IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM IN AKIDAH AKHLAK LEARNING TO TRAIN STUDENTS CRITICAL THINKING

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Abstract:
This study aims to describe the application of learning akidah akhlak based on the independent curriculum to train students critical thinking, and describe the teachers way to train students critical thinking. The research used a qualitative method with a descriptive phenomenological approach conducted at Muhammadiyah 11 Randegan Elementary School, with the research subjects being class teacher, akidah akhlak teachers, and fifth grade students. Data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. The data analysis technique uses a triangulation technique, which has a flow, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that the application of the independent curriculum in learning akidah akhlak, the teacher must integrate students critical thinking skills. The implementation of akidah akhlak learning begins with preliminary activities. Then the core activities in the form of exploration phases for students, core activities as a process of akidah akhlak teachers to hone, train, and develop students critical thinking skills, through several sparking questions, and closing activities. The strategy of the akidah akhlak teacher in training students critical thinking through strategies with discussion methods, problem-based learning, and through the project of strengthening the profile of pancasila students.

Keywords: merdeka curriculum, akidah akhlak, critical thinking

Abstrak:

Kata Kunci: kurikulum merdeka, akidah akhlak, berpikir kritis
INTRODUCTION

Many changes and alterations have occurred in the way the curriculum is administered in Indonesia. Beginning in 1947 and continuing until it became the current curriculum, namely the independent curriculum (Muharrom et al., 2023). Merdeka learning is characterized as a learning design that allows students to study in a relaxed, tranquil, and entertaining environment while also focusing on students' innate talents (Syah et al., 2023). The freedom to think creatively and freely is the focus of learning in the independent curriculum (Quratul Aini & Adiyono, 2023). Teachers are expected to be a driving force in providing and doing nice things for pupils as a source of learning (Qolbiyah, 2022).

Several educational programs are included in the independent curriculum, one of the programs offered by the ministry of education and culture in the introduction of merdeka learning is the beginning of the P5 program, also known as the pancasila student profile strengthening project (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). The project aims to raise the profile of pancasila students in order to restore the character or individual pancasila students who represent the Indonesian national ideology (Ihsan & Fatah, 2021). The pancasila student profile is the character and skills created from daily life and implanted in each student through culture in an educational institution unit, intracurricular learning, the pancasila student profile strengthening project (curricular learning), and extracurricular. Faith and fear of God Almighty, noble character, global diversity, creativity, mutual cooperation, critical reasoning, and independence are the six primary dimensions of the Pancasila learner profile (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). The goal of education for the Pancasila student profile is to generate graduates who are competent while also upholding moral ideals and character (Juliani & Bastian, 2021).

As one of the characteristics in the pancasila learner profile (P5), critical
thinking is a component that is required and cultivated in today's learning. So, when the PISA survey from 2018 is revealed in 2019, Indonesia is ranked in the bottom ten out of 79 nations in terms of students critical thinking (Hewi & Shaleh, 2020). As a result, it is critical to emphasize education and discover strategies to improve and train learning quality and ability in Indonesia (Rahmawati et al., 2023). The PISA study results are one of the grounds behind Indonesia's merdeka curriculum (Astutik & Farista, 2023). Various studies were undertaken based on the survey results on how to train and strengthen the ability to think critically through learning akidah akhlak in educational institutions, including at the elementary school level. This akidah akhlak learning is used since it has a significant impact on childrens education (Putri & Nadlif, 2023). The implementation of akidah akhlak material based on the independent curriculum as an endeavor to train and improve students critical thinking skills through the Pancasila student profile program may be determined from the survey findings.

Critical thinking is becoming increasingly important as the times change, hence critical thinking is being developed more fully in the independent curriculum. Critical thinking is the ability to examine the ideas generated, make a temporary decision on the best course of action to solve the problem, or choose something dependable and logical, then evaluate and take a solution that is believed (Inggriyani & Fazriyah, 2018). Another attribute of critical thinking is the ability to come up with a good solution and maintain a positive attitude in the face of a difficulty (Sasmita et al., 2022). Critical thinking ability is also a construction process that involves connecting numerous pieces of information, processing it, assessing it, and arriving at the best conclusion or judgment (Adnyana et al., 2022). A student is required to be able to debate, appraise, and evaluate well in this case. As a result, it is vital for every individual to develop critical thinking skills in order to deal with a variety of challenges and circumstances in everyday life (Sarwanto et al., 2021).

