

IMPLEMENTATION OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES BASED ON SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN THE INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM TO IMPROVE LEARNING OUTCOMES IN MADRASAH

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Abstract :The purpose of this research is to describe the efforts to enhance students' learning experiences based on spiritual growth within the independent curriculum at MI Negeri 2 Probolinggo. This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. The data collection techniques used are interviews with the Head of the Madrasah, the Curriculum Deputy, and two subject teachers, as well as documentation. Data analysis is conducted through three interactive steps: (1) data condensation; (2) data display; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification. Data validity is ensured through source triangulation. The research results indicate that P5, which includes self-potential development, self-empowerment, self-understanding, self-improvement, and students' social roles, is part of the spiritual growth process in the independent curriculum aimed at enhancing students' learning experiences tailored to their needs. The enhancement of learning experiences cannot be achieved through mere verbal exposure. Learning experiences are obtained through various learning activities as mentioned above. This implies that the subject matter functions more as a means rather than an end. The spiritual growth approach in this independent curriculum illustrates various activities that are not only based on religious values but also uphold the affective aspects that students should possess.

Keywords :*Learning Experience, Spiritual Growth, Independent Curriculum*

Abstrak:Tujuan penelitian ini untuk mendeskripsikan upaya peningkatan pengalaman belajar siswa berbasis *spiritual growth* dalam kurikulum merdeka di MI Negeri 2 Probolinggo. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus. Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan ialah wawancara kepada Kepala Madrasah, Waka Kurikulum, dan dua guru mata pelajaran, serta dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan melalui tiga langkah interaktif, yaitu: (1) kondensasi data; (2) paparan data; dan (3) penarikan kesimpulan dan verifikasi. Keabsahan data dengan proses triangulasi sumber. Hasil penelitian menjelaskan bahwa P5 yakni pengembangan potensi diri, pemberdayaan diri, pemahaman diri, peningkatan diri, dan peran sosial siswa sebagai proses *spiritual growth* dalam kurikulum merdeka untuk meningkatkan pengalaman belajar siswa yang disesuaikan dengan kebutuhan siswa dan meningkatnya pengalaman belajar yang tidak akan tercapai melalui *expose* verbal semata. Pengalaman belajar didapat serta diperoleh melalui berbagai kegiatan belajar (*learning activities*) sebagaimana yang disebutkan di atas. Artinya, materi pelajaran lebih berfungsi sebagai alat (*means*) bukan tujuan (*ends*). *Spiritual growth* yang dijadikan pendekatan dalam kurikulum merdeka ini mengilustrasikan berbagai kegiatan yang tidak hanya berasaskan nilai-nilai keagamaan namun juga menjunjung tinggi aspek afektif yang seharusnya dimiliki siswa.

Kata kunci :*Pengalaman Belajar, Spiritual Growth, Kurikulum Merdeka*

INTRODUCTION

Learning experiences are learning activities that students must carry out in order to master competency standards, basic abilities and learning materials (Fauzi et al., 2023). This experiential approach is the provision of real learning to students in the context of instilling student competency values (Muljawan & Ibad, 2020). According to Amir et al. (2022), defines experiential learning as the form of an individual who is able to engage cognitively, affectively and act to process knowledge, skills and attitudes in a learning situation which is categorized as active involvement at a high level of interaction. Heru & Bali (2024) stated that it is important to develop learning experiences because they become a reference for students to understand and master the learning material presented by the teacher and the realization of the curriculum used. Meanwhile Sahri et al. (2023) stated "learning from experience is much better than just talking, never doing anything at all. The experience referred to here is of course an educational experience. Providing educational experiences to students directed at achieving predetermined goals."

It is hoped that the current curriculum changes will be able to overcome various educational problems faced by the Indonesian nation. The decline and backwardness due to the Covid 19 pandemic can have an impact on the collapse of the nation because in a country with an abundant demographic bonus like Indonesia, human resources play a very important role. (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022)(Abidin et al., 2024). One of the right ways to improve the quality of human resources is to improve the quality of education. So that in its implementation, synchronization of learning methods, materials, media with teacher delivery in the classroom must be adjusted to the formulation of student needs and characteristics. (Achmad et al., 2022).

The characteristics and needs of students in the midst of current globalization and digitalization require experience, enthusiasm and motivation to learn in a virtuous and civilized way. (Patimah, 2022). Amir & Nurhasanah (2022) in his research, he explains that the current development of modernization in the world of education is aimed at transforming classical educational styles into heterogeneous ones for current developments and he also hopes not to damage or reduce students' affective values. According to Mastikawati et al. (2022), need to be looked at together, that the characteristics and needs of students must be identified along with the current world of digitalization. Students can interact with various types of environments, using language, clothing, and even body movements that are currently trendy.

