



The Success of Implementing the Independent Curriculum in Shaping the Pancasila Student Profile Character of Students at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat

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ABSTRACT

The Independent Curriculum at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat is implemented in stages. Based on the results of observations conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat, during the learning process, teachers only focus more on student learning outcomes and less focus on character value formation. Problem formulation: 1). How is the implementation of the Independent Curriculum for students at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat?, 2). How is the character formation of the Pancasila Student Profile in students at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat?, 3). How is the success of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum towards the development of the Pancasila Student Profile character in students at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat?, the research method is carried out with qualitative research with data collection techniques carried out by observation, interviews and documentation. Data analysis techniques are carried out by data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions. The research findings are as follows: 1) The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat was effective through project-based learning (P5) and differentiated learning strategies, which encouraged active student involvement in the learning process. 2) The character development of the Pancasila Student Profile in students is evident in the growth of independence, social awareness, creativity, discipline, and critical thinking skills, which are internalized in daily learning activities. 3) The successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum is reflected in positive changes in student attitudes and behavior, resulting in more self-confidence, responsibility, caring, and the ability to actualize Pancasila values in real life.

1. Introduction

Curriculum is a system consisting of components that are closely interconnected and support one another. These curriculum components include objectives, learning materials, methods, and evaluation (Usman et al., 2023). The form of the curriculum system will function toward an educational goal through cooperation among all of its subsystems (Nurfajri, 2023). The Independent Curriculum strengthens aspects of character education and morality within the Pancasila Student Profile, which is what distinguishes it from previous curricula (Suryawati et al., 2023). Islamic

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education always aspires for humans as rational beings to possess noble character and good morals by striving to perfect learning in accordance with curricula that are continually designed to improve quality. The curriculum undergoes changes (revisions) each year to realize the nation's aspirations of creating a generation capable of bringing honor to the country. Ideally, education should be able to produce a generation with strong character (Octavia & Tirtoni, 2024). In the Independent Curriculum, Islamic education is directed toward preparing students to be spiritually grounded and to have a strong understanding of the fundamentals of Islam and how to apply them in daily life, so that compassion and tolerance become the foundation of their lives, shaping them into good individuals who practice these values every day (Supriadi et al., 2024).

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education is carried out across all educational units and integrated into all subjects, as well as co-curricular and extracurricular activities as part of the development of Islamic Religious Education (Sidiq et al., 2025). This ensures that Islamic teachings can be actualized because their study materials become part of the lessons (Yuliani et al., 2025). The learning objectives of Islamic Religious Education aim to prepare school graduates to master the basic competencies of Islamic Religious Education in accordance with their level of schooling and to practice them in daily life (Wayan Wini Widarini et al., 2023). Furthermore, the goals of national education serving as a reference for the objectives of Islamic Religious Education include developing students' abilities so that they foster responsibility, faith and piety, courtesy, noble character, broad knowledge, independence, competence, creativity, and democratic attitudes (Zainuddin et al., 2025).

The application of the Independent Learning Curriculum can be implemented in Islamic Religious Education learning. So far, the concept of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is often considered monotonous because learning usually takes place only in the classroom and focuses mainly on character education (Suwarni, 2024). Islamic Religious Education is an effort carried out by educators to help students believe, be pious, and practice Islamic teachings derived from the Qur'an and Hadith through guidance, teaching, training, and experiential activities (Septiyani et al., 2025).

Social problems often emerge in suburban areas, but it is also possible for such issues to occur in rural regions. Therefore, early detection of social problems is necessary, and one of the most effective and efficient ways to begin this detection is through educational institutions. SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat is a formal school located on the outskirts of the city, specifically in the Rantau Selamat District. In addition, SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat is a school that has integrated the Independent Curriculum into its learning process, particularly in Grade 7.

Observations indicate that SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat began implementing the Independent Curriculum in early 2022, during the start of the new academic year. The Independent Curriculum at the school has been applied gradually. Based on the observations conducted, during the learning process teachers seemed more focused on student learning outcomes and less on character development. This has led to noticeable negative behaviors among students, such as many students not being serious when reciting prayers before starting the lesson, students showing a lack of respect when others express their opinions, and students being disorderly when performing ablution before prayer.

Interview results show that teachers are still in the adjustment stage of implementing the Independent Curriculum. Teachers are currently undergoing training supported by the principal and the Merdeka Belajar platform, which continues to provide training and improvements for each learning process. All educators are continuously working to optimize the teaching and learning process to achieve the goals of the Independent Curriculum, namely shaping students into Pancasila learners.

