Integration of Character Education and Islamic Education Values in The Independent Curriculum in Senior High School in Batam City Riau Islands

Misbah[1], Zamsiswaya[2], Asmal May[3]
[1]Sultan Syarif Kasim State Islamic University of Riau, Riau, Indonesia, h.misbah2589@gmail.com
[2]Sultan Syarif Kasim State Islamic University of Riau, Riau, Indonesia, zamsiswaya@uin.suska.ac.id
[3]Sultan Syarif Kasim State Islamic University of Riau, Riau, Indonesia, asmal.may@uin.suska.ac.id

Corresponding Author: h.misbah2589@gmail.com[1]

Abstract: This study aims to explain the integration of character education and Islamic educational values in the Independent Curriculum at Senior High Schools in Batam City, Riau Islands. The background of this study is based on the importance of character formation among students so that they have a positive and strong direction in life in facing global challenges, as well as the need to instill Islamic values as part of holistic education. This study aims to identify and analyze the implementation of Islamic educational values in character education at Senior High Schools in Batam City and their impact on students. The research method used is qualitative with a case study approach, where data is collected through in-depth interviews with teachers, students, and observations in teaching and learning activities. The results of the study show that the integration of Islamic values in character education at Senior High Schools in Batam City takes place effectively, with a number of supporting programs and activities such as extracurricular and religious activities, so that students become more disciplined, responsible, and respect each other. The conclusion of this study is that character education based on Islamic values not only strengthens students' morals and ethics, but also creates a better learning environment, so that Senior High Schools in Batam City can be a model in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum which is more oriented towards character and noble morals.

Keyword: Integration of Character Education, Islamic Education Values, Independent Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Education as a process of mental maturity and enrichment of a person's intellectual, skilled and competent creation, is capable of creating superior and characterful human resources (Rusadi, 2020). For that, Educational Institutions have a "ton of mandates" to help children find their identity. As a person with character. In Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003, concerning UUSPN article 3 it is explained that "National education functions to develop abilities and form the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to educate the life of the nation, aiming to develop the potential of students to become

human beings who believe and are devoted to God Almighty, have noble morals, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens" (Nasional, 2003). Article 1 of the Law also explains that education is "a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have spiritual religious strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble morals, and the skills needed by themselves, society, the nation, and the state." (Marshanda et al., 2023).

Education has a very important role in shaping the character and morals of the younger generation, especially in this challenging era of globalization (Nurhayati & Rosyadi, n.d.). In Indonesia, character education is an important focus in the education curriculum in order to create individuals who are not only academically intelligent, but also have good morals and are able to contribute positively to society (Wahid, 2018). Along with that, it is hoped that Islamic educational values that teach ethics and morality can also be integrated into the educational process to answer various current social and cultural challenges (Fadilah et al., 2021).

Batam City, as a rapidly developing region in the Riau Islands, faces diverse community dynamics, with increasingly strong global influences. In this context, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum offers flexibility and freedom for schools to adapt educational approaches to local needs as well as cultural and religious values. However, the implementation of the integration of character education and Islamic education values in the Merdeka Curriculum in Batam City Senior High Schools has not been widely explored and there are challenges in its implementation.

The following is a literature review/overview on the integration of character education and Islamic educational values with a review of three relevant previous studies, namely research conducted by Fahrina Yustiasari Liriwati with the article title "Independent Curriculum in the Context of Islamic Education". This article highlights how the Independent Curriculum can improve students' creativity and critical learning through contextual and interactive learning methods. This study also emphasizes the importance of implementing Islamic values as a foundation to help students assess information intelligently and responsibly (Yustiasari Liriwati, 2023).

Research conducted by Lailatul Afiyah et al. In an article entitled "Islamic Religious Education in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum". This study focuses on the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the Independent Curriculum in schools and madrasas. The main findings include the development of PAI teaching modules based on elements of the Qur'an, Hadith, Aqidah, Morals, Fiqh, and History of Islamic Civilization. This study also discusses the importance of formative evaluation to monitor students' holistic progress (Afiyah, n.d.)

Meanwhile, research conducted by Dur Brutu1 at all entitled "Integration of Educational Philosophy Values in the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Educational Institutions". This study shows that the adoption of educational philosophy values such as humanism, ethics, and justice in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum can optimize the development of students' potential as a whole, both from intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects. Islamic educational institutions that implement this curriculum are expected to be able to create a more adaptive and contextual learning environment, so that students are not only academically intelligent, but also have a strong moral and spiritual understanding (Brutu et al., 2023).

