



Implementation of the Principal of Islamic Middle School's Policy in Improving the Competence of Educators and Education Staff (Independent Curriculum Perspective)

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Abstract: This research aims to analyze the policies, implementation strategies, and influence of the policies of the Principal of the Islamic Middle School to improve the competence of educators and education staff based on the independent curriculum perspective. This research used a qualitative approach with a case study method. The informants in this research were the school principal, deputy principal for curriculum, educators/teachers, and education staff. The data was collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentary studies. The data analysis technique used the Miles and Huberman model with the following stages: (1) Data Collection, (2) Data Reduction, (3) Data Presentation, (4) Conclusion Drawing/Verification. Data validity used triangulation techniques, including source and technical triangulation. The results of the research show that: (1) the policies implemented by the principal of the Islamic Middle School, among others, recruitment of educators and educational staff is always adjusted to their qualifications or abilities, placement of educators and educational staff is based on competency, fostering active and communicative relationships with educators and educational staff, giving awards to educators and educational staff who excel; (2) the strategy of the principal of the Islamic Middle School includes: regular meetings, training, supervision, Subject Teacher Working Groups (MGMP), follow-up studies, and benchmarking; (3) The influence of the policy of the principal of the Islamic Middle School including increased accreditation, increased student achievement, and high public trust. The conclusion of this research is to implement the Islamic Middle School policy to improve the competence of educators and education personnel from the Independent Curriculum perspective.

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Introduction

Education has a vital role in preparing the future of the younger generation. The implementation of education in Indonesia often experiences changes and developments, especially in curriculum development. One of the new policies in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia is the Independent Curriculum (Nurcahyono, 2023). One component of learning recovery efforts is the Independent Curriculum (Primadonna, 2024). The Independent Curriculum is learning with a new paradigm which aims to improve the quality of learning and create education with more character. It is hoped that the Independent Curriculum can be a solution to various problems, especially in terms of determining the orientation of educational goals (Muslimin, 2023). The Independent Curriculum emphasizes the formation of strong moral and ethical values through interactions and examples shown by teachers. The benefits of the Independent Curriculum



include schools synergizing with local governments and parents to find effective solutions to answer educational challenges, teacher performance becoming more focused because there is a reduced administrative burden, and students developing potential according to their interests and talents through school institutions.

The Independent Curriculum includes student-centered learning (freedom to learn) and teacher-centered teaching (freedom to teach). The Independent Curriculum can be applied at various levels of education, from kindergarten to college. In connection with that, Islamic Middle Schools have the same opportunity to implement the Independent Curriculum. The Independent Curriculum is characterized by optimized intra-curricular learning with diverse learning content, providing sufficient time for students to explore knowledge concepts and strengthen their competencies (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

Implementing an independent curriculum in schools cannot be separated from the role of the head Islamic Middle School, educators/teachers, students/students, and education staff. The head of Islamic Middle School has an important role, starting from planning, implementation, evaluation, and reflection. Head Islamic Middle School must be able to determine the category of application of the Independent Curriculum by the readiness of the educational institution they lead. The educational institution's readiness category determines "Independent Learning - Independent Change or Independent Sharing" in the 2023/2024 academic year (Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia No. 56 concerning Guidelines for Implementing Education. Independent Curriculum, 2022).

The results of research by Kusmanto et al., (2023) show that the role of the school principal in implementing the Independent Curriculum is: (1) Participating in workshops on learning activities and PSP (School Driver Program) assessments. (2) Participate in educational institution reflection activities with expert supervisors and teachers who have attended the training. (3) Participate in accelerating the use of free teaching platforms. (4) Participate in PMO activities. (5) Participate in field visits by School Driver Companions. (6) Participate in orientation activities for the first generation of the School Driver program mentoring program. (7) Coordinate intensively with teachers involved in the learning committee. (8) Carry out academic supervision activities together with the management team. (9) Provide full motivation and assistance regarding implementing P5 (Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project). (10) Become a learner. (11) Invite experts to provide insight into implementing the Independent Curriculum in educational institutions to all teachers.

