



Islamic Religious Education Curriculum Design for Junior High School Level

Edi Supardi^{1*}, Nina Nursilah², Dicky Darmawan³, Faiz Fahmi⁴

¹²³⁴STAI Al-Azhari Cianjur, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author, Email: edi.supardi.cianjur@gmail.com

Received: November 13, 2025; *Revised:* July 7, 2026, *Accepted:* July 12, 2026, *Published:* July 13, 2026

Abstract: The shift in the national education paradigm marked by the implementation of the Independent Curriculum demands the design of an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum that is in line with current developments, but remains rooted in Islamic values. At the Junior High School (SMP) level, PAI not only serves as a means of transmitting religious knowledge but also as a medium for the formation of students' character and spirituality. This study aims to examine and design an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum for junior high school level based on national regulations, Islamic education principles, and learning outcomes set out in the Independent Curriculum. This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method through the collection and analysis of various relevant literature. The results show that the design of the PAI curriculum must include main components such as Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objectives (TP), Learning Objective Flow (ATP), and Teaching Modules. Each component is designed integratively to create contextual, flexible learning that focuses on strengthening students' noble character. Overall, this study provides a theoretical contribution to the development of an operational curriculum for Islamic Religious Education at the junior high school level.

Keywords: curriculum implementation; Islamic religious education; junior high school; learning outcomes; teaching strategies.

Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is a crucial component of the national education system, playing a strategic role in shaping the character, morality, and spirituality of students. PAI serves not only as a means of transferring religious knowledge but also as a process of internalizing Islamic values to shape individuals who are faithful, pious, and have noble character. In the context of formal education in Indonesia, the existence of PAI has a strong legal basis as stipulated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which affirms that religious education is a compulsory subject at all levels of education (Depdiknas, 2003). This means that PAI is a key instrument in realizing the national education goal of developing the potential of students as whole human beings.

In response to rapid social, cultural, and technological changes, the Indonesian education system has undergone several reforms. One of the most significant reforms was the introduction of the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), which replaced the previous paradigm based on Core Competencies (KI) and Basic Competencies (KD). The Independent Curriculum emphasizes more flexible and contextual learning that focuses on Learning Outcomes (CP). This paradigm shift requires teachers, including Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, to act not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as designers and facilitators of student-centered learning (Kemendikbudristek, 2022b).

This shift in educational paradigms has implications for the structure and design of Islamic Religious Education curricula at all levels, including junior high school (SMP). At this stage, students experience a crucial phase of psychological development in shaping their identity and morality. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education curriculum design cannot be conventional; it must be adapted to the developmental characteristics of early adolescents who are transitioning from childhood to adolescence (Kusen, 2019). At this stage, Islamic values must be instilled through enjoyable, contextual, and relevant learning experiences to strengthen students' religious awareness and foster social tolerance (Ghazali, 2014).

In recent years, several studies have revealed serious challenges in the implementation of religious education in schools. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in Indonesia remains largely cognitive, memorization-oriented, and often fails to foster meaningful spiritual or moral awareness (Mariska et al., 2024). Meanwhile, other research shows that the Independent Curriculum (Curriculum Merdeka) opens opportunities for teachers to develop a more reflective, adaptive, and student-centered Islamic education (Misniati, 2023). However, the main challenge lies in teachers' readiness to design learning tools that align with the learning outcomes and actual needs of students in schools. This situation indicates a gap between the ideal curriculum policy and its practical implementation. Many teachers still struggle to understand and formulate key curriculum components such as Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objectives (TP), Learning Objective Flow (ATP), and Learning Modules. These four components are the core of the Independent Curriculum, determining the direction, strategy, and evaluation of learning. Therefore, it is crucial to design an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum that not only refers to official government documents but is also built on a strong philosophical and pedagogical foundation.

Philosophically, Islamic education is based on the values of monotheism, morality, and universal humanity. The Qur'an establishes the principle that education must maintain a balance between the intellectual, spiritual, and social dimensions of human life, as reflected in Surah Al-'Alaq [96]: 1–5, which emphasizes the importance of knowledge and learning rooted in divine values. This perspective is in line with Al-Attas's (1993) view that the ultimate goal of Islamic education is to instill *adab* (ethical discipline) and produce virtuous individuals (*insan adabi*). Therefore, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum in schools should not only focus on mastering religious knowledge, but also on developing character and behavior that reflect the noble values of Islam (Al-Attas, 1993).

From a regulatory perspective, the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is further strengthened through Government Regulation Number 55 of 2007 concerning Religious and Religion Education, which stipulates that religious education must be implemented in a planned, systematic, and comprehensive manner (Pemerintah, 2007). This regulation serves as the legal basis for educational institutions to develop professional Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curricula, taking into account the needs of students and the challenges of the modern era. Reforms to the religious education curriculum should aim to balance spiritual, social, and intellectual competencies (Khuriyah, 2024).

Furthermore, there are differing views in the literature regarding the ideal approach to designing an Islamic Religious Education curriculum. Some experts argue that curriculum development should follow a normative-theological approach that emphasizes the purity of Islamic teachings (Munawar-Rachman, 2022). Others argue that curriculum design should adopt a contextual approach that responds to the challenges of modernity. These differing perspectives demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education curriculum design requires a balanced integration of traditional Islamic values and the realities of contemporary society.

In the context of the Independent Curriculum, an integrative and flexible approach is crucial. Integration means connecting Islamic values, student needs, and 21st-century competencies such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity. Flexibility means giving teachers the freedom to adapt learning to the local context, school culture, and student characteristics (GTK, 2022). Therefore, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum must be designed not only to develop intellectual competencies but also to foster moral, spiritual, and social awareness.

Based on the previous explanation, this research addresses two interrelated urgencies. From a theoretical perspective, this research significantly strengthens the conceptual foundation for

designing an Islamic Religious Education curriculum that aligns with the direction of the Independent Curriculum and the core values of Islamic education (Wahyudi et al., 2023). This strengthening provides the necessary foundation for understanding how the Islamic Religious Education curriculum can be structured in a more comprehensive, focused manner, and in line with developments in contemporary pedagogical thought. From a practical perspective, this research provides a reference that can be used by educators, curriculum designers, and educational institutions seeking operational guidelines for developing an Islamic Religious Education curriculum that adapts to the learning needs of junior high school students. Through this formulation, this research seeks to bridge the gap between curriculum demands and the need for more humane, adaptive, and relevant learning for students (Komalasari & Yakubu, 2023).

The practical urgency of this research is evident in its attempt to offer a curriculum orientation that can be directly applied in the context of formal education. The operational curriculum designed based on this research is expected to be able to address the dynamics of learning at the junior high school level, which is characterized by the psychological, social, and intellectual development of students (Tuna, 2022). Within this scope, this research presents the basis for developing more innovative learning strategies oriented toward character formation, so that the learning process not only emphasizes cognitive aspects but also provides space for moral strengthening and social sensitivity. With this approach, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum takes on a more vibrant and relevant form, providing learning experiences that enable students to instill Islamic values into daily practice (Tabroni et al., 2022). Thus, this research not only establishes conceptual guidelines but also opens up opportunities for concrete implementation in classroom situations.

Using a qualitative approach based on library research, this study examines various sources, including government regulations, Islamic education theories, and current curriculum policy documents. This analytical step is aimed at identifying key patterns, structures, and principles that can be used as primary references in designing an Islamic Religious Education curriculum at the junior high school level. The findings indicate that designing an ideal Islamic Religious Education curriculum requires the integration of four essential components: Learning Outcomes, Learning Objectives, Learning Objective Flow, and Teaching Modules (Supriadi et al., 2024). These four elements serve as a complementary framework and ensure a holistic learning process. By integrating theoretical and policy aspects, this study provides a conceptual framework that can help educators develop an effective curriculum that aligns with the developmental needs of students.