Unfortunately, nowadays there is a crisis of affective values among students because the need for meaning in life is not fulfilled so that life feels shallow, empty, and identical to the behavior of the surrounding environment. Evidence can be seen from the results of researchers' observations on the condition of students at MI Negeri 2 Probolinggo, there are three reasons why students have been hampered in their affective aspects since the implementation of social distancing. First, namely that students have not developed some parts (potential and talents) of themselves at all. Second, they have developed some parts, but disproportionately. Third, it is contrary to civilized norms. This is proof that in fact, students are not unable to hone their

potential, but rather, there is a lack of active stimulus that can stimulate their development. The presence of teachers also pays less attention to students because of limited space and time for extensive interaction with students.

This problem was then initiated into a new curriculum policy during the new normal period (Wahid et al., 2024). The Ministry of Education and Culture launched a new curriculum as a recovery measure for the previous curriculum (emergency curriculum) which was used during the pandemic which caused a degradation of moral and affective values in the reality of students' lives (Abidin et al., 2024) (Maulidah et al., 2023). This curriculum is then present to be able to open up space freely for institutions or teachers so that they can adapt learning concepts to the needs/characteristics of students. This is also what MI Negeri 2 Probolinggo implemented at the beginning of 2022. To re-emphasize the development of students' learning experiences after experiencing passive learning during the pandemic, MI Negeri 2 Probolinggo involves spiritual growth in the independent curriculum used. With this approach students are given the opportunity to gain learning experiences that can foster noble spiritual values in accordance with religious norms and Pancasila, both individually and in groups.

Spiritual character should not only be a target for achievement at the end of a student's graduation, but must be ingrained from the moment the student is in the madrasah. The relationship between students and teachers must also be based on spiritual character both in the classroom and outside the classroom (Sholeha & Anggraini, 2022)(Jadidi et al., 2022). This innovation is for students to be able to develop and educate intensively in order to create a good, friendly, strong, responsible character, who has noble morals so that they can control themselves in everyday life. (Fajry, 2022). In the SQ (spiritual quotient) theory, spiritual intelligence is needed as a person's ability to give meaning to worship for every behavior and activity, through monotheistic (integralistic) steps and thinking, as well as the principle "only because of God"(Abdullah & Java, 2024). For a student, by growing and developing spiritual intelligence he is able to make himself a human being who has the same rights, obligations, position and responsibilities, is confident in his own abilities, and is brave in his actions. Practically, MI Negeri 2 Probolinggo uses this approach as part of the implementation of the independent curriculum for students.

There are several previous studies showing that the independent curriculum is a curriculum with diverse intracurricular learning where the content will be more optimal so that students have enough time to deepen concepts and strengthen competencies. Hidayah (2024)(Rodliyah et al., 2024) in his research stated that implementing the independent curriculum properly in PAI subjects will make it easier for teachers to teach basic and important material to students without having to be burdened with other less essential material. The very broad PAI subject matter will be narrowed down into several parts which must be delivered to students with learning that is independent and fun, in-depth and on target. Qolbiyah (2022) explained in his research that the implementation of the independent learning curriculum is very suitable for PAI subjects because learning is carried out in stages and continuously from one phase to another. PAI must be delivered gradually and thoroughly and starting

from the most basic things, namely cultivating strong beliefs and then moving on to other areas. Temporary Susilowati (2022) more firmly stating that the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum occupies a superior learning concept explained by the Ministry of Education and Culture which focuses on essential material and developing student competencies in each phase so that students can learn more deeply, meaningfully and happily, without being rushed. Learning is much more relevant and interactive through project activities that provide wider opportunities for students to actively explore current issues such as environmental issues, health and others to support the development of character and competency of the Pancasila Student profile (Herlina, 2024). Several summaries of the results of previous research regarding the implementation of the independent curriculum have indeed been carried out before, as shown above. However, this research shows a different side to the implementation of the independent curriculum in general, which places more emphasis on the collaborative aspect of students as spirits who need to always hone and develop their spiritual abilities.

It is a novelty that this research is based on the importance of the relationship between aspects of student competence (cognitive and affective aspects) to build interaction during the period of studying at a madrasa. The choice of object or location for this research is interesting considering that MI Negeri 2 Probolinggo is one of the Islamic educational institutions that emphasizes developing students' competence physically and spiritually.