These three relevant studies show the importance of integrating Islamic educational values in character education that can help develop positive attitudes in students and strengthen morals and ethics in the educational context. In addition, they highlight the need for training and collaboration between all stakeholders in education to achieve better results.

Therefore, this study is important to explore how the integration of character education and Islamic educational values can be carried out in the Merdeka Curriculum in Batam City High Schools, as well as its impact on the formation of student character. By understanding this context, it is hoped that effective strategies can be found to improve the quality of education and character of the younger generation in the region.

The contribution of the novelty or uniqueness of this research is that this research focuses on the integration of character education and Islamic educational values in the Independent Curriculum in Senior High Schools in Batam City, which offers a new perspective and originality in the study of education in Indonesia. The uniqueness of this research lies in the following aspects: 1) Contextual Approach. This research was conducted in Batam City, an area with unique social and cultural dynamics, which has not been widely explored in studies related to the integration of character education and Islamic values. This local context provides new insights into how Islamic educational values can be adapted in the Independent Curriculum to meet the needs of students in the area. 2) Focus on the Independent Curriculum. With an emphasis on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, this research fills the gap in the existing literature that has discussed character education and Islamic education extensively, but has highlighted less how these two aspects can be integrated concretely within this new flexible curriculum framework. This research provides practical guidance for schools in designing and implementing character education programs based on Islamic values. 3) Comprehensive Research Method. Using qualitative methods with in-depth interviews and observations, this study presents richer and more in-depth data than previous studies. This study not only assesses existing programs, but also explores the perceptions and experiences of students and teachers, providing a complete picture of the challenges and successes in implementing Islamic educational values in the context of character education. 4) Implications for Educational Practice. This study offers concrete recommendations based on the findings that can be used by educators and policy makers to improve and strengthen the integration of character education and Islamic values in the curriculum. By providing an in-depth understanding of successful implementation, this study has the potential to be a reference for the development of similar educational models elsewhere.

Thus, this study not only adds to the academic treasury in the field of education, but also provides a practical contribution to developing better education, which is responsive to cultural and religious values in Indonesia. This study is important to be conducted because of the urgent need to strengthen character education among the younger generation, especially in the context of rapidly developing education in Indonesia. In the era of globalization and modernization, the moral and ethical challenges faced by adolescents are increasingly complex. Many students face social pressures, conflicting values, and a lack of deep understanding of their cultural and religious identities. Therefore, it is important to integrate character education and Islamic educational values in the Merdeka Curriculum, so that students not only excel academically, but also have good character and can contribute positively to society.

METHOD

This research method uses a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research using descriptive-analytical methods, namely by collecting data that describes or explains the results of the research as they are, then compiling and presenting them in the form of historical (narrative) writing, interpreting and analyzing them (Nasution, 2023). Lexy Moleong defines this qualitative approach as research that aims to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects, for example behavior, perception, motivation, actions, etc., holistically, and by means of description in the form of words and language, in a specific natural context and by utilizing various natural methods (Moleong, 2018).

The time of this research starts from the submission of the research title being accepted until the collection of literature and then until the final revision of this dissertation (September - February 2025). The research location is the place where the study process used to obtain solutions to research problems takes place. The locations of this research are at SMA Kartini, SMA Ulul Ilmi Cendikia and SMA Negeri I Batam City, Riau Islands.

The subject of this study is the Integration of Character Education While the object of the study is the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Senior High Schools in Batam City, Riau Islands. The informants in this study were the principal, teachers, education staff, students and parents of students. Data collection techniques are one of the steps to obtain data from the objects studied before drawing final conclusions from a study conducted (Arikunto, 2017). The data collection techniques in this study are as follows: 1) in-depth interviews: conducting semi-structured interviews with 10-15 teachers and 10-15 students at Batam City High Schools to obtain their perspectives on the integration of character education and Islamic values. 2) observation: direct observation of learning activities that include aspects of character education and Islamic values in the classroom. 3) documentation study: collecting curriculum documents, school policies, and teaching materials related to character education and Islamic education.