Other character issues also occur in class during Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lessons. From the interview, the teacher stated:

“For character-related issues, research can be conducted in Grade 7 because it is the only grade using the Independent Curriculum, which includes character education within the Pancasila Student Profile. There are also various projects to instill character in students. Some students arrive on time, while others are late. For those who are late, we provide positive sanctions such as having them read short surahs and recite istighfar.”

Based on the interview with the principal, it can be concluded that character problems at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat include a lack of discipline. Through the Independent Curriculum, the characters expected to be developed include faith, piety, noble character, and independence.

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in shaping the Pancasila Student Profile at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat plays an important role in this study because it enables the creation of relevant, contextual learning that focuses on students' character development (Kartini, 2024). Through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), the curriculum allows students to develop values such as faith, global diversity, cooperation, independence, creativity, and critical thinking through activities based on local culture, such as the preservation of Acehese traditional arts or coastal environmental projects (Sobirin et al., 2023).

This methodology is pertinent to a context abundant in cultural values and socio-economic difficulties, so reinforcing students' identities while equipping them for global issues (Islamiah et al., 2024). The incorporation of Pancasila ideals into both intracurricular subjects, including civics and information technology, and extracurricular activities, such as scouting, facilitates the development of a comprehensive character that may be assessed in this study (Nur Hakim et al., 2024). Notwithstanding obstacles like inadequate infrastructure and teacher preparedness, the Merdeka Curriculum offers schools the flexibility to customize education according to local requirements, rendering it a crucial focus of research for assessing the efficacy of student character development in rural regions such as Rantau Selamat.

This approach is relevant to a context rich in cultural values and socio-economic challenges, thereby strengthening students' identities while preparing them for global challenges. In addition, the integration of Pancasila values into intracurricular learning, such as in Civics Education (PPKn) and Informatics, as well as extracurricular activities like Scouts, supports the formation of holistic character that can be measured in this research. Although challenges such as limited infrastructure and teacher readiness exist, the Independent Curriculum provides flexibility for schools to adapt learning to local needs, making it a significant subject of study for evaluating the effectiveness of character-building among students in rural areas such as Rantau Selamat.

2. Methodology

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design, aiming to provide a detailed description and in-depth analysis of the processes, dynamics, and factors influencing the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum in shaping the Pancasila Student Profile at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat. The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat, located in Rantau Selamat District, East Aceh Regency, Aceh Province. This location was selected because the researcher identified several issues related to the Independent Curriculum as a newly implemented curriculum still undergoing adjustments, and because the school is one of the educational institutions that has gradually implemented the Independent Curriculum since the 2022/2023 academic year, starting with Grade VII.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data, which complement each other to provide a comprehensive picture of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in shaping the Pancasila Student Profile. Primary data were obtained directly through interactions with the research subjects, namely the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher as Informant 1, and the

school principal as the policymaker at the educational unit level as Informant 2. Secondary data were obtained from the curriculum coordinator as Informant 3 and students as Informant 4.

Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. In this study, the data analysis method refers to the theory of Miles and Huberman, which consists of Data Reduction, Data Display, and Conclusion Drawing. In the context of this research, technique triangulation was carried out through direct observation of learning activities, particularly the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) and Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, combined with in-depth interviews with the PAI teacher, the school principal, and Grade VII students, and supported by documentation analysis such as lesson plans (RPP), project modules, syllabi, and school activity records.

3. Results

3.1 Implementation of the Independent Curriculum for Students at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) and differentiated learning has made a significant contribution to the development of students' competencies, character, and learning independence. Student involvement in P5 appears to be quite intensive across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Learners are not merely recipients of knowledge but are actively engaged in the planning, implementation, and presentation of their project outcomes.

This phenomenon aligns with the concept of Islamic education, which aims to shape insan kamil individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also faithful and morally upright. From the perspective of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the implementation of P5, which emphasizes values such as cooperation, deliberation, and collective responsibility, reflects the teachings of the Qur'an, as stated in Surah Ali Imran verse 103 regarding brotherhood (ukhuwah) and Surah Ash-Shura verse 38 on consultation (musyawarah) in decision-making (kurniawan et al., 2024). Thus, P5 can be understood not merely as an educational policy program but also as a means of integrating Islamic values into contemporary learning practices.