The research findings confirm that the development of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum within the Merdeka Curriculum framework has strategic value in strengthening the position of Islamic education within the national education system. A curriculum built with an integrated approach will provide space for students to develop in-depth religious competencies while simultaneously strengthening the moral aspects that underpin their behavior (Pujianti & Nugraha, 2024). With careful design, the PAI curriculum can create a generation with a strong religious identity while remaining adaptive to changing times. This curriculum supports the formation of students who are able to integrate religious understanding with other skills needed in modern life, enabling them to face global challenges with adequate intellectual readiness and personal integrity.

This study also underscores that an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum grounded in Islamic values and aligned with 21st-century learning paradigms has significant potential to shape competitive, moderate-minded students capable of making meaningful contributions to both the social environment and the nation. This curricular approach creates a learning experience that relies not only on texts and theory but also on character building and the development of critical, creative, and collaborative thinking skills. This framework enables students to develop a broad understanding of their roles as individuals living in a diverse and dynamic society. Therefore, this study confirms that a well-designed Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum is crucial for preparing a young generation with character and productivity, capable of establishing a harmonious relationship between Islamic values and the demands of modern development (Diana et al., 2024).

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with library research methods to explore the concept and implementation of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum design at the junior high school (SMP) level within the Merdeka Curriculum framework. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand phenomena in depth and in context through the analysis of text data from various academic sources. In this study, this approach emphasizes the interpretation and analysis of meanings generated from relevant literature, providing a comprehensive understanding of the philosophical, regulatory, and pedagogical aspects of PAI curriculum development. Qualitative research aims to uncover phenomena holistically and contextually by collecting data from the natural environment and positioning the researcher as the primary tool (Fadli, 2021).

The library research method was chosen because this study does not involve field data collection but instead focuses on exploring various literary sources relevant to the topic of curriculum design. According to Abdurrahman, library research aims to build conceptual understanding, examine diverse perspectives, identify research gaps, and develop a theoretical framework for the study (Abdurrahman, 2024). Therefore, this method is appropriate for this research, as it allows for a comprehensive review of academic sources discussing the principles, policies, and strategies of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum design oriented towards the learning outcomes of the Independent Curriculum.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include official government documents such as Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Government Regulation Number 55 of 2007 concerning Religious Education and Religious Education, and Learning Outcomes (Capaian Belajar-CP) for Islamic Religious Education and Character Education published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology in 2022. Secondary sources include previous studies, academic books, and scientific journal articles relevant to curriculum development, Islamic education theory, and the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The selection of these two types of data sources aims to ensure that the analysis is based on a strong conceptual foundation while being supported by current education policies in Indonesia.

Data collection was conducted through several systematic stages, starting with identifying and reviewing relevant literature, selecting credible sources, critically analyzing content, and classifying it based on themes and focus areas. These stages were carefully conducted to ensure that the data used was valid, up-to-date, and contextually relevant to this study. The selected literature was analyzed using content analysis, a qualitative analysis technique used to identify, categorize, and interpret meanings emerging from texts or documents (Mulyana, 2024).

The data analysis process in this study involved several interrelated steps. The first step was data reduction, which involved selecting and simplifying literature relevant to the research focus. The second step was data categorization, in which the researcher grouped findings based on themes such as philosophical foundations, principles of Islamic education, national curriculum policies, and components of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum design (CP, TP, ATP, and Teaching Module). The third step was data interpretation, which refers to the process of interpreting the meaning and relationships between concepts to identify the patterns of thinking underlying the Islamic Religious Education curriculum design. The final step was drawing conclusions, in which the results of the analysis were formulated into a theoretical framework that describes an ideal Islamic Religious Education curriculum design that can be implemented in junior high schools.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, source triangulation was applied by comparing information from various literature sources and related studies. This technique aims to ensure data consistency and minimize interpretive bias. Additionally, peer review was conducted through academic discussions with experts in Islamic education and curriculum development to verify the accuracy of the analysis and conclusions (M.B. & Huberman, 1994). In this study, the analysis process follows a conceptual model that describes the relationship between data sources and the content analysis process. This relationship can be expressed through the following conceptual formula:

$$R=(S_p+S_s)\times A_c R=(S_p+S_s)\times A_c$$

Where R represents the ideal design of the PAI curriculum; S_p signifies primary sources such as official documents and Islamic texts; S_s refers to secondary sources such as previous studies and academic references; and A_c represents a process of in-depth and systematic content analysis. This formula suggests that the ideal curriculum design is generated through the synthesis of primary and secondary sources through comprehensive content analysis.

This research method is expected to achieve a holistic understanding of how Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum design concepts can be effectively implemented within the Merdeka Curriculum framework. This approach also theoretically contributes to strengthening the conceptual foundation for developing an Islamic education curriculum that is character-oriented, adaptive to contemporary changes, and relevant to the learning needs of junior high school students.

Results and Discussion

Curriculum Basis

1. Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System

Law Number 20 of 2003 affirms that the fundamental direction of national education is oriented toward fostering the potential of students to grow as individuals of faith, submitting to the will of God Almighty, and demonstrating noble character (Kosim et al., 2023). This regulation positions the spiritual and moral dimensions as the foundation that accompanies the educational process at every level of formal institutions. Through this binding normative provision, the state establishes the great aspiration of education as a process that not only develops intellectual intelligence but also nurtures students' divine awareness as part of the formation of a whole person. This formulation provides a conceptual direction for the implementation of national education that combines the demands of academic competence with religious values that guide students' behavior and perspectives.

Article 37, paragraph (1), of the same law establishes religious education as a compulsory subject at all levels of education, from elementary to secondary. This regulation demonstrates that the religious dimension is not merely a supplement to the curriculum, but rather a core element that needs to be present in the overall design of national learning. The inclusion of religious education as a mandatory component provides clarity regarding the state's commitment to providing learning that is inseparable from divine and ethical values. This emphasis provides a strong legal basis for ensuring that religious subjects, including Islamic Religious Education, receive adequate space in the development of the curriculum. This provision also reflects the view that moral and spiritual aspects have an equal standing with academic aspects in the formation of students' personalities (Depdiknas, 2003).

The existence of Islamic Religious Education in the curriculum of formal educational institutions thus gains clear legal legitimacy through the construction of these regulations. This regulatory affirmation makes Islamic Religious Education an inseparable part of the national educational framework, which aims to shape students who are able to integrate scientific insight with religious values. Its existence is not seen merely as a symbolic element, but as an educational instrument oriented towards strengthening the spiritual, moral, and cultural integrity of students (Komariah & Nihayah, 2023). This legal framework provides guidelines for educational institutions to develop Islamic Religious Education learning practices in a structured and systematic manner. In this context, religious education is understood as an integral part of the process of student self-development in facing social dynamics and the ever-evolving advancement of science.

And theoretical reinforcement of the position of religious education in the national education system which emphasizes that religious education is not limited to normative-formal ritual learning, but also includes the development of religious attitudes and behaviors reflected in everyday life. This approach shows that religious teaching needs to connect mastery of concepts and teachings with the life experiences of students, so that the values acquired do not stop as cognitive knowledge, but form ethical awareness and consistent social practices. This thinking underscores the importance of integration between understanding religious teachings and

behavioral habits, which ultimately give birth to individuals who are spiritually mature and sensitive to human values (Marshall, 2025).

