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INTERNAL POLICY ANALYSIS OF BOARDING-BASED SCHOOLS: CASE STUDY OF INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM ORIENTATION AT AZZAINIYAH NAHDATUL WATHAN SMP BATAM CITY

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ABSTRACT

Islamic boarding school-based schools, as traditional Islamic educational institutions, often face challenges in implementing a curriculum that is able to accommodate religious values while meeting the demands of increasingly modern national education. This study examines the differences in the direction of Islamic boarding schools and schools that emerge in relation to Islamic boarding school-based school curriculum policies at Az-Zainiyah Nahdatul Wathan Middle School. This research uses a qualitative approach with data collection and data processing techniques using Miles and Huberman. There is a case analysis to identify and analyze impacts and analyze decision-making policies at Az-Zainiyah Nahdatul Wathan Middle School. Data was obtained through in-depth interviews with Islamic boarding school managers, school principals and 5 students, and 3 parents. Apart from that, observations and documentation were also carried out to collect phenomena related to the impact of curriculum policies on students' personal and social development. The results of this research indicate that there is an ethical dilemma in decision making that must consider the balance between educational innovation and respect for tradition, as well as the importance of involving various parties, including the community and local stakeholders, in formulating more inclusive and ethical policies. It is hoped that this study will provide insight into improving policies at Az-Zainiyah Nahdatul Wathan Middle School, taking into account the demands of an independent curriculum and religious values, human rights and social justice. Ethical dilemmas arise in several aspects, including: first, the tension between maintaining the traditional values of Islamic boarding schools and integration with a more secular, independent curriculum. Second, the difference between policies set by the government and the specific culture of Islamic boarding schools. Third, there is an impact on the implementation of the independent curriculum in schools which has not been optimal.

Key words: ethical dilemma, curriculum policy, Islamic boarding school-based school, independent curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Additional educational institutions that are growing rapidly in Indonesia are Islamic boarding schools. With the establishment of legitimate educational institutions, Islamic boarding schools are no longer left behind in the academic realm because they do not follow trends. In its evolution from a personal network to a more impersonal institution, Islamic Boarding School began with its founding as an institution. Because of the institute's history of working together, its members can feel secure in their roles and enjoy



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productive collaboration. Therefore, it is the prerogative of each Islamic boarding school to set its own academic standards and pace.

Az-Zainiyah Nahdatul Wathan Middle School is an Islamic Boarding School (SBP). According to Suhardi, 2012, Islamic boarding school-based schools are schools with superior education systems that combine the two education systems that Indonesia currently has, namely the formal education system and the Islamic boarding school education system (Muhammad Khoirul Anam, 2019). Implementing the Independent Curriculum which is more flexible and competency-based can be seen as a challenge for Islamic boarding school-based schools which have so far been more structured in their curriculum approach. This raises the dilemma of whether Islamic boarding school-based schools should follow the national policy or continue to maintain existing educational methods. The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes competency development in various fields, including life skills and 21st century skills. On the other hand, Islamic boarding school-based schools tend to focus on in-depth religious education, which may not be completely in line with curriculum models that are more secular or oriented towards non-religious skills. This policy raises an ethical dilemma regarding how to balance in-depth religious education with the demands of broader skills development.

Decision making in Islamic boarding school-based schools usually involves Islamic boarding school leaders, such as kiai or ustad, who have great influence in directing educational policy. The Merdeka Curriculum may be considered a policy that comes from outside the Islamic boarding school environment, which can cause tension between those who support this policy and those who are more loyal to Islamic boarding school traditions. An ethical dilemma arises regarding who has the right to make decisions regarding the curriculum and how much external policy can be implemented without damaging the integrity of the Islamic boarding school. The ethical dilemma in making the Independent Curriculum policy in Islamic boarding school-based schools arises due to the tension between the traditional values existing in Islamic boarding schools and the demands of modernization in the world of education. Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have long been educational institutions that emphasize religious teaching, especially Islam, with a distinctive and in-depth curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum, introduced by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, aims to provide flexibility in learning and encourage the development of individual character and abilities.