Teachers should be able to implement various roles, especially in carrying out their professional duties as educators, mentors, trainers and developing various aspects of students. As a learning leader, the teacher acts as a facilitator who facilitates a differentiated learning process. Learning is adapted to students' diverse potential, interests, and talents so that the learning experiences provided are expected to be meaningful and provide provisions for students to achieve their life goals in society (Kemendikbud, 2020). In the learning process teachers should be able to create a learning atmosphere that is conducive, fun, interesting, safe, active, creative and innovative which allows students to explore their abilities, so that they are able to achieve learning goals (Rusman in Annisa Alfath et al., 2022). Teachers are the key to success and determine the success of curriculum implementation, because teachers are an influential factor in managing the class and determining the continuity of the learning process, greatly influencing student learning success (Nurchayono, 2023).

The Independent Curriculum has been implemented in Indonesia since 2020. However, until now, its implementation has still faced problems/obstacles. Prakoso (2023) stated that the "Independent Curriculum" still requires input for its development; therefore,



research is important as a reference for progress. Nasution (2023) mentioned problems in implementing an independent curriculum: teachers still have experience with low learning independence, limited references, uneven access to learning, and time management. Meanwhile, the challenges in the Education unit are (1) teacher readiness (human resources) as the main pillar of implementing an independent curriculum; (2) teacher's ability to support digital-based technology facilities; (3) increasing communication and collaboration networks between educational units and stakeholders; and (4) difficulties in implementing the learning evaluation function as an integral part of learning. Learning assessment is an essential component often overlooked by schools when achieving curriculum goals. Several factors influence the success of implementing the Independent Curriculum, including Teachers, Students, the Head of Islamic Middle School, and Education Personnel. According to Bastian et al. (2023). The key to successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum lies in the principal and teachers because school autonomy is under their control.

The Independent Curriculum gives students as much freedom as possible in choosing learning materials. The Independent Curriculum will maximise the learning process, so students have enough time to deepen concepts and strengthen their competencies. Learning to be independent encourages students to learn and develop themselves, form a caring attitude towards the environment where students learn, encourage students' self-confidence and skills, and easily adapt to the community environment (Iqbal et al., 2023). Apart from that, with the Independent Curriculum, educators can strengthen a culture of reflection, learning, and sharing among educators. The curriculum is designed to create a safe, comfortable, inclusive, and enjoyable learning environment. Through the Independent Curriculum, it is hoped that it can be a solution to learning loss due to the pandemic's influence and provide opportunities to grow and develop individual abilities that are of interest (Marlina, 2022).

The Principal of Islamic Middle School's policy in implementing the Independent Curriculum, is one of the determining factors for the success of the curriculum. It also greatly influences the quality of educational services and performance results of Islamic Middle School (Herianto, 2023). Improving school quality requires appropriate policies, such as creating programs that align with the school's goals, vision and mission. The policy is a direction from leadership that is different from existing rules imposed on individuals or groups who cannot and are unable to comply with general rules (Ilham, 2021). Another opinion (Hidayati & Rustyawati, 2019) defines *policy* as the result of decisions made wisely and judiciously for a person/group to achieve the desired goals by moving forward into the future.

The Principal of the Islamic Middle School's policy is the direction of the school principal, which consists of a series of principles that form the basis for planning the implementation of tasks and actions taken to achieve quality education. He must have the right strategy to motivate teachers to accomplish various tasks and functions. He can also realize these efforts by arranging a harmonious environment conducive to practical work, discipline, and rewards and providing other learning resources so that teachers can improve their skills, especially in education (Sulis & Hidayani, 2023).