In this perspective of thought, religious education is understood as a process directed at fostering students to understand Islamic teachings comprehensively and be able to live them in the context of actual life. The process of internalizing values gives depth of meaning to religious learning, so that the goal of moral and spiritual development can run in harmony with the intellectual development of students (Djuaini, 2025). The explanation presented by Hidayatullah and Rahman shows that effective religious education requires a relationship between the dimensions of knowledge, attitude, and action, which is established through reflective and continuous learning experiences. Through such a framework, religious education gains a strategic role in forming a mature personality, so that students are able to live life with a strong foundation of values and ethics in a social environment that is constantly changing (Hidayatullah & Rahman, 2025).

2. Government Regulation Number 55 of 2007 concerning Religious Education and Religious Teaching

Government Regulation Number 55 of 2007 affirms the existence of religious education by providing a normative basis that provides broader space for its implementation in the school environment. This regulation presents a strengthening of the position of religious education by establishing the principle that religious learning needs to receive proportional attention within the formal education structure. In Article 2 paragraph (1), it is stated that the main orientation of religious education is to foster students to grow as individuals with strong faith, submit to the provisions of Almighty God, and demonstrate character that reflects noble morals. This formulation places spiritual and moral aspects as the spirit of religious education. In this context, religious education is understood as an effort to develop oneself that directs the development of students through an approach that instills deep religious values, in harmony with the demands of the dynamics of modern education (Pemerintah, 2007).

The regulation also outlines that the implementation of religious education must be carried out through a planned, well-structured process, and encompass all aspects of learning comprehensively. Strengthening the principle of systematic and comprehensive implementation demonstrates the government's concern for the quality of religious education as an integral part of national education. Structured implementation is interpreted as an effort to ensure that all related elements, from the formulation of objectives and the preparation of materials to the evaluation of learning, proceed with clear direction. Thus, the presence of religious education in schools is placed within a pedagogical framework that is not ceremonial, but rather as an educational process that requires continuous planning and implementation. The comprehensive principle emphasizes that religious learning encompasses elements of knowledge, attitudes, and religious practices in students' daily lives (Darling-Hammond, Flook, et al., 2020a).

Broadly speaking, this regulation provides strong legal legitimacy for the professional development of religious education through a curriculum designed based on the real needs of students. This provision opens up space for educators to design religious instruction that aligns not only with religious norms but also takes into account the psychological, social, and developmental stages of students. A curriculum that is responsive to students' characteristics allows religious education to flow more naturally into their learning experiences. With this legal basis, religious learning practices can be developed through creative planning, without departing from the fundamental principles established by the state. At this point, religious education gains legitimacy not only as part of the curriculum but also as part of a sustainable national character-building strategy (Biesta, 2015b).

The emphasis placed on this regulation illustrates the position of religious education as a crucial instrument in shaping students' personalities. This regulation explains that religious education is not merely a process of instilling spiritual values, but also a means of developing moral character, which serves as the foundation of students' personalities. Thus, religious education plays a role in shaping students' perspectives, emotional responses, and behaviors in social interactions. The implementation of religious learning based on the principle of curriculum professionalism provides guidance so that the moral values instilled through religious instruction can be translated into concrete forms in students' lives. This dimension of moral development, which extends to the social realm,

makes religious education a strategic component in supporting the achievement of the national education vision (Nucci & Narvaez, 2008).

Within the scope of national education goals, these provisions provide a stronger reinforcement of the role of religious education as a component in shaping students' overall personality. Religious education is understood as a process that guides students in absorbing noble values that form the basis for moral judgment and orientation of their actions. With an approach structured through a structured regulatory design, religious education is positioned as a foundation supporting students' spiritual and ethical maturity. This process not only introduces religious doctrine but also provides direction for the formation of moral awareness that develops through managed learning experiences (Arthur, 2005).

These provisions also emphasize that religious education must be developed with continuity and relevance to students' needs in mind, ensuring that religious values are consistently present throughout their development. Such learning encourages students to not only cognitively understand teachings but also to experience them as part of a self-accustoming process integral to their maturation. By continuously addressing the dynamics of student development, religious education serves as a space where religious values are practiced, understood, and developed into life principles (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005).

Within this framework, religious education holds its place as an element that not only teaches normative concepts but also fosters character development rooted in faith and moral integrity. The values presented in religious instruction serve as guides in developing individuals capable of balancing thoughts, feelings, and actions. Thus, religious education exists as an integral part of the national education process, guiding students toward a more mature self-understanding and providing direction for personality development grounded in solid spiritual values (Arthur, 2005).

Curriculum Components

1. Learning Outcomes (Learning Achievements–CP)

Learning Outcomes (CP) are understood as a set of abilities targeted for students to achieve at each phase of the learning process. This concept describes the direction of achievement that serves as the primary orientation in students' academic journeys throughout a defined timeframe. Within an educational framework, CP serves as a depiction of the ultimate goal to be achieved through a series of tiered and interconnected learning experiences. Each learning stage is structured into six phases, allowing student development to be systematically mapped. This phase division allows teachers and educational institutions to monitor student progress based on competency characteristics relevant to their developmental level. Thus, CP provides a conceptual framework that guides the educational process so that it is directed, measurable, and aligned with the evolving learning dynamics within the Independent Curriculum, as explained in the guidelines (GTK, 2022).

Phase	Classes and Levels in General
A	Grades I-II SD/ MI/ Package A Program
B	Grade III-IV Elementary / Middle School / Package A Program
C	Grades V-VI SD/ MI/ Program Package A
D	Grades VII-IX of Junior High School/ MTs/ Package B Program
E	Class X SMA/SMK/MA/Package C Program
F	Grade XI-XII of Senior High School/Vocational High School/Islamic Senior High School/Package C Program

The use of phases in the Independent Curriculum is designed as a mechanism to create a more flexible learning process that can adapt to the diversity of student readiness. The phase-based approach provides opportunities for teachers and students to move through a flexible learning path, allowing each individual to develop according to their own abilities. This concept also emphasizes the importance of collaborative work in designing learning experiences, as learning plans are

formulated through dialogue and needs mapping among educators. These phases are structured as developmental stages that allow students to progress through the learning process in a gradual and measured manner. This mechanism enriches the dynamics of learning by emphasizing flexibility as a principle that helps schools adapt learning strategies to the ever-changing learning environment. Thus, the use of phases serves as a foundation that harmoniously connects student needs and curriculum design (Priestley et al., 2021).

In the Learning Outcomes or Learning Achievements (CP) document, the competencies that students must master are presented in complete paragraphs that combine aspects of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Compiling competencies in this integrative format provides a comprehensive overview of expected outcomes, so that the learning process does not only focus on one dimension of ability, but encompasses the entire spectrum of student development. CP is divided into several components, one of which is the rationale that explains the significance of the subject and its relationship to the Pancasila Student Profile. It also includes objectives that describe the final competencies after a series of learning sessions have been completed. The characteristics component explains the scope of the subject study, while phase achievements are structured in the form of general achievements and specific achievements. With this framework, CP provides clear direction for educators in implementing gradual and structured learning (Young & Muller, 2016).

The determination of Learning Outcomes (CP) has a strong regulatory basis through Decree of the Head of the BSKAP Number 003 of 2022, which regulates learning outcomes in general subjects and Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in schools. This provision is reinforced by Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education Number 3211 of 2022, which establishes CP for the Islamic Religious Education and Arabic Language clusters. These documents serve as official references that provide uniform curriculum direction across all educational units. The existence of these regulatory guidelines provides certainty regarding the competency standards that must be achieved, ensuring a consistent legal and academic foundation for the learning process. This affirmation also demonstrates the government's aspiration to unify learning quality through guidelines that can be implemented nationally. Thus, CP serves as an instrument that not only guides achievement but also ensures alignment across levels of education (Biesta, 2015a).