Az-Zainiyah Nahdatul Wathan Middle School as an Islamic boarding school-based school has unique characteristics, which not only prioritize academic aspects but also religious values which are the basis of the educational process. In this context, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is often faced with ethical dilemmas involving a balance between conformity with religious principles and the need to follow national policies. For example, adjustments to teaching materials that may conflict with religious principles or structuring study time that risks disrupting the students' worship schedule. So this dilemma raises a significant ethical question: to what extent should Az-Zainiyah Nahdatul Wathan Middle School follow national education policies, even though these policies can sometimes clash with the traditional values adhered to by the Islamic boarding school? How can decisions made by the school maintain the integrity of Islamic boarding school religious and cultural values without sacrificing the quality of education expected by the Independent Curriculum? Therefore, this research aims to analyze the ethical dilemma



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faced by Az-Zainiyah Nahdatul Wathan Middle School in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum and its impact on the decisions taken by Islamic boarding school leaders in dealing with this policy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education Policy

Education is the main capital that every human being must have, this is important because basically education is like an experiment that will never be finished, as long as there is human life in this world. It is said that, because education is part of human culture and civilization which continues to develop over time. This is in line with human nature which has creative and innovative potential in all areas of life (Heriyadi, 2022). The development of the world of education in Indonesia is currently experiencing many changes and advances, of course the process of change and progress is influenced by several factors. One of the main factors influencing change is the educational foundation used. Without a foundation, education will not have a strong footing or foundation to support the development of educational activities. Therefore, there are many foundations that must be considered for the development of educational activities, one of which is the policy basis.

The foundation of national education is education based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and Education and Teaching Law no. 12 of 1954, Law no. 2 of 1989 concerning the National Education System and no. 20 of 2003 (Hery Soedibyo, 2003). The general education system and Islamic education are two sides that cannot be separated in the national education system, both are interrelated and each has specificities that complement each other. On the one hand, the aim of national education is to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe and are devoted to God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable and are expected to become good citizens and are responsible for everything. Policies always include ambiguous structures. On the one hand, policy has an instrumental dimension in producing decisions, programs and other results with values believed by decision-making actors, but on the other hand, policy can produce anti-values such as domination and non-developmental processes. Education policy is a concept or idea that we often hear, say and even act on, but often do not understand well. The main basis underlying a policy is common sense considerations and is also based on needs in the field. Of course, a policy is not solely the result of consideration by human reason, whether individual or group, even though human reason is the dominant element in making decisions.

Independent Curriculum

The Independent Curriculum is an educational initiative that allows students to choose subjects according to their interests, aiming to realize students' aspirations and create teachers who play an active role in the world of education. Although initially implemented in Islamic boarding schools, this program has not been officially recognized by the Ministry of Education. The general objectives of the independent curriculum have been adopted by various educational institutions, including the Institute for Islamic Studies, and have contributed to the progress of teachers as the main movers with a better understanding of students' needs (Wafi, 2023).



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The discourse surrounding the Independent Curriculum underlines its basic principles, which provide flexibility for all stakeholders in education to innovate in fostering lifelong learning in line with the Pancasila Learner Profile. In this context, the important role of educators is highlighted because they shape learning experiences that focus on developing basic competencies and typical attributes of students (Oktavia & Qudsiyah, 2023). This effort is expected to increase the quality of education and human resources throughout Indonesia (Muzakki et al., 2023). Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum depends on various factors, including the features of the curriculum itself, the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes of educators, in addition to their proficiency in incorporating the curriculum into teaching practice. The principle of intellectual freedom embedded in the Merdeka Curriculum underlines the important role of educators as the main architects of educational victory. In the era of digitalization, the impact of technology on education is very large, influencing the dynamics of both educators and students who now cannot be separated from digital devices (Ariga, 2023).