Critical reasoning pupils can analyze information, both quantitative and qualitative, in an objective manner by applying critical thinking. They can also combine many pieces of information, analyze, evaluate, and develop conclusions (Mudrikah, 2020). Acquiring and digesting ideas and information, examining and assessing reasoning, and reflecting on ideas and mental processes in reaching conclusions are all components of critical thinking (Basri et al., 2022; Yasin & Khasbulloh, 2022). Data and notion collection and analysis Examining and evaluating logic Consider and evaluate one's own ideas. Analyzing logic, contemplating, and evaluating one's own thoughts.

This critical thinking is fostered further in akidah akhlak learning because critical reasoning and curiosity help students to continue to filter available information and digest it effectively, enhance problem solving skills, and play an essential part in academic success (Wardani et al., 2021). One of the factors that must be considered in developing students critical thinking skills is the usage of an independent curriculum in the classroom. Because it is based on cognitive and non-cognitive characteristics, akidah akhlak can be a platform for teachers to train students critical thinking. Furthermore, the learning process is a method for developing pupils talents, both cognitive and non-cognitive. Non-cognitive
evaluation is created alongside cognitive assessment in the independent program. Cognitive assessment focuses on student knowledge, whereas non-cognitive assessment considers how psychological children or students are (Bimagfiranda & Achadi, 2023).

Each topic teacher in the independent curriculum is entitled to adapt learning to the independent curriculum, including the teacher of akidah akhlak. With this authority, each instructor is free to devise acceptable learning methods (Rifa’i et al., 2022). In learning akidah akhlak, critical thinking serves as a worldview for viewing reality and its implications in life from diverse perspectives (Romadlon et al., 2021). This enables teachers to employ appropriate approaches to train each students critical thinking skills. There are also policies connected to independent learning freedom for students in the independent curriculum. As a result, when learning, children tend to exhibit interest, activity, courage, and student confidence. With the growth of this mindset, pupils in learning assess, select, and solve a variety of difficulties. Where in this learning stage is a persons critical thinking process (Putra et al., 2023).

The independent curriculum allows teachers to be more creative in their teaching and makes them more aware of their students interests, talents, needs, and abilities (Restu et al., 2022, Kurniati et al., 2022). The type of teacher innovation in the classroom Classroom management, the use of learning methods, and the usage of learning material can all help to attain akidah akhlak (Badawi, 2023). Furthermore, in class management, several study groups are formed, using various learning methods such as problem-based learning methods, jigsaw-type cooperative learning methods, and learning media in the form of audio visuals applied to learning videos, where the videos will be used as student analysis materials (Trisnawati & Salahuddin, 2023). With the availability of learning methods based on the teacher critical thinking, it is possible to naturally educate and produce students critical thinking skills (Zakiah & Lestari, 2019).

Critical thinking abilities are necessary for pupils to develop in order to help them study and prepare for the future as one of the 21st century's abilities (Rahardhian, 2022, Muhith et al., 2023). A student can understand and solve problems more effectively and efficiently if they think critically. It is crucial for teachers to experiment with different teaching methods and approaches while using a independent learning curriculum to assist students enhance their critical thinking skills. As a result, study in training critical thinking and reasoning "critical thinking" in akidah akhlak material is required. Whereas learning akidah akhlak based on an independent curriculum necessitates reasoning and thinking in theory, which is then executed in practice or real-world actions by pupils.

Previous research based on the keywords of this research influenced this research. This divide is used to define the relationship between earlier and current research, which is characterized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Previous Research Studies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researchers</td>
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<td>Policy for implementing the independent</td>
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According to the study of past research studies, this research still has things that may be debated again, that is, it still has flaws that become points of difference and uniqueness in this research. Where in the study has critical thinking not been discussed as a component of the Pancasila student profile in the independent curriculum. Furthermore, practice or implementation in akidah akhlak learning activities is still required. Based on the findings of prior studies and the novelty of this study, the researcher wishes to conduct research on training critical thinking in moral learning using a independent curriculum.