Learning Outcomes (CP) are established by the government as mandatory competencies that must be achieved by students at each stage. Their existence serves as a policy framework that guides the development of learning objectives in each subject. However, the CP document is conceptual in nature and therefore does not provide sufficient operational detail to directly regulate classroom learning activities. This general framework requires a more applicable follow-up document so that educators can translate it into daily teaching practice. This is where curriculum developers and educators play a crucial role in developing more detailed implementation guidelines that can be used in real-world contexts. Thus, CP serves as a starting point for designing systematic learning, while its implementation is determined through more technical derivative documents (Priestley et al., 2021).

To bridge the conceptual nature of CP with the needs of classroom learning, educators need to develop an operational document that guides intracurricular activities. This document, known as the Learning Objective Flow (ATP), serves as a map for developing learning objectives in a logical and continuous sequence. The ATP guides teachers in breaking down major learning outcomes into concrete, actionable learning steps. Thus, developing the ATP is a crucial process in ensuring that CP is implemented in learning activities that are easily understood by students. This document serves as a bridge between the competency formulation in CP and daily learning practices. Through the ATP, educators can build a teaching structure that is organized, goal-oriented, and aligned with students' developmental stages. In the context of the Independent Curriculum, the ATP is a vital part of connecting the curriculum vision with the reality of classroom learning (Kemendikbudristek, 2022a).

To fully understand CP, educators are required to read the document comprehensively, starting with the foundation, objectives, and characteristics of the subject, and continuing through to its phased achievements. Each educator must understand the Learning Outcomes for each phase to identify the developmental progress students have made and will experience in the next phase. Learning Outcomes for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) consist of five main elements:

- a. Faith (*Aqeedah*)
- b. Worship (*Fiqh al-Ibadah*)

- c. Morality (*Akhlaq*)
- d. History of Islamic Culture (SKI)
- e. Al-Qur'an dan Hadis (Al-Qur'an Hadis)

Each of these elements has general learning objectives that must be achieved during each phase. The Independent Curriculum encourages flexibility and emphasizes competency mastery over content accumulation (Amka, 2024).

2. Learning Objectives (TP)

Learning Objectives (TP) are understood as a formulation encompassing two main elements: competency and material scope. Competency describes the abilities, skills, or performance expected to emerge in students after participating in the learning process. This element serves as an indicator that marks the success of a learning activity in developing students' intellectual, emotional, and psychomotor capacities. Meanwhile, material scope refers to the main concepts, core ideas, or body of knowledge that students need to understand in depth so that these competencies can be fully achieved. These two elements complement each other and build a structure of directed objectives, so that the learning process can proceed systematically. Learning Objectives are thus not simply a list of skills or a collection of materials, but rather a conceptual plan that unifies what students must understand and what they must be able to demonstrate in the real context of learning (Biggs & Tang, 2011).

Within the Independent Curriculum framework, the formulation of Learning Objectives (LQOs) has shifted away from the previous model, which was based on Core Competencies (KI) and Basic Competencies (KD). The development of Learning Objectives (TP) is now directed at more detailed, contextual elements that are directly related to the competency structure within each subject element. This paradigm shift provides educators with the opportunity to develop objectives that are more explicit and easily operationalized in daily learning practices. This approach allows teachers to gain a deeper understanding of how each element within a subject contributes to the development of students' knowledge and skills. Formulating specific TPs helps educators establish a more focused, measurable, and relevant learning direction for students. Thus, the designed objectives provide a clear picture of the expected outcomes and the steps necessary to achieve them (Riyadi & Budiman, 2023).

A concrete example of the formulation of the Learning Objectives (TP) is seen in the element "Faith (*Aqidah*). In this element, Learning Objectives can be realized through operational statements such as, "Students are able to explain the meaning of faith in Allah by referring to relevant verses of the Qur'an." This formulation shows how the targeted abilities are integrated with the context of the material that students must understand. This operational approach provides clarity regarding the direction of the learning to be achieved and connects it to the teaching sources that form the basis of the study. Thus, students are directed not only to memorize concepts but also to connect their understanding with the texts and values contained in the Qur'an. This formulation of the TP allows for the development of learning that is more lively, reflective, and related to the students' spiritual experiences (Zulmi & Natuna, 2025).

The formulation of the Learning Objectives (TP) in this example aligns with the principles of constructivism theory, which positions students as active subjects in the learning process. This theory emphasizes that knowledge is not imparted directly but is constructed through contextual, relevant, and meaningful experiences. In this context, Learning Objectives (TP) provide direction for students to engage in the thinking process, interpret concepts, and relate them to real-life learning experiences. Constructivist-based learning allows students to construct understanding independently through teacher guidance, so that the formulated objectives serve not only as assessment indicators but also as guides in shaping learning interaction patterns. Thus, TP functions as a compass that directs learning strategies to be more dialogical and reflect the dynamics of students' cognitive development (Fosnot, 2013).

The implementation of Learning Objectives in *Fiqh* in Phase D demonstrates how competency mapping and material scope strategies are used to produce proportional and operational formulations. In the development process, educators determine the core competencies that students need to achieve and then connect them to relevant *fiqh* material thematically and conceptually. Thus,

the designed objectives illustrate the relationship between conceptual understanding and mastery of worship practices that are part of fiqh studies. The formulation of Learning Objectives developed in this phase helps educators develop a learning flow that is coherent, consistent, and appropriate to the students' developmental level. Through this approach, fiqh learning is not only oriented towards rote understanding but also includes strengthening thinking patterns, analytical skills, and the meaning of worship values in everyday life (Biggs & Tang, 2011).

No	Elements	Learning Outcomes	Competence	Material	Learning objectives
1	Fiqh of Worship	Students analyze the procedures for purification from hadas and najis, the provisions of obligatory prayers, congregational prayers, provisions of fasting, Itikaf, the virtue of dhikr and prayer, various sunnah prayers and the provisions of prostration for forgetfulness, tilawah prostration, thanksgiving prostration, provisions of Friday prayers, plural and shortened prayers, prayers in certain circumstances including: sick conditions, critical conditions (khauf) and on vehicles, and practicing them well and correctly in the context of daily life in the global community, so that obligations are carried out consistently in any situation and at any time.	Analyze and practice	Procedures for purifying oneself from hadas and najis, provisions for obligatory prayers, congregational prayers, provisions for fasting, Itikaf, the virtues of dhikr and supplication, various sunnah prayers and provisions for prostration of forgetfulness, prostration of recitation, prostration of gratitude, provisions for Friday prayers, plural and qashar prayers, prayers in certain circumstances	• Analyze the procedures for purifying oneself from hadas and najis and practice them properly and correctly in daily life • Analyzing the provisions of obligatory prayers and practicing them properly and correctly in daily life.

3. Learning Objective Flow (ATP)

The Learning Objective Flow (ATP) is understood as an orderly series containing a logical sequence of Learning Objectives (TP) arranged systematically over the span of one academic year. This structure serves as a guideline for educators in designing a well-managed, continuous, and sequential teaching and learning process. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the development of ATP takes into account the depth of the material and the level of complexity of thinking that students need to achieve. These considerations are closely related to the stages of students' cognitive development, which progress from a basic level of understanding to more mature analytical and reflective abilities. The determination of ATP in PAI refers to the provisions of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation Number 16 of 2022, which provides guidance on how the objective structure should be structured to align with the characteristics of the subject and the demands of the Independent Curriculum (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

ATP represents a series of objectives formulated in a logical, structured, and hierarchical manner to support the achievement of Learning Outcomes (CP) at each educational stage. In its development, ATP serves as a link between the established learning objectives and the learning practices to be implemented in the classroom. This step is the next step after the formulation of the TP, so that objectives that were initially conceptual in nature can be translated into a coherent and

applicable learning flow. Through ATP, educators gain a clearer picture of how each objective is interconnected and how this interconnectedness leads students to the final achievement of the learning stage. This framework helps direct the learning process so that it not only meets competency requirements but also occurs at the rhythm of each student's development. Thus, ATP becomes a pedagogical instrument that provides certainty of direction in designing effective learning experiences (Biesta, 2015c).