The preparation stage for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum includes various aspects, such as developing content, integrating the curriculum into the classroom, ensuring a conducive learning environment, navigating implementation challenges, evaluating impact, managing the learning process, accommodating variations in implementation, evaluating program feasibility, and monitoring curriculum compliance. Careful attention to these aspects is essential to ensure smooth implementation according to the envisioned goals (Maulana et al., 2022). In the Islamic boarding school realm, designing a curriculum for independent learning involves researching learning requirements and involving administrators, teaching staff, and instructors. This planning stage includes determining learning milestones, compiling teaching modules, and formulating assessments that are aligned with national curriculum benchmarks. The importance of collaborative talent, creativity, and problem-solving skills is underscored through collaborative efforts with educational institutions and experts in the field. Routine evaluation and monitoring mechanisms are very important to ensure the smooth implementation of the Independent Curriculum (Hanief, 2023). Educators play an important role in the effective implementation of a self-paced learning curriculum. Apart from that, the success of implementing an independent learning curriculum in Islamic educational institutions requires wholehearted support from the leadership of the institution. Educators are given the autonomy to structure learning experiences according to students' needs and are encouraged to use active teaching methodologies. Ongoing training and support initiatives are available to empower educators in developing and implementing innovative and relevant teaching methodologies (Muslimin, 2023).

Islamic boarding school-based school policy

Examining the reality of Islamic boarding school-based schools, a number of aspects stand out, most of which relate to decision making and policies that seek more progressive growth than before. Because in an Islamic boarding school-based school, the Islamic boarding school leadership is given the highest authority in all matters relating to school operations. When an Islamic boarding school leader decides on a policy, it seems as if it cannot be changed or questioned. This applies to both Islamic boarding school administration and administrative bodies that oversee educational facilities. When a senior leader is no longer responsible for such things, a manager or director should step in, and there will be no discernible difference between the two. Therefore, the characteristics of each of these leadership styles will be identical.



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Therefore, they will rely on dominance as a selection criterion. Good intentions or goals for all parties must be considered at least in the decision-making process, preferably in a discussion forum where all parties are involved in choosing the optimal policy. The decision-making process should be discussed with subordinates by both top leaders (Kiyai) and middle leaders (heads of institutions responsible for overseeing formal educational institutions) to ensure that all ideas are considered and the resulting policies are more collaborative and effective. In practice, the speed of the school in implementing a program has nothing to do with the decisions made by the institution's management. While the decision has been made, there is still room for confusion in the next step of the process: putting it into action. This makes it impossible to effectively manage program-related choices or policies. Most of the time, institute administrators present courses that do not change the extent to which individual schools and other organizations have prepared for them. Because all programs require evaluation in every process, this creates challenges during program implementation. It is not uncommon for there to be variations in assessment methods between institutions, or for evaluation to occur only after the program has been completed.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method was carried out in the Az-Zainiyah Nahdatul Wathan Middle School environment, which is an Islamic boarding school-based school. This research is important to carry out because it discusses how policy is made in the orientation of the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Boarding School-Based School Environments. This research has been prepared in a qualitative manner, where this approach involves case study procedures which produce descriptive data in the form of experiences from individuals and actors observed in the school environment. In qualitative research, a variety of approaches can be used to collect data. Cresswell stated that data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation, with a focus on certain themes or topics. Therefore, data collection techniques in this research include observation and interviews and theoretical data processing techniques by Miles and Huberman. Furthermore, data analysis is a systematic step to organize data obtained from observation and documentation by researchers, and is followed by interviews and discussions with Islamic boarding school leaders, school principals, teachers, students and parents which will be carried out from 21 to 24 November 2024.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In everyday life we have certainly been in a dilemma position, a position where someone is in a condition between choosing a or b, both of which cannot be done together so they have to choose one option based on considerations. These considerations are the reasons for individual decisions. Not only that, policy making must be based on actions that meet normative criteria and meet moral or ethical standards (Imas Kurniawaty, 2022).