Based on prior study, the independent curriculum is an important component that has to be developed and examined further. One of them is about critical thinking, critical thinking is a high-level ability that is highly important and required by students, critical thinking is a high-level ability that is very important and required by students. Learning akidah akhlak also necessitates critical thinking, hence critical thinking instruction from teachers to students is required. The purpose of this study is to discover how the application of learning akidah akhlak based on the independent curriculum trains students critical thinking and how teachers train students critical thinking. Researchers will focus on study on the application or use of the independent curriculum in akidah akhlak material, as well as how teachers train students critical thinking skills, based on these objectives. It is hoped that the end outcome of this research would be clear and capable of answering and achieving the research objectives. So that students can strengthen and continue to train their critical thinking skills during the learning process in order to attain learning objectives.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative research method with a phenomenological descriptive approach. The qualitative research method is a research approach that analyzes natural things with the goal of studying events that occur and is descriptive in the form of words, language, and a comprehensive picture that attempts to enhance understanding from the research subject's point of view in depth (Sugiyono, 2019). The subjects in this study were class teachers, akidah akhlak teachers, and fifth grade students at SD Muhammadiyah 11 Randegan Tanggulangin.

Researchers retrieved and collected primary data in this study through observation and interviews, as well as secondary data through documentation. The research procedure began with initial observations at SD Muhammadiyah 11 Randegan Tanggulangin.
11 Randegan Tanggulangin to investigate data related to the learning process of akidah akhlak subject matter in the classroom, followed by interviews with class teachers, moral creed teachers, and fifth grade students. Documentation in the form of images of activities that occur during the akidah akhlak learning process, as well as documentation of the final grades of students akidah akhlak topics.

The data analysis technique in this study uses triangulation techniques, an analysis technique developed by Miles and Huberman which consists of three flows, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Thalib, 2022). Data verification is carried out in accordance with the synchronization of the results of interviews, observations and documentation which can then be obtained conclusions from the research results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Implementation of Learning Akidah Akhlak Based on The Independent Curriculum

The independent curriculum has been applied to the subject of akidah akhlak at Muhammadiyah 11 Randegan Elementary School, the informants said that they had implemented the independent curriculum in learning akidah akhlak well. In the independent curriculum program, SD M 11 Randegan Tanggulangin has the status of a changing independent school. This status was obtained after the school went through the independent learning school stage. This stage was carried out, in response to an appeal related to the discourse by the Ministry of Education and Culture regarding the use of an independent curriculum as a national curriculum in 2024. SD Muhammadiyah 11 Randegan made this action to give adaption chances for institutions and all SD Muhammadiyah 11 Randegan education professionals.

The independent curriculum is a significant issue that requires further development and research (Inayati, 2022). There are factors to take into account when learning akidah akhlak, specifically the existence of cognitive and non-cognitive features. As a result, teachers can train students talents in both cognitive and non-cognitive domains by using the independent curriculum to teach akidah akhlak. In the independent curriculum, cognitive assessment is more about student knowledge, while non-cognitive includes how psychological children or students are. Teachers have greater freedom to apply creativity in the classroom because to the independent curriculum, which also increases their awareness of the interests, talents, needs, and abilities of their pupils. Students have flexibility in a independent curriculum as well, this freedom takes the form of thought.

The application of the independent learning curriculum aims to accomplish the results of ideal learning goals by stressing flexibility for students to explore their talents and making teachers a friend to discuss with (Khusni et al., 2022). Based on the results of the study, the implementation of a independent curriculum at SD Muhammadiyah 11 Randegan, which has the status of an independent changed school, has been altered each akidah akhlak teacher now has the authority to adapt learning to the independent learning curriculum in the twenty-first century. Teachers in akidah akhlak are supposed to be able to adapt
to the current curriculum, notably the independent learning curriculum. Akidah akhlak teachers, particularly in the twenty-first century, must be able to integrate students critical thinking skills in the disciplines of literacy, knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward the ability of cognitive and non-cognitive components. As a result, each teacher may encourage each student to continue developing the ability to think critically and creatively.

The independent curriculum in the realm of akidah akhlak topics is being introduced in stages at Muhamammadiyah 11 Randegan Elementary School. Making lesson plans (RPP) for the subject of akidah akhlak is the first step in using a independent curriculum. By identifying general information (which includes school information and akidah akhlak subject plans), core components (which include learning outcomes (CP), learning objectives (TP), and the flow of learning objectives (ATP), subject matter, learning activities (which includes initial, core, and closing activities), reflection, and attachments. Teaching resources, student activity papers, and assessment rubrics are included in each chapter of the akidah akhlak material. Then, before beginning learning activities, teachers and students must create a learning contract or learner rules (Basri, 2023).