In curriculum development, educators have several options for utilizing ATP as a reference for lesson planning. The Teacher Information Center provides three alternatives. First, educators can independently develop ATP based on established Learning Outcomes (CP), ensuring the resulting flow is truly tailored to the needs and characteristics of students. Second, teachers can develop and modify existing ATP examples, ensuring the document remains relevant yet flexible within the context of the educational unit. Third, teachers can choose to use ATP prepared by the government if they feel it aligns with learning needs. These three options provide educators with the flexibility to choose the most feasible development strategy while ensuring that the planning process remains within the applicable curriculum (Priestley et al., 2021).

In developing an ATP, one of the key principles to consider is the flow's ability to comprehensively illustrate the development of student competencies within a single learning phase. This means the ATP must demonstrate how initial competencies gradually develop toward higher levels of mastery through a planned sequence of objectives. Such a structure provides a clear picture of how the learning process progresses from the starting point to the targeted final outcome. This competency development is linked to efforts to facilitate students' gradual, logical, and uninterrupted learning experiences. With this flow, the learning process can be more focused and minimize the potential for overlapping material or gaps in competency mastery (Biggs & Tang, 2011).

The Learning Objectives Flow (ATP) is expected to be able to describe the pattern of competency development that moves gradually from the beginning to the end of a phase, so that students can follow the learning process that continues uninterrupted and is easy to understand. The linear flow is not intended to limit the educator's creative space, but rather as a structural support that guides students moving from mastery of basic concepts to more in-depth skills. Within this framework, the ATP functions as a design that emphasizes the logical relationship between each objective, so that each stage of learning is structured as a series that leads each other towards the final achievement (Bruner, 1960).

The ATP serves as a roadmap that connects learning objectives, materials, and activities into a cohesive flow. This systematic structure allows students to experience a fluid, directed learning process and provides space for gradual cognitive development. When carefully designed, the learning process not only moves at a regular pace but also provides opportunities for students to develop thinking skills, build progressive understanding, and foster readiness to achieve more complex competencies (Hattie, 2009).

In the context of student growth, ATP plays a crucial role in shaping a learning journey that aligns with their developmental needs. This design supports the creation of a comprehensive learning experience, which not only focuses on intellectual aspects but also fosters a reflective and independent learning attitude. Through a well-structured flow, learning can take place as a continuous process, enabling students to develop academic literacy and maturity of thought as they develop as individuals who continue to grow in the world of education (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

No	Learning objectives	Material	Class	Semester	Allocation Time
1	Analyze the procedures for purifying oneself from hadas and najis and practice them properly and correctly in daily life	Purify from hadats and najis	7	Odd	2 JP
2	Analyzing the provisions of obligatory prayers and practicing them properly and correctly in daily life.	Obligatory Prayer	7	Odd	2 JP
3	Dst				

Example of Learning Objective Flow (ATP) as listed on the official website of the Ministry of Education:

**ALUR TUJUAN PEMBELAJARAN
PENDIDIKAN AGAMA ISLAM DAN BUDI PEKERTI**

NAMA PENYUSUN : Ahmad Bukhori, M.Pd.I dan Muh. Syamsul Wardani Alhawi, S.Pd.I
INSTITUSI : SMP Insan Cendekia Madani Bsd – SMPN 01 Cariu Kab. Bogor
FASE : D (Kelas VII-VIII-IX)

ELEMEN	CAPAIAN PEMBELAJARAN	TUJUAN PEMBELAJARAN	ALUR TUJUAN PEMBELAJARAN
AL-QUR'AN DAN HADITS	Peserta didik memahami definisi Al-Quran dan hadis Nabi dan posisinya sebagai sumber ajaran agama Islam. Peserta didik juga memahami pentingnya pelestarian alam dan lingkungan sebagai bagian yang tidak terpisahkan dalam ajaran Islam. Peserta didik juga mampu menjelaskan pemahamannya tentang sikap moderat dalam beragama. Peserta didik juga memahami tingginya semangat keilmuan beberapa intelektual besar Islam.	- Memahami definisi Al-Quran dan Hadis Nabi serta posisinya sebagai sumber ajaran agama Islam. - Memahami dan mengaplikasikan penerapan pentingnya menjaga pelestarian alam dan lingkungan sebagai bagian yang tidak terpisahkan dalam ajaran Islam - Memahami dan mengaplikasikan pemahamannya tentang sikap moderat dalam beragama. - Memahami dan menganalisis beberapa intelektual besar Islam dalam semangat keilmuannya dan cara menumbuhkan semangat keilmuan dalam kehidupan.	- Memahami definisi Al-Quran dan Hadis Nabi serta posisinya sebagai sumber ajaran agama Islam. - Memahami dan menganalisis beberapa intelektual besar Islam dalam semangat keilmuannya dan cara menumbuhkan semangat keilmuan dalam kehidupan. - Memahami dan mengaplikasikan penerapan pentingnya menjaga pelestarian alam dan lingkungan sebagai bagian yang tidak terpisahkan dalam ajaran Islam - Memahami dan mengaplikasikan pemahamannya tentang sikap moderat dalam beragama.
AKIDAH	Peserta didik mendalami enam rukun Iman	- Memahami dan mengaplikasikan pemahamannya tentang iman kepada Allah, malaikat, kitab, rasul, hari kiamat, qada' dan qadar - Memahami dan menciptakan karya (<i>Project based learning</i>) tentang konsep diri dalam kehidupan sebagai refleksi dalam mengimani kepada Allah, malaikat, kitab, rasul, hari kiamat, qada' dan qadar	- Memahami dan mengaplikasikan pemahamannya tentang iman kepada Allah, malaikat, kitab, rasul, hari kiamat, qada' dan qadar - Memahami dan menciptakan karya (<i>Project based learning</i>) tentang konsep diri dalam kehidupan sebagai refleksi dalam mengimani kepada Allah, malaikat, kitab, rasul, hari kiamat, qada' dan qadar.
AKHLAK	Peserta didik mendalami peran aktivitas salat sebagai bentuk penjagaan atas diri sendiri dari keburukan. Peserta didik juga memahami pentingnya verifikasi (tabayyun) informasi sehingga dia terhindar dari kebohongan dan berita palsu. Peserta didik juga memahami definisi toleransi dalam tradisi Islam berdasarkan ayat-ayat Al-Quran dan hadis-hadis Nabi. Peserta didik juga mulai mengenal dimensi keindahan	- Memahami dan mengevaluasi peran aktivitas salat sebagai bentuk penjagaan atas diri sendiri dari keburukan. - Memahami pentingnya verifikasi (tabayyun) informasi sehingga terhindar dari kebohongan dan berita palsu. - Memahami definisi toleransi dalam tradisi Islam berdasarkan ayat-ayat Al-Quran dan hadis-hadis Nabi.	- Memahami dan mengevaluasi peran aktivitas salat sebagai bentuk penjagaan atas diri sendiri dari keburukan. - Memahami pentingnya verifikasi (tabayyun) informasi sehingga terhindar dari kebohongan dan berita palsu. - Memahami definisi toleransi dalam tradisi Islam berdasarkan ayat-ayat Al-Quran dan hadis-hadis Nabi. - Memahami dan menganalisis berbagai dimensi keindahan dan seni dalam Islam termasuk ekspresi-ekspresinya.
FIKIH	dan seni dalam Islam termasuk ekspresi-ekspresinya Peserta didik memahami internalisasi nilai-nilai dalam sujud dan ibadah salat, memahami konsep mu'āmalah, ribā, rukhshah, serta mengenal beberapa mazhab fikih, dan ketentuan mengenai ibadah qurban.	- Memahami dan menganalisis berbagai dimensi keindahan dan seni dalam Islam termasuk ekspresi-ekspresinya. - Memahami internalisasi nilai-nilai dalam sujud dan ibadah salat - Memahami konsep mu'āmalah, ribā dan rukhshah - Memahami beberapa mazhab fikih - Memahami ketentuan mengenai ibadah qurban. - Memahami dan menciptakan peta konsep (<i>Problem based learning</i>) dalam kehidupan dalam bermu'āmalah dan menjauhi riba.	- Memahami internalisasi nilai-nilai dalam sujud dan ibadah salat - Memahami konsep mu'āmalah, ribā dan rukhshah - Memahami beberapa mazhab fikih - Memahami dan menciptakan peta konsep (<i>Problem based learning</i>) dalam kehidupan dalam bermu'āmalah dan menjauhi riba. - Memahami ketentuan mengenai ibadah qurban. - Memahami dan mengaplikasikan penerapan akhlak mulia dari kisah-kisah penting dari Bani Umayyah, Abbasiyyah, Turki Utsmani, Syafawi dan Mughal. - Memahami dan menciptakan karya (<i>Project based learning</i>) mengenai kisah-kisah penting dari Bani Umayyah, Abbasiyyah, Turki Utsmani, Syafawi dan Mughal.
SEJARAH PERADABAN ISLAM	Peserta didik mampu menghayati penerapan akhlak mulia dari kisah-kisah penting dari Bani Umayyah, Abbasiyyah, Turki Utsmani, Syafawi dan Mughal sebagai pengantar untuk memahami alur sejarah masuknya Islam ke Indonesia.	- Memahami dan mengaplikasikan penerapan akhlak mulia dari kisah-kisah penting dari Bani Umayyah, Abbasiyyah, Turki Utsmani, Syafawi dan Mughal. - Memahami dan menciptakan karya (<i>Project based learning</i>) mengenai kisah-kisah penting dari Bani Umayyah, Abbasiyyah, Turki Utsmani, Syafawi dan Mughal.	