Nevertheless, the findings also identify several challenges, particularly among students who tend to be passive due to low self-confidence, limited communication skills, and difficulties in time management. Within the framework of PAI theory, this condition calls for the application of tarbiyah bil hal (education through modeling and habitual practice) and the strengthening of patience (sabr), as emphasized in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 153. Teachers are therefore required not only to act as transmitters of knowledge but also as motivators, facilitators, and moral role models. Consequently, the implementation of P5 carries not only pedagogical relevance but also reinforces the role of PAI in shaping students with Islamic character (Naimi et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the application of differentiated learning at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat supports the growth of student creativity. The principles of differentiation allowing students to learn according to their readiness levels, interests, and learning styles are consistent with the concept of fitrah in Islam, as stated by the Prophet Muhammad SAW: "Every child is born in a state of fitrah..." (HR. Bukhari-Muslim). By providing space for students to express themselves according to their potential, such as through poster creation, digital presentations, or written work, teachers are implementing an Islamic educational principle that emphasizes the optimal development of human fitrah. This creativity is closely related to the Qur'anic commands of tafakkur and tadabbur (Surah Ali Imran verses 190–191), which encourage humans to use their intellect critically, productively, and creatively in responding to life's realities (Ratnawati et al., 2024).

In addition to producing academic skills, differentiated learning also contributes to strengthening noble moral values such as responsibility (*amanah*), cooperation (*ta'awun*), and appreciation for the diversity of individual abilities. This demonstrates that differentiation is not only a modern pedagogical strategy but also holds theological relevance within the framework of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Nevertheless, the study found that some students with lower academic abilities still face obstacles in expressing creativity, particularly when tasks require technological skills or abstract thinking. From the perspective of Islamic education, this condition reinforces the need to apply the principle of *tadarruj* (gradualism) in teaching, namely providing learning tasks according to the students' capacity so that all potentials can develop proportionally.

Overall, this confirms that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat has strong relevance to Islamic Religious Education theory. The P5 projects contribute to the internalization of values such as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *musyawarah* (consultation), and responsibility, while differentiated learning supports the development of creativity, appreciation of individual *fitrah*, and the strengthening of noble character. Both complement each other in shaping students who are faithful, knowledgeable, well-mannered, and able to actualize Islamic teachings in real life. Thus, the Independent Curriculum is not only oriented toward achieving 21st-century competencies but is also aligned with the primary goals of PAI in cultivating a generation of *insan kamil*.

3.2 Character Formation of the Pancasila Student Profile among Students of SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat

There are two prominent character values, namely independence and social concern. Student independence is closely related to the concept of *mujahadah an-nafs*, which refers to earnest self-discipline that enables individuals to take responsibility for their tasks without relying on others. Meanwhile, social concern is reflected in behaviors of empathy, cooperation, and solidarity, which align with Islamic teachings on *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) and *ta'awun* (mutual assistance in goodness). Thus, character formation through the Independent Curriculum does not stand alone but aligns with the goals of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in shaping individuals who are faithful, virtuous, and able to contribute positively to their environment.

Student independence has continued to develop along with the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. This independence is not only evident in academic activities such as organizing study schedules, determining task priorities, and preparing presentations independently but also in everyday attitudes that demonstrate responsibility and discipline.

This phenomenon is relevant to PAI teachings that emphasize the habituation of *ibadah mahdhah*, such as prayer, fasting, and Qur'an recitation, all of which require discipline and personal awareness. The ability to manage time and plan independent learning strategies can be associated with Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) materials on worship management and morality, which emphasize responsibility. From the perspective of Islamic educational theory, the independence formed through the Independent Curriculum is part of the *tarbiyah* effort to train students to become self-reliant, disciplined individuals with intrinsic motivation. This aligns with the goals of PAI, which seek to cultivate a generation that is independent, morally upright, and capable of applying Islamic teachings in real life.

In addition to independence, social concern is also a character value that has developed well at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat. Through P5-based activities and daily interactions at school, students demonstrate empathy, solidarity, and willingness to help their peers. For example, when students help a friend understand a lesson, encourage peers who feel nervous during presentations, or participate in school clean-up activities.

Such behaviors reflect values of compassion, togetherness, and social responsibility that are central to Islamic teachings. Surah Al-Maidah verse 2 emphasizes the command to help one another in goodness and piety (ta'awanu 'alal birri wattaqwa), which is clearly visible in students' behavior when working in groups, sharing tasks, and resolving conflicts through deliberation. Therefore, the social concern cultivated through the implementation of the Independent Curriculum aligns with the mission of PAI in teaching ukhuwah Islamiyah, compassion, and cooperation.

However, not all students demonstrate the same level of social concern. A small number of students still exhibit individualistic attitudes and are reluctant to actively participate in group work. This condition requires the consistent habituation of cooperative values through teacher role modeling, as well as giving recognition to students who demonstrate caring behavior. From the perspective of PAI theory, this aligns with the approach of tazkiyah al-nafs (purification of the soul), which is carried out continuously to guide learners to become accustomed to good behavior and avoid selfish attitudes.