The policy contains three elements, namely: (1) identification of the goals to be achieved, (2) tactics or strategies for various steps to achieve the desired goals, (3) provision of various inputs to enable actual implementation of public policy tactics or strategies (Andi Cudai Nur & Muhammad Guntur, 2019). There are several stages of a policy, they're: 1) First stage: Finding what is the problem in the policy; 2) Second stage: Formulate policies that can control the problems that occur; 3) Third stage: Implementing policies that have been formulated



within the organization; 4) Fourth stage: Evaluate the policy to ensure the accuracy of the policy (Nugroho, 2021).

Implementation of the Independent Curriculum began in 2020. However, many schools still have problems/obstacles. This is caused by various factors, including the fact that in the planning process, teachers still rely on teaching modules provided by the central government. New aspects need attention in the Independent Curriculum with the Project for Strengthening the Profile of Pancasila Students (P5). According to the statement, the principal of Islamic Middle Schools needs to understand their roles and functions well to apply the concept of freedom of learning effectively in the school they lead. The research results by Isa et al. (2022) show that the principal fulfils his role as a mediator and motivator by involving teachers in curriculum training.

On the other hand, act as a participant in regular meetings or discussions and as a supervisor and evaluator. One of the challenges school principals face is the need for smooth internet connectivity to facilitate teachers' use of technology in teaching. School principals consider the expected outcomes from the theories in the research in making decisions to overcome problems and improve the quality of education by implementing the Independent Curriculum. Previous research conducted (Rohmah, 2017), aims to describe the form of policy; strategy; supporting and inhibiting factors of strategy the principal Islamic Middle School in realizing policies to increase teacher professionalism in Islamic High School. Further research was carried out (Harahap, 2019), aims to find out the Policy; Implementation of policies and results of the policies of the principal of the Islamic Middle School in improving the quality of education at Islamic Middle School. Meanwhile, the research conducted by this researcher aims to analyze the policies implemented by the Principal of the Islamic Middle School; identify effective implementation strategies; and knowing the influence of the policies of the Principal of Islamic Middle School Labbaika Samarinda.

Research Method

This research used a qualitative approach with a case study method. The case study method is an appropriate strategy to use in research that uses “how” or “why” as the main research question, requires little time to control the event being studied, and the research focus is a contemporary phenomenon (Nur'aini, 2020). The informants in this research consisted of the Principal of Islamic Middle School, Vice Principal, Educator/Teacher, and Education Staff at Islamic Middle School. The data analysis technique used the Miles and Huberman Model, with stages: (1) Data Collection, (2) Data Reduction, (3) Data Presentation, (4) Conclusion Drawing/Verification (Matthew B. Miles et al., 2014). Data validity used source triangulation and technical triangulation. Source triangulation is getting data from different sources with the same technique. Meanwhile, technical triangulation is where researchers use different data collection techniques to obtain data using the same source (Sugiyono, 2015).

Results and Discussion

The Principal of Islamic Middle School's Policy in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum

The Principal policy make Islamic Middle School involves coordination with the Vice Principal for Curriculum, educators and education staff through meetings and designing school programs. As stated by the Vice Principal for Curriculum Islamic Middle School Labbaika in interview quotes:

“...policies are formulated fairly and wisely by the school principal through consultations (meetings)...”. (R. II)



The policy making process includes several stages: (a) program formulation, (b) program organization, (c) implementation of the policy program, (d) monitoring/evaluation of policies made by the school principal. Program evaluation is very important in quality improvement as a means of continuous improvement (Goumairi et al., 2020). Like expressed by one of the teachers Islamic Middle School Labbaika in interview quotes:

“... the principal has implemented the policy with the right steps. First, he formulated his program carefully. Then, he managed the program organization well. After that, the program was implemented well by all related parties. And what is important, there is strict monitoring of the success of the program through an evaluation process. All these steps ensure that the policies made by the school principal can run effectively and efficiently....”. (R.III)

Which states that the policy making process includes planning, organizing, implementing and evaluating to improve the quality of education (Fadilah, 2019). On the other hand, the results of this research are also in line with the findings of research conducted by Bastian et al (2023) which states that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum must be supported by adequate educational infrastructure and technological readiness, as well as effective and efficient policies, procedures and funding. In preparation, the implementation of this new curriculum (Independent Curriculum) has challenges and positive impacts. This means that teachers, principals and other stakeholders must find solutions to minimize challenges and maximize positive impacts. Therefore, when this curriculum is implemented nationally in 2024, this curriculum will be possible bringing progress to the education system in Indonesia (Rizki & Fahkrunisa, 2022).