4. Learning Module (Teaching Module)

In the implementation of the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), particularly for Phase D in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) topics such as "Faith in Allah," teachers are granted full flexibility to design adaptable Learning Modules that span multiple sessions. An ideal module is developed comprehensively, starting with essential components that include general institutional information, author identity, and clear learning objectives aligned with the Learning Objectives Flow (ATP). Furthermore, the implementation design must strategically map out instructional hours, learning modes, and facilities, while seamlessly integrating learning materials, media, and both diagnostic and summative assessment plans to ensure a smooth educational experience (Darling-Hammond, Flook, et al., 2020b).

To make the module truly impactful, its development must be deeply rooted in student-centered principles. This means learning should be tailored to the developmental stages and diverse characteristics of the students, creating a meaningful and enjoyable experience. The instructional

process is designed to foster lifelong learning, support holistic competency and character development, and maintain contextual relevance by integrating local culture and partnering with parents and the community. By maintaining a future-oriented focus, the module ultimately prepares students to navigate sustainable long-term challenges (Biesta, 2015a).

Procedurally, crafting this module begins with identifying learning objectives derived from the broader Learning Outcomes (CP), followed by an initial assessment to gauge students' prior knowledge. Teachers then determine end-of-unit assessment techniques and success indicators aligned with the core objectives, allocate the necessary study hours, and establish formative assessment tools. The sequence of learning activities is then structured chronologically from start to finish, enriched with essential attachments such as worksheets, reading materials, varied media, and evaluation rubrics. As a final step, the entire module undergoes a thorough review and verification process to ensure all components are complete and ready for classroom implementation (Black & Wiliam, 2009).

The findings of this study indicate that the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum design within the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) framework represents a strategic effort to strengthen the relevance of religious education to the needs of 21st-century learners. Fundamentally, PAI at the junior high school (SMP) level is no longer limited to the transfer of religious knowledge but is also directed at developing students' character, spirituality, and moral awareness. The Independent Curriculum provides teachers with the flexibility to design contextual, differentiated, and student-centered learning experiences, allowing Islamic values to be meaningfully integrated into classroom activities (Kemendikbudristek, 2022b).

The analysis of the curriculum structure shows that the Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objectives (TP), Learning Objective Path (ATP), and Learning Module components form four main pillars in designing an adaptive and measurable Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum. Each component is interconnected, creating a comprehensive framework for learning implementation. CP defines the essential competencies that students must achieve by the end of the learning phase, while TP sets measurable learning objectives. ATP serves as a conceptual map that connects each learning objective in a logical sequence, while the Teaching Module provides practical guidance for teachers in designing learning activities, media, and assessments. The integration of these four components ensures that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teaching is systematic, progressive, and focused on character development (Darling-Hammond, Frank, et al., 2020).

In relation to the research objectives of reviewing and designing a junior high school Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum based on national regulations and Islamic educational principles, the analysis shows a strong alignment. The Independent Curriculum reflects the fundamental principles of Islamic education, emphasizing a balance between the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. This principle is reflected in the Islamic concepts of *tazkiyah al-nafs* (spiritual cleansing) and *ta'dib* (education toward righteous behavior). True Islamic education not only develops intellectual intelligence but also guides students to understand the meaning of life and their moral responsibility as *khalifah* (guardians) on earth. Within this framework, the Independent Curriculum provides significant opportunities for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers to design learning that fosters spiritual and social awareness in a balanced manner (Halstead, 2004).

Empirically, this study also highlights the importance of considering the social and psychological context of junior high school students in curriculum design. Early adolescence is a developmental stage characterized by identity exploration and the emergence of rational thinking and critical attitudes toward accepted values (Besari, 2021). Therefore, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning should emphasize strengthening faith (*aqidah*), moral understanding, and regular worship through a dialogical, reflective, and practical approach. The Independent Curriculum accommodates this need by enabling teachers to implement differentiated and project-based learning, both of which enhance critical thinking skills and religious awareness through contextual learning experiences.

Further literature analysis revealed that one of the biggest challenges in implementing the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum under the Merdeka Curriculum (Curriculum Merdeka) is teacher preparedness. Many Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers are still adapting to the paradigm shift that demands creativity, design thinking, and digital literacy (Musbaing, 2024).

Teachers accustomed to conventional teaching models often struggle to design ATP (Analysis of Islamic Education) and Teaching Modules (Teaching Modules) that align with CP and TP, highlighting the need for ongoing training and guidance. This type of professional development ensures teachers can effectively integrate Islamic values into contextual and collaborative learning practices.

On the other hand, this study found that the Independent Curriculum opens up opportunities to develop a more flexible and contextual Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum. Unlike previous centralized models, the curriculum can be adapted to reflect student characteristics, local culture, and the school environment. This flexibility aligns with the humanist educational approach in modern educational theory, which views learners as active subjects with unique potential and needs. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), this flexibility allows teachers to instill Islamic values through methods that reflect the social and cultural realities of their communities while maintaining the substance of Islamic teachings.

In the broader context of Islamic education reform, integrating Islamic values with 21st-century competencies has become an urgent need. A 21st-century-oriented curriculum requires students not only to understand Islamic teachings cognitively but also to develop critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity to face global challenges. These competencies align with Islamic principles that emphasize the balance between reason (*'aql*), heart (*qalb*), and action (*'amal*), ensuring that Islamic Religious Education fosters both knowledge and moral character. According to Zainuri, the 21st-century Islamic Religious Education learning model aims to produce a generation of Muslims who are ethical, productive, and adaptive to change while maintaining their Islamic identity (Zainuri, 2024). In the Independent Curriculum, teachers play a central role as designers and facilitators who integrate spiritual values with 21st-century skills through reflective, collaborative, and contextual strategies relevant to students' lives.

