carried out effectively because it meets all indicators of curriculum implementation effectiveness, both in terms of planning, implementation, and learning outcomes. This effectiveness is reflected in the integration of structural readiness (through systematic preparation of KOSP and teaching modules), human resource readiness (through training and technical guidance for teachers), and a conducive and participatory learning environment, as expressed by Syaiful Sagala that one of the indicators showing that a curriculum is effective is when it implements an enjoyable learning process that stimulates students to learn (Sagala, 2007). This concept is part of "Merdeka Belajar" (Independent Learning), where learning is more enjoyable and flexible, and this has been applied in the learning process at MTs Al-Amin through the team quiz learning model, which encourages students to be more diligent in learning. Students also learn the importance of collaboration, making them more active and enthusiastic because the model applied is more enjoyable in the form of games.

From a contextual perspective, the independent curriculum at MTs Al-Amin is applied according to the needs of students and the characteristics of the educational institution. In terms of input, the institution has prepared all administrative tools and supporting resources. In terms of process, teaching and learning activities have integrated project based learning, environmental observation, and continuous evaluation, which shows authentic and reflective curriculum implementation. While in terms of product, this implementation results in measurable improvements in learning quality through increased student involvement, teacher creativity, and parental participation in academic activities. Therefore, the effectiveness of the implementation of the independent curriculum at MTs Al-Amin is not only seen from compliance with formal policy but also from its success in creating real changes in learning culture, improving the quality of the learning process, and forming students' character to be critical, independent, and Pancasila profiled.. Hal ini memperkuat panda This reinforces the view of Rahayu et al (2022) that the success of the Independent Curriculum lies in the integration of national policy, school readiness, and teacher innovation in creating a reflective and student centered learning process.

After implementing the independent curriculum, changes in the teaching and learning process were observed, from initially rigid to more flexible, which impacted the quality and learning outcomes of students, making them more active and enthusiastic in receiving lessons.

“Since the implementation of the independent curriculum, I have observed several positive changes in the teaching and learning process. Although not very significant, gradually the students appear more active and engaged in learning, such as actively asking and answering questions. They are more motivated and enthusiastic in receiving learning. Student learning outcomes have also improved compared to before, although their grades do not increase in all subjects, students have already shown their interests and talents in specific subjects, such as those talented in arts and literature and others who prefer mathematics and English”

According to Pasaribu & Saragih (2023) the implementation of the Independent Curriculum can increase student activity through flexible and student centered learning. In addition, according to Waruwu & Helsa (2025) the implementation of active learning strategies in the Independent Curriculum can increase student engagement and make the learning process more interactive and meaningful. According to Ardiansyah & Alwi (2025) the implementation of the independent curriculum also affects the increase in students' motivation and interest in learning, as students are given space to independently explore their potential. Therefore, these various research findings indicate that the implementation of the independent curriculum not only encourages students to be more active and engaged in the learning process but also increases motivation, interest, and learning independence. This confirms that the Independent Curriculum is effective in creating student centered learning processes and accommodating the differences in potential and learning styles of each individual.

The success of an educational institution in implementing the Independent Curriculum is not only measured from the administrative aspect but also from how the curriculum can create meaningful, active, and student potential-oriented learning processes. The effectiveness of curriculum implementation can be reflected in increased student involvement in learning processes and positive changes in their learning outcomes. Effective implementation of the Independent Curriculum will directly impact student behavior and learning outcomes. When students show high enthusiasm for learning, are active in class activities, and have developed interests and talents, it is an indicator that the curriculum has run according to the expected objectives.

In addition, the effective implementation of the curriculum also affects the quality of learning, including the learning process and student learning outcomes in an educational institution. If the quality of learning in a school increases and

remains stable, it indicates that the school has been effective in applying the curriculum in use. As stated by Rahayu et al (2022) the main goal of the curriculum is to prepare students to become competent individuals with the skills needed to face future world challenges. In this regard, the researcher found that the quality of learning at MTs Al-Amin has improved compared to before, evidenced by a comparison of students' learning outcomes from previous years. Furthermore, observing students' activeness in asking and answering questions and their enthusiasm in learning shows that the quality of learning at MTs Al-Amin is quite good. This aligns with Sardiman, who stated in his book that one of the indicators showing the quality of learning is student activeness in asking questions and enthusiasm in receiving lessons (Sadirman, 2008).