In addition, the Principal's policy Islamic Middle School Labbaika is as follows: (1) Recruitment of educators and education staff is always adjusted to their qualifications and skills. (2) The placement of educators and education staff is based on their abilities, without discriminating against race, ethnicity or culture. (3) Maintaining good, active and communicative relationships with educators and education staff. (4) Give awards to educators or educational staff who achieve outstanding performance. As stated by the Principal Islamic Middle School Labbaika in interview quotes:

“...*Firstly, in recruiting teaching staff and educational staff, we always ensure that they meet the qualifications and also have relevant skills. Furthermore, job placement is based on ability, without discriminating against race, ethnicity or culture. We also pay great attention to our relationships with educators and educational staff, always trying to maintain them well through active and continuous communication. Lastly, we reward those who demonstrate extraordinary achievements. All these efforts are made to create a conducive learning environment and provide motivation for the entire educational community in Islamic Middle School Labbaika...*”. (RI)

Hanim et al.'s research findings (2020) shows that the principal's policy in providing solutions involves recruiting teachers, setting teaching hours, and assigning administrative tasks to administrative staff. These findings are also in line with the research results of Nurulloh et al (2020) who suggested that the policy of the Principal of the Islamic Middle School of Excellence Hikmatul Amanah in improving the quality and professional competence of teachers be carried out through coaching, seminars, training, workshops. The competency that teachers must have is mastery of digital literacy which helps in the process of transferring knowledge, technology and skills (Wulandari & Trihantoyo, 2020). Conversely, communicate and behave well with teachers, provide motivation, give awards to teachers who excel, hold monthly meetings for evaluation, and provide incentives. Teacher competency is prioritized through discipline in Islamic Middle School activities or events.



Effective Implementation Strategy

Effective implementation strategies have a significant impact in ensuring the success of the Independent Curriculum at schools. Several fundamental approaches that can be used to facilitate effective curriculum implementation: Providing training, workshops, IHT (In-House Training), and providing opportunities for educators and education staff to continue their studies. As stated by the Principal of Islamic Middle School Labbaika in the following interview excerpt:

"...policy for developing the competence of educators and education staff in Islamic Middle School Labbaika is indeed our priority. One of the efforts we make is by providing regular training and workshops. Apart from that, we also organize In-House Training (IHT) activities which are tailored to the latest needs and developments in the education sector. Furthermore, we provide opportunities for educators and education personnel to continue their studies further, either through postgraduate programs or other advanced training...".(RI)

Strategy carried out by the Principal of Islamic Middle School Labbaika includes, among other things, holding regular meetings, training, supervision, Subject Teacher Working Groups (MGMP), follow-up studies, and benchmarking visits. As stated by the Principal of Islamic Middle School Labbaika in the following interview excerpt:

"... the strategy we implement is to ensure the smooth running and improvement of the quality of education in Islamic Middle School Labbaika. One of them is by holding regular meetings, where we discuss various current issues related to the implementation of education. However, we also provide regular training and supervision to support the development of skills and performance of teachers and education staff. We are also active in MGMP (Subject Teacher Working Group) activities to share experiences and learning between teachers. Not only that, we also encourage education staff to continue their studies or carry out benchmarking visits as an effort to continue to improve their competence and knowledge...". (RI)