Through this methodology, the research is expected to provide in-depth and practical insights into the integration of character education and Islamic educational values in the Merdeka Curriculum, and how this can improve the quality of education in Batam City Senior High Schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The integration of character education and Islamic educational values in the Independent Curriculum at Batam City High School, Riau Islands, is a strategic step to form students who not only have academic intelligence, but also good morals (Hubbi et al., 2020).. The rich social and cultural context of Batam makes this integration even more relevant and urgent, given the moral challenges faced by today's young generation. lokal The rich social and cultural context in Batam makes this integration more relevant and urgent, given the moral challenges faced by today's young generation. Character education based on Islamic values offers a systematic approach in preparing students to face future challenges, by equipping them with ethics and moral values that are in accordance with local culture (Fathoni et al., 2024).

One of the important components in implementing this integration is the involvement of all stakeholders in education, including teachers, students, and parents. Through interviews conducted, it was revealed that parental involvement in character education activities plays a major role in shaping student behavior at home and school (Japar et al., 2018). In addition, training for teachers to understand and apply Islamic educational values in teaching has also proven to be one of the keys to success (Ansori, 2017).

However, in practice, there are several challenges faced, namely the lack of in-depth understanding of the integration of Islamic educational values among educators, as well as limited resource support in developing innovative and attractive educational programs (Marjuni, 2020). Teachers often feel confused in balancing academic tests and efforts to implement character values in the daily teaching curriculum.

As a solution, this study recommends regular training programs and workshops for teachers, where they can share experiences and best practices in integrating character education and Islamic values. In addition, schools are expected to develop extracurricular programs that support the learning of Islamic values, such as social activities and religious activities, so that students can apply these values in their daily lives.

Thus, the integration of character education and Islamic educational values in the Merdeka Curriculum does not only focus on teaching in the classroom, but also includes

character formation through a positive social environment, so that students can grow into whole, responsible individuals with high integrity. This is expected to encourage the creation of people with noble morals, able to contribute positively to society, and face global challenges with confidence, both academically and morally.

The integration of character education and Islamic educational values in the Merdeka Curriculum in Batam City Senior High Schools, especially in SMA Negeri 4 Batam, SMA UIC Batam, SMA Kartini Batam, and SMA Integral Hidayatullah, provides interesting insights into how various educational institutions apply this framework in different contexts. Each school has a unique approach in integrating religious values and character in the curriculum, positively impacting the character formation of students. 1) SMA Negeri 4 Batam. This school implements a character education program based on local and Islamic values through extracurricular activities such as Scouting and Paskibra. The integration of Islamic values, such as mutual respect and discipline, is taught directly through these activities, creating an environment that supports the formation of student character. Teachers at SMA Negeri 4 are also actively involved in providing examples of good behavior, making them role models in students' daily lives. 2) SMA UIC Batam. With a focus on education based on Christian and Islamic values, SMA UIC Batam carries out a holistic integration between character education and religious values. They present special modules that teach ethics and morals from the perspective of their religion. This program is equipped with training for teachers that focuses on teaching methodology that includes spiritual aspects, expected to educate students to become individuals with good character and sanad. 3) SMA Kartini Batam. SMA Kartini is known for its feminist educational approach by emphasizing the importance of character development and femininity. In this school, Islamic educational values are upheld through social and religious activities that involve all students. A mentoring program for female students, involving inspiring female figures from the community, helps students to internalize Islamic values that strengthen their character and independence. 4) SMA Integral Hidayatullah. As a school that focuses on Islamic education, SMA Integral Hidayatullah prioritizes the integration of character education that is very thick with Islamic values. The curriculum here includes learning the Qur'an, morals, and fiqh which are designed not only for formal education but also to shape students' personalities. Regular activities such as religious studies, religious discussions, and social campaigns provide students with the opportunity to apply Islamic values in their daily lives, both inside and outside the classroom.

Despite the differences in each school's approach, all institutions share a common understanding of the importance of character education in shaping a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also has good morals. Challenges faced by all of these schools include a lack of in-depth understanding of integration strategies and limited resources to improve the quality of existing programs (Wahid, 2018). Therefore, there needs to be collaboration between schools, communities, and the government to create training programs that can improve teacher understanding and involve parents in supporting character education based on Islamic values.

By prioritizing Islamic character values and education, it is hoped that students in Batam can be formed as individuals who have integrity, responsibility, and can contribute positively to society, and face the future with self-confidence.