The formulation of the phenomenon that occurs explains that the conditions of students' learning experiences need to be considered every day. The existence and use of the curriculum must be able to help teachers and madrasahs create real learning experiences that are also based on spiritual habitation. The researcher took the focus of the research as a step to improve students' learning experiences based on the growth of spiritual values in implementing the independent curriculum. So the aim of this research is to determine the forms or efforts of MI Negeri 2 Probolinggo to improve students' learning experiences based on spiritual growth in the independent curriculum.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach with a case study type. This study approaches by exploring and photographing the situation or behavior to be researched thoroughly, broadly and in depth. The object of this research is MI Negeri 2 Probolinggo Jl Sunan Giri No 15 Brani Kulon Maron Probolinggo Regency. The data collection techniques used in this research were interviews and documentation. Informants in this research included the head of the madrasah, Deputy Head of Curriculum, and two subject teachers. Data analysis was carried out in three steps, namely: (1) data reduction; (2) data display; and (3) drawing conclusions and verifying (conclusion drawing/verifying). Validity of data using triangulation process of sources and techniques.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To achieve learning objectives, educational institutions must first identify needs. Once the needs are identified, it is also necessary to specify the goals to be achieved, because the lessons for students' education are so big. Educational objectives can be formulated in general and specifically. To determine the material, it is also necessary to pay attention to the validity and contribution of the selected material. This means that the material must produce a learning experience. Therefore, the curriculum is useful for underlying and directing the implementation of educational programs and teaching methods, and subject matter alone is not enough, but must reach further than that, namely learning experiences. According to Tylor, "learning experience is a history of activities obtained and experienced by students as a result of learning and interaction with learning content and activities.

MI Negeri 2 Probolinggo uses a spiritual growth approach in the independent curriculum as a form of improving student learning experiences. Based on researchers' observations, there are 5 main aspects of development that are prioritized in the independent curriculum used by MI Negeri 2 Probolinggo, namely P5 development including self-potential, self-empowerment, self-improvement, self-understanding and social roles.

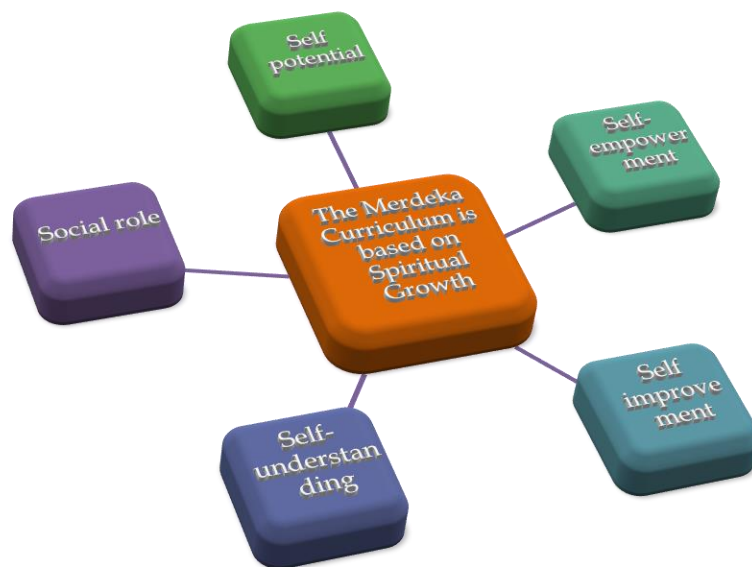


Figure 1. Important aspects of spiritual growth in the Independent Curriculum

The process of developing spiritual growth-based learning experiences in the independent curriculum carried out by MI Negeri 2 Probolinggo is based on two main Islamic concepts in life (hablun min Allah – relationship with Allah and hablun min Annas – relationships with others). These five aspects are intended to be developed to help cognitive abilities work well and maintain affective abilities. To see the explanation in more detail, below are the results of the researcher's observations regarding increasing spiritual growth-based learning experiences in the independent curriculum.

Development of Personal Potential

The first thing in determining or implementing the curriculum is identifying students' abilities and level of spiritual intelligence by testing their potential. MI Negeri 2 Probolinggo uses psychological tests for each new student to identify their abilities and competencies before determining which class suits them. Researchers looked at the psychological tests that madrasas made for students by providing leaflets with forms to fill in personal identity such as likes, hobbies, ideals, and what abilities the students had. Student answers will be recorded as a record for the madrasah to know the potential and characteristics of students. Opinion Sulaiman & Neviyarni (2021) explains that with personality (psychology) tests, individuals can find out their tendencies. All students' potential and personality types such as physical potential (Psychomotoric), mental potential, intellectual potential (intellectual quotient), social emotional potential (Emotional Quotient), mental spiritual potential (Spiritual Quotient), and fighting potential (adversity quotient) will be measured from this psychological test.