Learning activities are initiated by the akidah akhlak teacher with an introduction in the form of greetings, prayers together, taking attendance, reviewing and asking questions about subjects that have been studied at the previous akidah akhlak meeting, or can be called apperception activities, in the implementation of akidah akhlak learning carried out with an allocation of 35 minutes. Following this stage, the teacher conveys the objectives of the material values that can be learned on material such as recognizing Allah SWT books and their privileges and material regarding the habituation of manners when associating with fellow human beings, which is then connected in the practice of daily life. For example, the learning objectives so that students can have good manners and character (Syamsul et al., 2023), then by offering information regarding examples of the Prophet Muhammad SAW deeds in everyday life, it can be an example for students to emulate the Prophet Muhammad SAW morals. It is intended for pupils to comprehend why they are learning the content.

The following activity intends to introduce students to key learning activities in the form of exploration phases. The exploration phase begins when the teacher asks a provocative question that sparks an idea that must be resolved. The akidah akhlak teacher hones, trains, and develops pupils critical thinking skills in akidah akhlak subjects during this process. This stages actions include paying attention, identifying, and then the discussion stage, which will result in conclusions, additional explanations, and organizing and producing solutions in issue solving "problem solving" by pupils. Learning is then concluded with an announcement of the next subject and a group prayer (Sari, 2022).

According to the foregoing explanation of the learning stages of the topic of akidah akhlak, learning activities in an independent curriculum include learning that allows students to explore and provide independence in presenting akidah akhlak material. Teachers and students have the freedom to apply and communicate their critical thinking to solve problems, as well as to create and
innovate.

Teacher Strategies to Train Students Critical Thinking

According to the results of research at Muhammadiyah 11 Randegan Elementary School, akidah akhlak teachers employ appropriate discussion tactics (individual and group) and problem-based learning strategies to foster critical thinking in fifth grade pupils. The first strategy used by akidah akhlak teachers to develop students critical thinking skills is to use a discussion approach in teaching and learning activities, both individually and between students and teachers, as well as group discussions or investigations (Arnyana, 2019).

![Image](https://example.com/image.jpg)

**Figure 2: Discussion activities in learning akidah akhlak**

Discussion technique is one of the strategies that might help students strengthen their critical thinking skills, because it exposes students to issue solving. After spotting an issue, the goal is for pupils to think critically. Students will share viewpoints (thoughts) in solo and group discussion exercises to identify solutions or draw conclusions about a subject or theme selected by the teacher. Through these talks, students are given incentives and encouragement to solve issues or problems by applying their experience and expertise (Partono et al., 2021). In other words, kids do not rely on their peers opinions. Furthermore, kids can express themselves verbally. As a result, students teach themselves to become accustomed to constantly expressing their opinions or ideas.

In the application of the discussion method, it allows for more two-way or reciprocal communication between students and professors. This approach will involve active engagement between teachers and students, as well as between students. This active interaction encourages kids to express themselves verbally (Nurhayati & Sulaiman, 2022). As a result, students teach themselves to become accustomed to constantly expressing their opinions or ideas. Teachers can use this two-way communication process by designing and constructing enjoyable, fascinating, creative, and innovative learning to boost students interest in learning and train students critical thinking skills.

The use of problem-based learning methodologies is another strategy used to train students critical thinking skills. Problem-based learning is a learning strategy that employs a pattern of presenting students with problems or examples to solve (problem solving) by locating valid and acceptable information and references (Jailani et al., 2017). According to Duch (1995) in Aris Shoitinin
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(2014: 130), a problem-based learning model is a teaching technique that employs real situations as a context in which students can develop critical thinking and problem-solving abilities and obtain knowledge (Susilowati, 2022). According to this definition, problem-based learning is a learning situation that leads to a problem in everyday life.