The policy of Islamic boarding school leaders to maintain a traditional approach to religious learning is a crucial factor influencing the implementation of the independent curriculum in schools. The continuation of this policy reflects the commitment of Islamic boarding school leaders to maintain the traditional heritage of Islamic boarding schools, which prioritizes the teaching of religious books as the main foundation of education. So, the orientation and implementation of the implementation of the



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Independent Curriculum, as an innovation in the world of education which emphasizes student independence and creativity, creates its own dilemma for Islamic Boarding Schools. On the one hand, Islamic values that are unique to Islamic boarding schools need to be integrated consistently in the curriculum so that students do not lose their Islamic identity (Susanna, 2023). The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Az-Zainiyah Nahdatul Wathan Middle School presents several ethical dilemmas that need to be considered carefully. Some of these dilemmas involve balancing educational freedom, religious values, and the demands of the national curriculum. Ethical dilemmas that are often faced in decision making. An ethical dilemma is where a person is faced with two or more choices, each of which has conflicting moral consequences (Gede Wirata, 2024). In this dilemma, each available option involves sacrifices or considerations of different values, and there is no clear solution that can be considered completely right or wrong.

The following are several ethical dilemmas that arise in policy making regarding the Independent Curriculum orientation at Az-Zainiyah Nahdatul Wathan Middle School:

Differences in Educational Goals

The Merdeka Curriculum gives schools the freedom to design a curriculum that is more flexible and suits students' needs. However, Islamic boarding schools as educational institutions that also emphasize religious education often have more specific goals related to the formation of morals and religious understanding. This can be seen from the limitations of Az-Zainiyah Nahdatul Wathan Middle School teachers in designing differentiated learning related to the choice of media or learning materials that are not in accordance with "Manhajiah" or Islamic boarding school rules. For example, the use of song media, making posters in learning, limited licensing for novels that students can read, or educational films that can be watched. This results in tension between the freedom provided by the Independent Curriculum and the main goal of Islamic boarding schools to deepen religious teachings.

The Influence of Modernity and Technology

The Merdeka Curriculum encourages the use of technology and a more modern learning approach, which can lead to the integration of digital learning, project-based learning, or the use of software in learning. However, Islamic boarding schools tend to maintain traditional methods that focus more on book interpretation, direct teaching, and other conservative approaches. This creates a dilemma between maintaining tradition and accepting modernity. This can be seen in the use of IT media as a learning resource. Manhajiah Islamic boarding school emphasizes that students are not allowed to have social media accounts, while social media accounts can be used to search for learning resources or self-development through competitions. Apart from that, there are limitations for students in using computers and the internet, such as learning ICT with the material of creating a blogger account, which is not permitted under Islamic boarding school regulations. This is limited because of concerns that it will damage students' memorization and morals.

Equality of male and female students in competitions

Az-Zainiyah Nahdatul Wathan Middle School faces challenges in participating in various competitions for students' self-development because they are constrained by Islamic boarding school licensing regulations for participating in competitions. This is because according to Islamic boarding school



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rules the competition can only be participated in by male students and the competition is not mixed for boys and girls. So there is injustice for female students who cannot take part in competitions.

Changes in cultural and religious values

The Merdeka curriculum emphasizes strengthening 21st century skills such as creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration, which may be at odds with pesantren's more conservative approach to religious and social education. Islamic boarding schools often prioritize more structured and normative teaching in accordance with religious teachings. This creates a dilemma as to whether implementing a more open approach in the Merdeka Curriculum can change the religious and cultural values that are upheld in Islamic boarding schools. This can be seen during the implementation of the P5 project, where students are limited in being creative and innovating due to Manhajiah rules. For example, during a project with the theme Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, getting to know culture in Indonesia. Where for students it is limited by introducing the culture and traditions of revealing regional clothing or ceremonies that are contrary to the teachings of the Islamic religion.

Student independence vs conventional in learning

Islamic boarding schools often emphasize conventional, in-depth learning, with more structured teaching by ustadz. Meanwhile, the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes independence and learning that is more centered on student choice, which gives them the freedom to explore their interests and talents individually. This creates a dilemma between maintaining conventional approaches in Islamic boarding schools and adopting more flexible individual learning principles. Teachers tend to teach using a lecture system, while the independent curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning with a variety of strategies. With students' independence in learning, it is considered that the teacher is not teaching optimally.