Furthermore, after carrying out psychological tests, students can be grouped. Then, there are several tips from madrasas for teachers to easily recognize students' potential holistically in the classroom. (1) Teachers are instructed to identify more deeply the activities that students like or dislike most during learning. (2) Recognize what students need for the material to be learned more quickly. (3) Asking the people closest to the students (parents) what would best be able to accompany the students' learning. Madrasahs implement a community group system for each class. The association participants for each class are formed in a WhatsApp group forum which is attended by the class teacher, all teachers who have teaching hours in that class, and all the parents of students in that class. Total class So that whatever form of information regarding the madrasa and student learning is conveyed clearly and openly. (3) Give students the opportunity to choose. Teachers allow students to choose their interests and talents. Teachers also allow students to be creative in determining their way of thinking. (4) Provoke students' curiosity in each subject. The teacher presents material that is related to history, past events, or everyday life. For example, in learning SKI (history of Islamic culture) which requires students to get to know Kholifatur Rosyidin with so many historical life stories and patterns of government. The SKI subject teacher explained that he presented learning material by connecting one story to another. For example, if the LKS (student worksheet) only presents the way of government of the Rosyidin Kholifatur with a series of lots of descriptions so that students are bored and lazy to read, then the SKI teacher applies more complex history, such as "Do you know which of the Rosyidin Kholifatur were the Mother-in-laws of the Prophet Muhammad?" or "Do you know which of the Kholifatur Rosyidin became the Prophet's son-in-law?" This question aroused students' interest in finding out more about Kholifatur Rosyidin, who was apparently still part of the family of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. From these efforts to develop students' personal potential, teachers will find it easier to recognize and identify students continuously and intensely.

The program carried out by MI Negeri 2 Probolinggo is similar to the focus of the independent curriculum in essence. The focus of freedom to learn is freedom to think creatively and independently. Teachers are the driving force behind actions that bring

positive things to students. The reorganization was carried out to respond to changes and progress within the country and to adapt to changing times. Thus, students develop according to their potential and abilities. Independent learning from the independent learning curriculum is characterized as critical, high quality, fast, applicable, expressive, progressive and diverse. Students learn on their own initiative which can be seen from their attitudes and ways of thinking. One of them is energetic, optimistic, positive, creative and not worried about trying new things.

Development of Self-Empowerment

Self-empowerment can be interpreted as a situation where a person consciously makes a decision to become independent, has self-confidence, and continues to develop himself in a better direction. The institutional culture that researchers found at MI Negeri 2 Probolinggo was the attachment of the motto "Ha Ana Dza" (this is who I am) to students. This motto is always said by students when their presence is being checked by the teacher to answer "present" or when they want to answer questions from the teacher or other students. This motto is proposed so that students can appreciate, respect, care and equalize their rights, obligations and position among students. This motto also enables students to be confident and brave in their abilities without being isolated or discriminated against.

The head of the madrasah also added, "Teachers' tips for developing students' self-empowerment are always saying thank you, please and sorry to students. "This is intended to be a role model for students and to respect the existence of students at the madrasa." (Sanafiri, 2022) explained that students' self-empowerment does not only appear in those who uphold the values of self-confidence or courage, but teachers must also provide active and regulatory stimuli to students such as providing motivation and full support for students' self-abilities. So it is clear that this self-empowerment can be a form of developing a form of *hablum min Allah* (relationship with Allah) with gratitude for the blessings of God's gift of life to them.

Development of Self-Understanding

Developing students' self-understanding, especially regarding subject matter, cannot be separated from the duties and roles of a teacher. MI Negeri 2 Probolinggo demonstrated to the teacher council to use interactive methods such as project-based learning (PjBL). This learning model is one of the other learning models that hone students' thinking and analytical skills. Apart from that, MI Negeri 2 Probolinggo also recommends that students' learning materials be assisted by using projector media which is already available in madrasahs. To understand LKS (student worksheets), students are required to have a highlighter or pen to underline the important points of the material presented by the teacher. This effort is made so that students can easily find and recognize important information from the material.