Regular meetings are a forum for exchanging information and evaluating performance that teachers and staff attend. In terms of training, one form of support and motivation provided by the Principal of Islamic Middle School Labbaika is to provide transportation allowances. Training routinely carried out annually includes In-House Training (IHT). Supervision is carried out suddenly without prior notification to ensure the teaching process runs as usual to maintain the assessment's objectivity. The Principal of Islamic Middle School allocates time at the beginning of the school year for teachers and staff to complete the assessment's required administrative documents. Regarding the Subject Teacher Working Group, the principal of Islamic Middle School always encourages all teachers and staff to join the group. The group functions as a forum for teachers to exchange information and discuss. This research's findings align with Tarhid's (2017) which states that a quality principal can increase teacher involvement individually and in groups. Regarding further studies, the Principal of Islamic Middle School supports, advises, and gives permission to teachers and staff to continue their education. In addition, they facilitate teachers and staff to carry out benchmarking visits to other Islamic Middle Schools. The aim is to increase knowledge and insight in order to improve performance.

The findings of this research are in line with research conducted by Ariyani (2017) which indicates that teachers and staff are allowed to take part in training programs, and certification courses, pursue further studies, and visit other schools. Furthermore, Khoirudin et al (2022) suggests that increasing teacher professionalism at Islamic Senior High School NU Sunan Ampel Baujeng requires a conceptual framework and strategic plan to develop the Islamic Middle School quality. The strategies implemented include increasing teacher resources through seminars, training, Teacher Working Group (KKG) activities, improving teacher welfare, and providing supporting facilities such as internet access. The strategies



implemented include increasing teacher resources through seminars, training, Teacher Working Group (KKG) activities, improving teacher welfare, and providing supporting facilities such as internet access.

The Influence of the Policy of the Principal of Islamic Middle School

Results of policy implementation carried out by the Principal of Islamic Middle School Labbaika have a positive effect on schools, teachers and students. Some of them are: (1) Increase in accreditation score from B to A (Very Good) with a score of 95, making it one of the outstanding schools in Samarinda. (2) Increasing student achievement, both academic and non-academic. Even though it is located on the outskirts of town, Islamic Middle School focus on student achievement. Considering students' various talents, efforts are made to explore their potential. The Motto of Islamic Middle School is a "School for The Champions". (3) Increasing public trust and perception towards Islamic Middle School, seen from the increasing number of students registering. (4) Very good cooperation with the community, as seen from their enthusiasm to participate in all school activities. As stated by the Vice Principal for Curriculum:

"... we succeeded in increasing the school's accreditation score from B to A (Very Good) with a score of 95, and now we are one of the outstanding schools in Samarinda. Apart from that, student achievement, both academic and non-academic, showed a significant increase. We focus on developing student potential with the motto 'School for Champions', recognizing and nurturing student talents in various fields...". (R.II)

Likewise, teacher Islamic Middle School Labbaika stated:

"...The public's trust and perception of our Islamic Middle School is getting better, and thank God there has been an increase in the number of student enrollments from the previous year...". (R. III)

Further the Principal of Islamic Middle School Labbaika said,

"... our cooperation with the community is also very good, as can be seen from the enthusiasm of the community in participating in all our activities. Every time we hold religious events or activities, the community is always involved...". (R. II)

This research conducted with another research that done by (Banani, 2017) which states that effective learning can be achieved through the application of competent leadership by school principals and teachers. In addition, the research results of Pujiarti et al (2023) suggests that teachers improve their professional competence with strong internal motivation and a sense of responsibility to carry out their duties optimally.

The research results imply an increase in the accreditation score, namely from B to A (very good) with a score of 95, confirming the school's status as one of the outstanding schools in Samarinda. Increasing student achievement focuses on Islamic Middle School, exploring students' potential with the motto "Schools for Champions" has improved students' academic and non-academic achievements. This approach proves that developing student potential is an effective strategy for achieving educational excellence. Increasing public trust and perception aligns with improving school quality and student achievement. Apart from that, recognition of the Islamic Middle School also increased. This is reflected in the increase in the number of students, which shows increasing public confidence in the quality of education. Good cooperation with the community in school activities reflects the close relationship between the school and its community. Islamic Middle School strengthened relationships with its environment by involving the community in various school activities.