Character Values Integrated into the Learning Process

In the context of integrating character education and Islamic educational values in the Independent Curriculum in Batam City High Schools, a number of character values are integrated into the learning process to build holistic student character. Maskawih argues that character is a state of the soul. This state causes the soul to act without thinking or considering it in depth. This state is of two types: (1) natural and based on character, for

example in people who get angry easily because of the smallest things, or who are afraid of facing the most trivial incidents, laughing excessively just because of something very ordinary that makes them amazed; (2) created through habit and practice. Initially this state occurs because it is considered and thought about, but then through continuous practice, it becomes character (Miskawaih, 1994).

Andrianto explains that "character includes a series of attitudes such as the desire to do the best; intellectual capacity, such as critical thinking and moral reasoning; behavior such as being honest and responsible; maintaining moral principles in situations of injustice (Fitrianah, 2018). Character education is everything that teachers do that can influence the character of students (Triana, 2022). Teachers help shape the character of students. This includes examples of how teachers behave, how teachers speak or deliver material, how teachers tolerate, and various other related things (Musbikin, 2021). Character education is expected not to produce students who like to brawl, cheat, be lazy, engage in pornography, abuse drugs and so on.

The following are integrated character values along with their detailed explanations: 1) Discipline. Discipline is one of the most important character values in education. In the learning process, discipline is taught through regularity in daily activities, such as punctuality in attending class, completing assignments on time, and upholding school rules. At SMA Negeri 4 Batam, for example, teachers apply strict rules regarding attendance and assignment obligations, where students are taught to be responsible for their attendance and assignments given. This not only forms student discipline, but also strengthens their responsibility for learning. 2) Responsibility. The value of responsibility is taught to students through group activities, individual assignments, and social projects. At SMA UIC Batam, students are involved in projects that require them to work together and rely on each other, so they learn to be responsible for their respective contributions in the group. In addition, they are also taught to take responsibility for the actions and decisions they make, both inside and outside of school. 3) Cooperation. Cooperation is a very important value in social and academic environments. The learning process at SMA Kartini Batam prioritizes project-based learning where students work in groups to achieve common goals. Activities such as group discussions, team presentations, and community service projects encourage students to learn to respect the opinions of others, communicate effectively, and find solutions together. This helps students understand the importance of collaboration in achieving collective goals. 4) Honesty. Honesty is a character value that is often an important foundation in education. At SMA Integral Hidayatullah, honesty is taught not only through academic policies, such as the prohibition of plagiarism and honest exams, but also through discussion sessions that discuss ethics and morals. Students are invited to reflect on the importance of honesty in everyday actions and its impact on interpersonal relationships and trust. Thus, honesty becomes part of the formation of their identity as good individuals.

Social Awareness. The value of social awareness is taught through community service activities and social projects where students are expected to be sensitive to their surroundings and actively participate in helping others. An example of this implementation is seen at SMA Kartini Batam, where students are involved in community service activities and outreach campaigns. This not only teaches about social responsibility, but also helps students to understand the needs and challenges faced by the community. 6) Positive Disposition. Integrative character education also aims to form positive dispositions, such as optimism, gratitude, and a desire to continue learning. In the learning process, students are expected to be able to encourage themselves and their friends to have positive thoughts in facing learning challenges. The use of a learning approach that encourages exploration and creativity at SMA UIC Batam helps students develop a positive attitude towards learning and life. 7) Independence. Independence is taught through independent assignments and project-based learning. Students are trained to take the initiative in completing tasks without relying on

others. SMA Integral Hidayatullah includes projects that encourage students to plan, implement, and evaluate their own work, thereby developing self-confidence and independence in learning.

The integration of character values in the learning process at Batam City High School is not only aimed at improving students' academic skills, but also at forming whole individuals, having high morals, and being ready to face challenges in society. Through a varied and integrated learning approach, students are expected to be able to internalize these values and apply them in their daily lives. This is in line with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum which prioritizes holistic and character-based education, providing a positive contribution to the development of students as the nation's next generation.