To evaluate and measure students' level of understanding, teachers require students to prepare mind maps for each material presented by the teacher. Mind mapping initiated by MI Negeri 2 Probolinggo encourages students to think creatively

and analyze their memories. From this effort, teachers can identify the level and grouping of students' abilities. Don't forget that during learning, the teacher does open asking (open questions) so that students and teachers can exchange thoughts and opinions regarding material that is difficult to understand or problems that occur. According to Sain (2025), Students' understanding of a subject matter can be measured by making mind maps. Silva et al. (2022) stated that this creative note-taking method makes it easier for students to remember a lot of information. Once completed, the notes taken form a pattern of interrelated ideas. The Indonesian language subject teacher explained that the teacher must continue to pay attention to students' every movement, and ask them about their understanding of the material before doing mind mapping. This is intended so that students gain equal understanding and can always actively pay attention to the teacher's material.

Self-Improvement Development

The development of student self-improvement is carried out by evaluating student learning outcomes at each meeting. In fact, the concept of mind mapping is a form of continuous reflection and formative evaluation of students. Apart from conducting evaluations, teachers are smart and correct in giving appreciation to students' learning performance and learning outcomes, giving confidence to each student that they have the same rights and obligations, and inviting each other to evaluate themselves and their friends. (Munif, 2023). The SKI subject teacher explained, "when the teacher has given students time to make a mind map, the teacher demands students to randomly correct their friends' mind maps. So that way, work corrections between students can be seen together and can be used as a self-evaluation for those who don't remember the material that has been presented. This creates concepts and learning experiences while muhasabah (self-introspection). This process of self-correction between students is made by teachers so that they continuously evaluate their own abilities.

Social Role Development

The development of students' social roles as social creatures is carried out through group discussions and the Dhuhur congregation. Group discussions to remind students of their role as social beings and congregational prayer develop students' social role as servants who should do good deeds according to Islamic teachings. Teachers use group discussions twice a month. The group discussion schedule is scheduled for MI Negeri 2 Probolinggo for each class because the hall is used as the location for their discussions. According to the researcher's observations, the group discussion flow begins with determining the material to be discussed, then the teacher presents the material briefly and concisely which allows students to ask various questions, then students discuss and are invited by the teacher to share their opinions and answers. Meanwhile, at the end of the lesson, the class leader's job is to function as a note taker who records the conclusions of the discussions that have been held which will later be shared in the class WhatsApp group. The congregational prayer schedule is

routinely held every day at 12.00, precisely during the second break. The congregational process is led by a religious teacher and a muezzin taking turns between male students from representatives of each class. The Deputy Head of Curriculum stated that this congregational activity was aimed at fostering religious awareness and awareness of gender equality among students. It is clear that this activity is developing social roles among students, both as social creatures and servants of Allah SWT.

From a number of spiritual growth processes in the independent curriculum to improve student learning experiences that are tailored to student needs, it shows that learning experiences will not be achieved through verbal exposure alone. So that learning experience is gained and obtained through various learning activities as mentioned above. This means that the learning material functions more as a means (means) rather than an end (ends). Spiritual growth, which is used as an approach in the independent curriculum, illustrates various activities that are not only based on religious values but also uphold the affective aspects that students should have. Such as self-confidence and courage in one's abilities, honing one's presence as a civilized social being, prioritizing individualist or socialist awareness, and involving divine values in madrasa activities. Confirmed by the expression Hanum & Annas (2019), If a person's Spiritual Quotient is well developed, then the signs that will be seen in a person are (1) the ability to be flexible, (2) a high level of self-awareness, (3) the ability to face and utilize suffering, (4) the ability to face and transcend pain, (5) a quality of life inspired by vision and values, (6) a reluctance to cause unnecessary harm, (7) a tendency to see the connection between things (a holistic view), and (8) a real tendency to ask "Why?" or "What if?" to find basic answers.

CLOSING

Of the number of spiritual growth processes in the independent curriculum, including P5, namely developing self-potential, developing self-empowerment, developing self-understanding, developing self-improvement, and developing students' social roles to improve student learning experiences that are tailored to student needs, it shows that learning experiences will not be achieved through verbal exposure alone. So that learning experience is gained and obtained through various learning activities as mentioned above. This means that the learning material functions more as a means (means) rather than an end (ends). Spiritual growth which is used as an approach in the independent curriculum illustrates various activities that are not only based on religious values but also uphold the affective aspects that students should have (Maulidah et al., 2023). The spirituality-based approach implemented includes activities such as self-reflection, prayer, and the development of moral and ethical values in each subject. This has been proven to be able to increase students' learning motivation, discipline and self-awareness. Apart from that, the relationship between teachers and students becomes more harmonious and deeper, creating a conducive and supportive learning environment. Overall, the implementation of spiritual growth in the Merdeka Curriculum at MI Negeri 2 Probolinggo can be used as a model for other madrasahs

who want to improve the quality of education through a holistic and comprehensive approach, covering academic aspects as well as students' spiritual development.

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