Integrity and autonomy in assessment

The Merdeka Curriculum provides greater freedom in student assessment and evaluation, allowing for more varied approaches, such as project-based assessment or portfolio assessment. However, Islamic boarding schools often have more structured and rigid assessment standards, in accordance with religious and scientific values. This can create tension in terms of how assessments are carried out fairly and in accordance with the principles of Islamic boarding school education. Meanwhile, at Az-Zainiyah Nahdatul Wathan Middle School, Islamic boarding school subjects still use written tests, oral tests and practical assessments which do not pay attention to the needs and diversity of students in carrying out assessments.

To resolve the ethical dilemma that arises in the Independent Curriculum orientation at Az-Zainiyah Nahdatul Wathan Middle School, namely by considering the balance between curriculum freedom and the Islamic boarding school's religious and cultural values. Here are some solutions that can be implemented to overcome this dilemma:

1. Collaboration between the National curriculum and religious education. Az-Zainiyah Nahdatul Wathan Middle School can adapt the principles of the Independent Curriculum, but with an emphasis on integration between general and religious education. One way to achieve this is to design a curriculum that accommodates both equally. For example, developing courses that not only teach 21st century skills but also emphasize religious values. Develop a curriculum that is flexible and can be adapted to the needs of the Islamic boarding school. For example, sufficient time for religious learning such as



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tafsir, fiqh, and morals, while still including project-based learning, collaboration, and technology components mandated in the Merdeka Curriculum

- 2. Application of technology with a phased approach. Az-Zainiyah Nahdatul Wathan Middle School seeks to integrate technology in learning in a way that is appropriate to the Islamic boarding school context. This approach can be carried out in stages, with maximum control from the teacher in the use of computers, laptops or internet access. This approach does not need to completely change traditional methods, but can be an additional tool that enriches the learning process.
- 3. Teacher training and increasing professionalism. Training for teachers at Az-Zainiyah Nahdatul Wathan Middle School, especially Islamic boarding school teachers, to understand and implement the Independent Curriculum in a way that is in accordance with Islamic boarding school values. This training is important to ensure that educators can balance teaching 21st century skills and in-depth religious education
- 4. Adapt assessment to religious principles and national eduacation policy. In terms of assessment, it is possible for Islamic boarding school subjects to develop a fair and transparent assessment system, which not only evaluates students' knowledge in academic aspects but also in religious and moral aspects in accordance with the objectives of the Islamic boarding school. Az-Zainiyah Nahadatul Wathan Middle School can use a combination of formative and summative assessments, by giving greater weight to assessments that include aspects of morals and character formation. For example, project-based assessments that reflect social and religious values, or exams that assess student competency in both general science and religion.
- 5. Involve the community and stakeholders in the implementation process. To overcome the ethical dilemma in implementing the Independent Curriculum, Az-Zainiyah Nahdatul Wathan Middle School must involve parents and ulama in discussions and the curriculum planning process. In this way, the implementation of policies can be more easily accepted by all related parties. Hold discussion forums or joint studies with parents and religious leaders to align Islamic boarding school education goals with national education policies. In addition, periodic evaluations can be carried out to identify obstacles that may arise in implementing the curriculum.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Islamic boarding school-based schools does bring big ethical challenges and dilemmas. However, with a wise approach, Islamic boarding schools can adapt this curriculum without compromising their main principles. This requires constructive dialogue between interested parties, including educators, parents and Islamic boarding school administrators, to ensure that the implementation of this curriculum can accommodate students' developmental needs and the religious values they hold. The solution to resolving the ethical dilemma in implementing the Independent Curriculum at Az-Zainiyah Nahdatul Wathan Middle School is an inclusive and sustainable approach. This involves adjusting the curriculum to maintain Islamic boarding school religious and cultural values, indepth teacher training, and wise technology empowerment. Involving various parties in the planning and implementation process is also important to ensure that the goals of Islamic boarding school education are achieved without sacrificing students' potential in developing skills that are relevant to the times. Based on



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the findings above, further research is needed regarding the effectiveness of the solutions that have been described in making orientation policies and implementing the independent curriculum at Az-Zainiyah Nahdatul Wathan Middle School. It is important for this research to be carried out to somewhat align educational demands and school culture for Islamic boarding school-based schools.

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