It confirms that the policies implemented by the Principal of Islamic Middle School have a strong conceptual foundation and positively influences all stakeholders of Islamic Middle School. Essentially, the results of the implementation policy done by the



principal of the Islamic Middle School were very positive for the school, teachers and students. First, increasing ranking accreditation from B to A (mark 95) shows enhanced quality school exists. It reflects academic performance, which tall, and confirms the school's commitment to education quality. Second, improved performance student good in both academic and Non-Academic shows that school in dig potency students succeed. This is reflected by increasing participation in schools and increasing public quality schools. Besides that, cooperation is good between schools and public local. The public's enthusiasm for following activity schools strongly supports quality education.

The findings of this research also corroborate the notion that effective school leadership and teaching are pivotal to effective learning. This study also highlights the importance of enhancement of the competence of professional teachers through intrinsic motivation, which is a strong and flavor not quite enough answer. The results implementation policy done by the principal of Islamic Middle School positively influences the school, Teachers, and students. Schools successfully create a productive and high-performing learning environment by enhancing the quality of education, tapping into students' potential, fostering community trust, and strengthening collaboration with the environment.

Table 1. Research Results

No.	Aspects studied / Research Objectives	Findings
1.	The Policy of the Principal of Islamic Middle School in Implementing Independent Curriculum	The policy-making process of the Principal of Islamic Middle School involves coordination with the Vice Principal for Curriculum, educators, and educational staff through meetings and school program planning.
2.	Effective Implementation Strategy	Effective implementation strategies play a crucial role in ensuring the success of the Independent Curriculum at schools. Several key strategies that can be employed to facilitate the effective implementation of the curriculum include providing training, workshops, in-house training (IHT), and opportunities for educators and educational staff to pursue further studies.
3.	The Influence of the Policy of the Principal of Islamic Middle School	The results of the policy implementation carried out by the Principal of Islamic Middle School have positively impacted the school, teachers, and students: (1) Improved accreditation score from B to A (Excellent) with a score of 95, making it one of the high-achieving schools in Samarinda. (2) Enhanced student achievements, both academically and non-academically. (3) Increased trust and perception of the community towards Islamic Middle School. (4) Excellent collaboration with the community, as evidenced by their enthusiasm in participating in all school activities..

Conclusion

The results of this research conclude that the implementation of policies by Islamic Middle School in enhancing the competence of educators and education staff aligns with the perspective of Independent Curriculum at Islamic Middle School Labbaika, as evidenced by the following: (1) Policies implemented by the Principal of Islamic Middle School include recruiting educators and education staff based on their qualifications and skills, placing them in positions according to their competencies, maintaining active and communicative



relationships with them, and rewarding those who excel in their roles. (2) Strategies: The strategies employed by the Principal of Islamic Middle School consist of holding regular meetings, providing training and supervision, facilitating subject teacher forums (MGMP), encouraging further education, and study visits. (3) Influence of Islamic Middle School Policy: The influence of the Principal of Islamic Middle School policy is evident from the increase in accreditation status, improvement in student achievement, and high community trust. These findings indicate that the policies and strategies of Islamic Middle Schools have effectively contributed to enhancing the competence of educators and staff in line with the goals of the Independent Curriculum.

Recommendation

The following recommendations are made based on the research findings: (1) School principals can provide training and professional development programs for teachers and educators to enhance teaching standards and school administration. (2) Teachers can utilize various resources and teaching approaches according to students' diverse learning styles to ensure inclusivity and effectiveness of learning. (3) Educational staff can assist in developing learning materials that support the Independent Curriculum. Additionally, educational staff can collaborate with teachers in designing challenging and relevant materials based on students' interests and needs. By providing training programs, utilizing various resources, and teaching approaches, and developing materials that support the Independent Curriculum, it is recommended to enhance the overall quality of education and create an inclusive and relevant learning environment for all students.

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