Obstacles Faced by Teachers in Implementing Character Education in the Independent Curriculum

The implementation of character education in the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 4 Batam, SMA UIC Batam, SMA Kartini Batam, and SMA Integral Hidayatullah faces a number of diverse obstacles. These obstacles can affect the effectiveness of character education designed to shape students into better individuals. The following is a complete explanation of the obstacles faced by teachers at each school:

1) Lack of Understanding and Training.
   One of the main obstacles faced by teachers in all schools is the lack of a deep understanding of the concept of character education and how to integrate it into the learning process. Despite the Merdeka Curriculum policy that emphasizes the addition of character education, many teachers feel that they have not received adequate training. At SMA Negeri 4 Batam, for example, teachers expressed that they did not have sufficient access to structured training in character education, making it difficult to implement effective learning methods.
2) Time and Workload Constraints.
   High workloads and time constraints are significant issues. Many teachers at SMA UIC Batam feel pressured by the demands of completing the academic curriculum within a limited time. This often results in them not having enough time to focus on teaching character education in the classroom. When the main learning time is used for academic materials, there is a risk that character education will be marginalized.
3) Measurement and Evaluation Challenges.
   Teachers at SMA Kartini Batam also face difficulties in measuring the impact and effectiveness of character education. The absence of clear indicators and established evaluation methods to assess students' character development leaves teachers confused about how to evaluate learning outcomes. In many cases, students are not assessed based on the character development they demonstrate, which can affect their motivation to engage in character education activities.
4) Pressure to Meet Academic Standards.
   At SMA Integral Hidayatullah, teachers are affected by the pressure to meet academic standards that are often measured through exam scores. This demand creates a dilemma for teachers, where they must choose between focusing on learning academic material for exams or setting aside time to teach character values. This situation can result in teaching character education becoming a second choice, thus having less of the expected impact.
5) Lack of Support from Parents and the Community.
   Parental support in character education is also a challenge. At SMA UIC Batam, several teachers reported that parents did not fully understand or were involved in character education efforts at school. When parents do not actively support the character values taught at school, this can lead to value conflicts among students, as they receive messages

from home that are different from those taught at school. Parental involvement is essential to creating consistency in the implementation of character values.

6) Variation in Commitment and Collaboration Among Teachers.

Inconsistency in teacher commitment to character education can be a barrier. At SMA Kartini Batam, there is variation in teachers' understanding and dedication to integrating character education, leading to inconsistent approaches in the classroom. When some teachers are highly dedicated to character education, while others are less committed, this can create an unbalanced learning experience for students.

7) Limited Resources and Infrastructure.

In all schools discussed, limited educational resources, such as teaching materials related to character education, are an additional obstacle. Schools often do not have access to books or other materials that can support character education. Without adequate resources, teachers will have difficulty designing creative and engaging activities to teach character values.

Overall, the obstacles faced by teachers in implementing character education in the Merdeka Curriculum are very diverse and complex. Lack of understanding, time constraints, and pressure to meet academic standards are some of the main issues that affect the effectiveness of character education in SMA Negeri 4 Batam, SMA UIC Batam, SMA Kartini Batam, and SMA Integral Hidayatullah. Therefore, there is an urgent need to create greater support for teachers in terms of training, resources, and collaboration with parents and the community so that character education can be integrated optimally and effectively into the education process.

CONCLUSION

The integration of character education and Islamic educational values in the Merdeka Curriculum in Senior High Schools in Batam City, Riau Islands, has proven to be an effective strategy to increase students' awareness of the importance of good character formation and a deep understanding of moral and ethical values taught in Islam, where the implementation of educational programs based on Islamic values not only strengthens students' discipline and social responsibility, but also creates a more inclusive learning environment and respects differences, although challenges in the consistency of implementation and understanding among teachers still need to be overcome; therefore, this study recommends the need for ongoing training for educators so that they are better able to integrate spiritual and character values in every aspect of teaching, so that they can form individuals who are not only academically intelligent but also have noble morals, so that students' potential can develop holistically in an educational context that is friendly and adaptive to change.

Each school has a different approach in integrating character values into learning. In general, the values that are most emphasized are religiosity, independence, mutual cooperation, critical thinking, discipline, and social awareness. The implementation of this character education aims to create graduates who are not only academically superior but also have good morals and life skills. The obstacles faced by teachers in implementing Character education in the independent curriculum are the main challenges are the economic conditions of students who do not support self-development, limited internet access, low motivation to learn due to weak academic abilities, and the need to improve 21st century skills so that students are able to compete globally.

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