Furthermore, Siagian et al. emphasized that the design of a 21st-century Islamic Religious Education curriculum must be based on two main dimensions: normative and empirical (Siagian et al., 2025). The normative dimension demands that the curriculum be based on transcendent values derived from the Qur'an and Hadith to maintain its spiritual essence. The empirical dimension, on the other hand, demands responsiveness to the real needs of students and the dynamic social context. Neglecting either aspect can disrupt the educational balance, leading to rigidity on the one hand or excessive liberalism on the other. Therefore, a 21st-century-oriented Islamic Religious Education curriculum can be seen as a form of educational *ijtihad*, seeking to bridge text and context, tradition and modernity, so that Islamic education remains relevant, dynamic, and transformative in the digital age.

Teachers play a vital role as learning designers and facilitators, aligning curriculum design with student characteristics and the learning environment. Within the Merdeka Curriculum framework, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers are expected to be more creative in developing CP, TP, and ATP, which foster spiritual, social, and intellectual competencies. Innovative teachers can transform PAI into a means of value formation, enabling students not only to understand Islamic teachings textually but also to apply them reflectively and practically in their daily lives (Zainuri, 2024). Consequently, an integrated PAI curriculum aligned with 21st-century competencies produces students who are not only religious but also capable of critical thinking, empathy, and ethical behavior amidst globalization and technological advancement.

Overall, the analysis concludes that designing an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum at the junior high school level within the Merdeka Curriculum framework has significant potential to strengthen the identity of Islamic education in Indonesia. This curriculum not only addresses the challenges of modernization but also strengthens the role of religious education in shaping students' character and spirituality. The study's findings also indicate that successful curriculum implementation depends on three key factors: teacher quality, institutional support, and alignment between national policies and local contexts (OECD, 2020).

The implications of these findings highlight the importance of developing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher capacity through ongoing professional training, providing comprehensive curriculum guidelines, and fostering collaboration between educational institutions, government agencies, and the community. Future research is encouraged to conduct field studies to test the effectiveness of this curriculum design in classroom practice, including its impact on improving

students' religious, social, and moral competencies at the junior high school level. Thus, the results of this study not only enrich the theoretical framework of Islamic education but also provide practical contributions to the development of a national curriculum that is humanistic, spiritual, and adaptive to contemporary changes (Caena, 2014).

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study confirms that designing an Islamic Religious Education curriculum at the junior high school level within the Merdeka Curriculum framework is a conceptual and pedagogical process that requires integration between the philosophical foundations of Islam, the national regulatory framework, and the learning needs of students living in the current of contemporary change. The Merdeka Curriculum opens up broad space for the development of flexible and contextual learning designs, so that Islamic values can be presented through meaningful, dialogic, and character-oriented learning experiences. The analysis shows that the four core components of Learning Outcomes, Learning Objectives, Learning Objective Flow, and Learning Modules build a curriculum structure that is systematic, progressive, and aligned with the cognitive and affective development of early adolescent students.

The findings of this study also demonstrate that religious education at the junior high school level requires an approach that embraces the dynamics of students' identity development, allowing for the strengthening of Islamic faith, morals, worship, and Islamic historical literacy to occur in a reflective and applicable manner. The Independent Curriculum provides a methodological foundation for this goal, but its implementation relies heavily on teachers' professional readiness to design adaptive learning tools based on students' concrete needs. The main challenge arises from the gap between the demands of ideal curriculum design and the pedagogical capacity available in the field. This study emphasizes the urgency of strengthening teacher competencies, providing institutional support, and inter-institutional collaboration to strengthen the quality of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum implementation. Therefore, the design of an Islamic Religious Education curriculum based on the Independent Curriculum has the potential to become an important pillar in producing a young generation that is religious, critical, and moderate, and able to participate in the ever-evolving social life.

References

- Abdurrahman. (2024). Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan dalam Pendidikan Islam [Library Research Methods in Islamic Education]. In *Adabuna : Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pemikiran* (Vol. 3, Issue 2, pp. 102–113). <https://doi.org/10.38073/adabuna.v3i2.1563> [in Indonesian]
- Al-Attas, S. M. N. (1993). *The Concept of Education in Islam: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education*. ISTAC.
- Amka. (2024). *Kurikulum Pembelajaran Fleksibel : Implementasi dan Tantangan dalam Perspektif Merdeka Belajar* [Flexible Learning Curriculum: Implementation and Challenges from the Perspective of Independent Learning]. <https://doi.org/>[in Indonesian]
- Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (Eds.). (2001). *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. Longman.
- Arthur, J. (2005). The Re-emergence of Character Education in British Education Policy. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 53(3), 239–254. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8527.2005.00293.x>
- Besari, A. (2021). Perkembangan Sikap dan Nilai Moral Peserta didik Usia Remaja [Development of Attitudes and Moral Values in Adolescent Students]. *Jurnal Paradigma*, 11(1), 25–43. <https://doi.org/>[in Indonesian]
- Biesta, G. (2015a). *The beautiful risk of education*. Routledge.
- Biesta, G. (2015b). What Is Education For? On Good Education, Teacher Judgement, and Educational Professionalism. *European Journal of Education*, 50(1), 75–87.

- <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12109>
- Biesta, G. (2015c). What Is Education For? On Good Education, Teacher Judgement, and Educational Professionalism. *European Journal of Education*, 50(1), 75–87. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12109>
- Biggs, J., & Tang, C. (2011). *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* (4th ed.). Open University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1111/teth.12185>
- Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (2009). Developing the Theory of Formative Assessment. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 21(1), 5–31. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-008-9068-5>
- Bruner, J. S. (1960). *The Process of Education*. Harvard University Press.
- Caena, F. (2014). Teacher Competence Frameworks in Europe: Policy-as-Discourse and Policy-as-Practice. *European Journal of Education*, 49(3), 311–331. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12088>
- Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2020a). Implications for Educational Practice of the Science of Learning and Development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 24(2), 97–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791>
- Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2020b). Implications for Educational Practice of the Science of Learning and Development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 24(2), 97–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791>
- Darling-Hammond, L., Frank, J., & Snyder, J. (2020). *Learning in Action: How Effective Teaching Develops*. Teachers College Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hammerness, K., Grossman, P., Rust, F., & Shulman, L. (2005). The design of teacher education programs. *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World: What Teachers Should Learn and Be Able to Do*, 1, 390–441.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development*. Learning Policy Institute.
- Depdiknas. (2003). *Undang-Undang RI Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional*. Jakarta: Depdiknas. [Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. Jakarta: Ministry of National Education.]. [https://doi.org/\[in Indonesian\]](https://doi.org/[in Indonesian])
- Diana, A., Azani, M. Z., & M, M. (2024). The Concept And Context Of Islamic Education Learning In The Digital Era: Relevance And Integrative Studies. *Profetika: Jurnal Studi Islam*, 25(01), 33–44. <https://doi.org/10.23917/profetika.v25i01.4239>
- Djuaini, A. (2025). Internalization of Islamic Religious Education Values in Moral Development of Students in Madrasah. *Afkaruna: International Journal of Islamic Studies (AIJIS)*, 3(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.38073/aijis.v3i1.3330>
- Fadli, M. R. (2021). *Memahami desain metode penelitian kualitatif [Understanding qualitative research method design]*. 21(1), 33–54. <https://doi.org/10.21831/hum.v21i1>
- Fosnot, C. T. (2013). *Constructivism: Theory, perspectives, and practice*. Teachers College Press.
- Ghazali, A. M. (2014). The Concept Of Tolerance In Islamic Education. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 1(105).
- GTK, D. J. (2022). *Panduan Pembelajaran Kurikulum Merdeka [Independent Curriculum Learning Guide]*. Kemendikbudristek.
- Halstead, M. (2004). An Islamic concept of education. *Comparative Education*, 40(4), 517–529.
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*. Routledge.
- Hidayatullah, S., & Rahman, Y. (2025). Pendidikan Berbasis Nilai Tasawuf Menurut Abuddin Nata dan Relevansinya Terhadap Pembelajaran Abad 21 [Sufism-Based Education According to Abuddin Nata and Its Relevance to 21st Century Learning]. *Riset Islamika: Jurnal Pendidikan*