Students can be trained to think critically by presenting real world challenges that are relevant to their life (Ju & Choi, 2017). The experience of learners in everyday life can be used to solve challenges posed in learning (Shofwani & Rochmah, 2021). As a result, in learning, students are presented with issues based on the theme of akidah akhlak material, which is derived from a film about one of the akidah akhlak materials. The video exhibited also has a connection to reality in the community, school environment, and so on. A movie on the tsabit war was utilized by the akidah akhlak instructor at Muhammadiyah 11 Randegan Elementary School (Suntiah, 2021). The table below provides an overview of the steps of adopting the problem-based learning technique at Muhammadiyah 11 Randegan Elementary School:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Implementation of Problem Based Learning</th>
<th>Problem Based Learning Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>Orientation and introduction of the problem to students</td>
<td>The akidah akhlak teacher gives a theme to the students (for example, the theme of moral creed in the tsabit war). The teacher can explain a problem, besides that the teacher can provide and show a video for students to observe. In this process, the teacher gives directions to students on what steps to take. These directions include the stages of learning, on how to analyze and conclude the problem.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>Coordinating students</td>
<td>The akidah akhlak teacher divides the students into small groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>Guiding and giving direction in finding references related to the theme of the problem</td>
<td>Students look for references and the teacher helps and encourages students to get the right information according to the problem and encourages students to find answers and solutions related to the problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>Develop and present students thinking</td>
<td>In this stage the teacher helps students to formulate, plan, and prepare the work of conclusions and solutions to problems. In this</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the table above, the application of problem-based learning at SD Muhammadiyah 11 Randegan is carried out in 5 stages (Bahri et al., 2021), beginning with the stage of giving problems and ending with the final conclusion. In problem-based learning, the concept of themes that have been selected by the akidah akhlak teacher and then developed by students is used.

One of the initiatives at SD Muhammadiyah 11 Randegan that teachers use to develop pupils critical thinking is the project program to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students (P5). The P5 curriculum in fifth grade focuses on sustainable lifestyles and cleanliness in the school environment. The development of photos and collages about the world and how to protect it, as well as how to safeguard the school environment, is the first step in this program or theme. This project was completed in groups from the same class (Mery et al., 2022). The drawing and collage product will then be exhibited or demonstrated to the entire class, both lower and upper classes, namely grades one through six. Students present and demonstrate their work under the supervision of the class instructor and the teacher in charge of the P5 project. This lecture also serves as a socialization opportunity for students and their peers. The final activity is cleaning activities in the school environment, during which fifth-grade students, accompanied by class teachers and teachers in charge of the P5 project, demonstrate how to sort rubbish and organize school equipment in order to maintain the school clean.

According to the project of improving the profile of Pancasila students (P5) above, critical thinking and reasoning activities by students are required throughout the process from beginning to conclusion. This is also one of the platforms and methods for moral creed teachers and classroom teachers to train students critical thinking skills. Students engage with the side of moral creed during the process of creating the P5 project. One of the references is "cleanliness is part of faith" (Heriyanto & Warsono, 2019), hence the information supplied by students includes akidah akhlak content in addition to general material. Students also submit examples of attributes and attitudes that might be used to address concerns with cleanliness in the school environment.
CONCLUSION

In order to implement the independent curriculum in the subject of akidah akhlak at Muhammadiyah 11 Randegan Elementary School, the akidah akhlak teacher must integrate students critical thinking skills in the fields of literacy, knowledge, skills, and abilities on cognitive and non-cognitive aspects. The teacher begins the application of akidah akhlak learning with introductory exercises and reviews the content from the previous meeting. Then there are core activities in the form of exploratory stages for students, core activities as a process of akidah akhlak teachers to sharpen, train, and develop students critical thinking abilities, and learning closing activities.

The discussion technique is an approach used by akidah akhlak teacher and other teachers to teach children critical thinking. Individual conversations and group investigations are used to conduct discussions between students and teachers, as well as between students. Problem-based learning strategy "problem-based learning" is a learning technique in which pupils are given a problem to solve. The initial stage in the application of problem-based learning is orientation and presenting of issues to students. The teacher coordinates students in the second level. The third stage involves leading and directing people in discovering references relating to the problems theme. The fourth stage involves creating and presenting the outcomes of student thought. Fifth, examine and evaluate the problem-solving method and results. The Pancasila student profile strengthening project is also a means of teaching pupils critical thinking abilities. This training is carried out through the creation of collages on the theme of environmental cleanliness, which must be tailored to the school environment. The Pancasila student profile program not only trains students critical thinking skills, but it also builds students self-esteem and values.

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