To strengthen findings from interviews and observations, the researcher also conducted documentation at MTs Al-Amin. This documentation includes various evidence relevant to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at the school. The researcher reviewed the learning process, student involvement, as well as teaching materials and methods to evaluate the curriculum's effectiveness in improving the quality of learning.

First, student report cards are utilized as a tool to assess students' academic development and serve as a consideration in designing strategies for improvement and enhancing learning quality. By analyzing report card data, the school can observe differences in learning outcomes before and after implementing the Independent Curriculum, thus obtaining a clearer understanding of the curriculum's influence on students' academic achievement. This is in line with the use of educational report cards in data based planning as mentioned in Putri et al (2025) which revealed that data from Report Cards is used by principals and stakeholders to improve teacher competence, which affects student motivation and academic achievement. Routine evaluation ensures the continuity of improvement programs

Second, student attendance is an important aspect of learning implementation. Accurate attendance records provide information regarding students' activity levels in each learning session. This data allows schools to monitor attendance, identify patterns of inactivity or recurring absenteeism, and serve as a basis for interventions needed to support students facing participation or engagement challenges. According to Yudiawan (2019) his research shows that student attendance levels have a significant relationship with learning outcomes. The higher the attendance rate, the higher the average grades obtained by students. Conversely, a decline in attendance is followed by a decrease in learning outcomes, indicating that student attendance plays a crucial role in supporting their learning achievement.

Third, student work is also reviewed as part of documentation. Student work, whether in the form of projects, reports, or other creative products, serves as

concrete evidence of the development of competencies and material understanding. Assessment of this work helps evaluate the extent to which students can apply the knowledge and skills acquired, as well as identify individual interests and talents for further development. According to Mardapi (2016) portfolio assessment is the evaluation of a collection of student works deliberately used as evidence of student achievements, competency development, and the quality of educational programs. Portfolios can include various forms of student work, such as essays, poems, letters, compositions, music, and others. Additionally, in the implementation of authentic assessment in curriculum 2013, authentic assessment is conducted comprehensively to assess students' attitudes, knowledge, and skills. This assessment includes various aspects, such as portfolios, performance, and student work, providing a complete picture of students' actual conditions (Setyo Purnama Aji, 2018).

Fourth, teacher assessment and documentation of project based learning activities are also analyzed. Teacher notes regarding teaching strategies, evaluation methods, and students' responses to active learning provide additional perspectives on curriculum effectiveness. Documentation of project based activities highlights student participation in learning processes emphasizing collaboration, creativity, and problem solving, which are the core of the independent curriculum. According to Rayyan (2024) this study reveals that the project-based learning model (project based learning/PjBL) is effective in enhancing students' critical thinking, collaboration, and problem solving skills. Documentation such as teacher notes and project results provides a clear picture of student participation and development during the learning process. Additionally, according to At-Taqwa (2023) project based learning can improve students' critical thinking, teamwork, and problem solving skills. Documentation such as teacher notes and project results provides useful information to evaluate the effectiveness of learning and teaching strategies implemented.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the presentation of data and the analysis that has been conducted, several relevant conclusions can be drawn regarding the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in improving the quality of learning at MTs Al-Amin. These conclusions cover two main aspects, namely the implementation of the Independent Curriculum and the effectiveness of its application in enhancing the quality of learning at MTs Al-Amin. First, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at MTs Al-Amin has been carried out as it should be; the stages and various processes required before the implementation of the Independent Curriculum have been well executed, including the preparation of the operational curriculum of the educational unit and the creation of teaching modules by the teachers. The learning process has also applied the concept of independent

learning, focusing on two main activities: intracyrricular activities and project-based learning models. Other learning models used by teachers at MTs Al-Amin include outdoor learning and team quiz-based learning, which make lessons more enjoyable, thus increasing students' enthusiasm for learning, as well as engaging students, schools, and the community. Second, the effectiveness of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in improving the quality of learning at MTs Al-Amin. Since implementing the Independent Curriculum, there has been an improvement in the quality of learning at MTs Al-Amin, as evidenced by students' enthusiasm in receiving learning and their activeness in asking and answering questions. In addition, the learning outcomes of students at MTs Al-Amin have improved compared to before. This proves that the implementation of the independent curriculum at MTs Al-Amin has been carried out effectively.

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