- Islam*, 1(02), 83–88. [https://doi.org/\[in Indonesian\]](https://doi.org/[in Indonesian])
- Kemendikbudristek. (2022a). *Panduan Pelaksanaan Komunitas Belajar Guru (KGB) [Guidelines for Implementing the Teacher Learning Community (KGB)]*. Direktorat Jenderal GTK. [https://doi.org/\[in Indonesian\]](https://doi.org/[in Indonesian])
- Kemendikbudristek. (2022b). *Panduan Pengembangan Bahan Ajar Digital [Guide to Development of Digital Teaching Materials]*. Direktorat Jenderal Guru dan Tenaga Kependidikan. [https://doi.org/\[in Indonesian\]](https://doi.org/[in Indonesian])
- Khuriyah, M. G. K. F. Z. M. (2024). Konsep kurikulum madrasah, sekolah, dan pesantren di indonesia [The curriculum concept of madrasas, schools and Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia]. *Jurnal Media Akademin (JMA) Vol.2, No.11*, 2(11). [https://doi.org/\[in Indonesian\]](https://doi.org/[in Indonesian])
- Komalasari, M., & Yakubu, A. B. (2023). Implementation of Student Character Formation Through Islamic Religious Education. *At-Tadzkir: Islamic Education Journal*, 2(1), 52–64. <https://doi.org/10.59373/attadzkir.v2i1.16>
- Komariah, N., & Nihayah, I. (2023). Improving The Personality Character of Students Through Learning Islamic Religious Education. *At-Tadzkir: Islamic Education Journal*, 2(1), 65–77. <https://doi.org/10.59373/attadzkir.v2i1.15>
- Kosim, M., Muqoddam, F., Mubarak, F., & Laila, N. Q. (2023). The dynamics of Islamic education policies in Indonesia. *Cogent Education*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2023.2172930>
- Kusen, R. H. (2019). *Contextual Learning and Its Contribution To The Understanding of Islamic Education*. 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.29240/ajis.v4i1.844>
- M.B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. Miles.
- Mariska, R., Islam, U., Abdurrahman, N. K. H., Pekalongan, W., Khobir, A., Islam, U., Abdurrahman, N. K. H., & Pekalongan, W. (2024). *Implementasi Aliran Konstruktivisme Terhadap Kurikulum Merdeka Dalam Perspektif Filsafat Pendidikan Islam [Implementation of Constructivism in the Independent Curriculum from the Perspective of Islamic Educational Philosophy]*. 2(1), 195–197. [https://doi.org/\[in Indonesian\]](https://doi.org/[in Indonesian])
- Marshall, H. (2025). Integrating sustainability into religious education. *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2025.2504983>
- Misniati, W. F. (2023). Landasan Pengembangan Kurikulum Merdeka dan Urgensinya pada Pembelajaran PAI [The Foundation for Independent Curriculum Development and Its Urgency in Islamic Religious Education Learning]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, 7, 31129–31135. [https://doi.org/\[in Indonesian\]](https://doi.org/[in Indonesian])
- Mulyana, A. (2024). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif [Qualitative Research Methods]*. [https://doi.org/\[in Indonesian\]](https://doi.org/[in Indonesian])
- Munawar-Rachman, B. (2022). *Pemikiran Islam Nurcholish Madjid In Indonesian [Islamic Thought of Nurcholish Madjid In]*. Prodi S2 Studi Agama-Agama UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung.
- Musbaing. (2024). Kompetensi Guru PAI di Abad 21 : Tantangan dan Peluang dalam Pendidikan Berbasis Teknologi [Islamic Religious Education Teacher Competencies in the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities in Technology-Based Education]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Refleksi*, 13(2), 315–324. [https://doi.org/\[in Indonesian\]](https://doi.org/[in Indonesian])
- Nucci, L. P., & Narvaez, D. (2008). *Handbook of Moral and Character*. Routledge.
- OECD. (2020). *Education in a Changing World*. OECD Publishing.
- Pemerintah, P. (2007). *Peraturan Pemerintah Republik Indonesia Nomor 55 tahun 2007 tentang Pendidikan Agama dan Pendidikan Keagamaan [Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 55 of 2007 concerning Religious Education and Religious Education]*. [https://doi.org/\[in Indonesian\]](https://doi.org/[in Indonesian])
- Priestley, M., Biesta, G., & Robinson, S. (2021). *Teacher Agency: An Ecological Approach*.

- Bloomsbury Academic. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781474298713>
- Pujianti, E., & Nugraha, H. A. (2024). The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Shaping the Inclusive Character of Students. *Journal Corner of Education, Linguistics, and Literature*, 4(001), 371–380. <https://doi.org/10.54012/jcell.v4i001.402>
- Riyadi, L., & Budiman, N. (2023). Capaian Pembelajaran Seni Musik Pada Kurikulum Merdeka Sebagai Wujud Merdeka Belajar [Music Arts Learning Outcomes in the Independent Curriculum as a Manifestation of Independent Learning]. *Musikolastika: Jurnal Pertunjukan Dan Pendidikan Musik*, 5(1), 40–50. <https://doi.org/10.24036/musikolastika.v5i1.104> [in indonesian]
- Siagian, H. N., Silaen, I. S., Nurjannah, F., & Halimah, S. (2025). *Merespon Tantangan Abad Ke-21 : Redefinisi Kurikulum PAI Melalui Pendekatan Kompetensi [Responding to the Challenges of the 21st Century: Redefining the Islamic Education Curriculum Through a Competency-Based Approach]*. 2, 137–155. <https://doi.org/>[in Indonesian]
- Supriadi, U., Rindu, M., & Islamy, F. (2024). Islamic Religious Education, Moderation, Ethics: Bibliometric Analysis Between Western and Eastern Cultures. *Proceeding Annual Conference on Islamic Religious Education*, 4(1).
- Tabroni, I., Marlina, L., & Maesaroh, S. (2022). Islamic religious education learning in forming an islamic personal character. *L'Geneus: The Journal Language Generations of Intellectual Society*, 11(1), 13–19.
- Tuna, M. H. (2022). The professionalisation of Islamic religious education teachers. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 44(2), 188–199.
- Wahyudi, S., Dudiyono, D., & Mawardi, K. (2023). Online Learning Talaqqi Method in Pesantren of Indonesia. *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 15(3), 2996–3004. <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v15i3.2596>
- Young, M. F. D., & Muller, J. (2016). *Curriculum and the Specialization of Knowledge: Studies in the Sociology of Education*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315688123>
- Zainuri, H. (2024). Pengembangan Kurikulum PAI Berbasis Kompetensi Abad 21 [Development of Islamic Education Curriculum Based on 21st Century Competencies]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 12(01), 58–68. <https://doi.org/>[in Indonesian]
- Zulmi, N. A., & Natuna, D. A. (2025). Digitalization of Teacher Personality Competency Development. *Future Space: Studies in Geo-Education*, 2(2), 209–219. <https://doi.org/10.69877/fssge.v2i2.64>



© 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY SA) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>).