Overall, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat plays an important role in shaping the Pancasila Student Profile, particularly in developing independence and social concern. Student independence reflects discipline, responsibility, and self-confidence, while social concern demonstrates empathy, solidarity, and togetherness. These two character values are not only aligned with the dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile but also consistent with the fundamental goals of PAI to shape Muslim individuals who are faithful, morally upright, and capable of applying Islamic values in daily life. Thus, the Independent Curriculum has proven to be a strategic instrument in harmoniously integrating national character formation and religious education.

3.3 The Success of Implementing the Independent Curriculum in Developing the Pancasila Student Profile Character of Students at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat

The success of implementing the Independent Curriculum in developing the Pancasila Student Profile character among students at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat can be identified through two main indicators: the alignment between learning activities and character-building objectives, and the changes in students' attitudes and behavior following the curriculum's implementation. The findings show that the learning approach applied does not focus solely on academic achievement but also integrates religious values, noble character, and 21st-century skills. This supports the formation of students who are faithful, critical, creative, independent, and caring toward both their social environment and the natural surroundings.

This confirms that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat consistently reflects the character dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile. Character strengthening is not only explicitly embedded in the design of the P5 (Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project) but is also structurally mandated by official regulation. Ministerial Regulation of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology No. 12 of 2024 requires every educational unit to organize co-curricular activities in the form of P5 projects, which are designed separately from intracurricular content and focus on developing competencies and character.

The alignment between learning activities and the goals of the Pancasila Student Profile is clearly reflected in learning designs that integrate character values. Teachers do not merely deliver material; they design lessons that emphasize honesty, responsibility, politeness, and respect for teachers and peers.

The practice of beginning and ending lessons with collective prayers creates a religious atmosphere that strengthens students' spiritual awareness. Project-based learning (P5), such as projects themed around sustainable lifestyles, serves as a platform for students to develop critical

thinking, collaboration, and social awareness. Through activities such as identifying waste sources, analyzing environmental impacts, and designing simple waste-bank programs, students are trained to connect theory to real-life issues. Thus, the learning process becomes not just a transfer of knowledge but a process of internalizing the values of the Pancasila Student Profile through concrete actions.

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum also fosters student independence and creativity by giving them opportunities to choose presentation methods that match their interests and talents, such as exhibitions, digital posters, or crafts made from recycled materials. This freedom builds self-confidence while providing space for innovative expression. Heterogeneous group work encourages students to share roles, respect opinions, and support peers facing difficulties. As a result, the value of mutual cooperation “gotong royong” which is a core element of the Pancasila Student Profile, becomes genuinely internalized in daily learning interactions.

Changes in students’ attitudes and behavior following the implementation of the Independent Curriculum further strengthen the evidence of its successful application. In the cognitive aspect, students demonstrate greater courage to ask questions, critique ideas, and offer solutions to real-world problems marking a shift from the previous pattern of passive acceptance of teachers’ instructions. In the affective aspect, increased self-confidence, discipline, and responsibility are evident through consistent task submission, willingness to speak in front of the class, and commitment to completing roles within group work. In the social aspect, students show empathy and solidarity, such as helping each other with digital projects or encouraging classmates who feel nervous during presentations. Meanwhile, in the psychomotor aspect, students are able to transform ideas into concrete creations, such as crafts from recycled materials, digital posters for environmental campaigns, or real actions to maintain school cleanliness.

Students also demonstrate integrity by upholding honesty, for example by not copying reports from other groups and taking responsibility for their own work. Interactions among students occur in an atmosphere of mutual respect, politeness, and a preference for deliberation in resolving conflicts. All these changes indicate that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum has successfully fostered the holistic development of the Pancasila Student Profile within the students of SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the success of the Independent Curriculum implementation at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat is reflected in both the alignment of learning activities with character-building goals and the transformation in students’ attitudes and behaviors. The Independent Curriculum is not merely an instrument for academic strengthening, but also a strategic tool for instilling religious, moral, and social values. Ultimately, it shapes a generation of learners who are faithful, independent, critical, creative, cooperative, and socially responsible. This affirms the relevance of the Independent Curriculum to the goals of national education as well as to the mission of Islamic Religious Education in nurturing the insan kamil (a well-rounded, virtuous individual).

4. Conclusions

Based on the research results and the discussions that have been carried out regarding the implementation of the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum for students at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat has been carried out well in accordance with government regulations, particularly through the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5). Teachers not only focus on academic aspects but also integrate character values into every

learning process. Learning activities are designed to be project-based, providing students with the flexibility to think critically, create, and collaborate. Thus, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at this school does not merely emphasize knowledge acquisition but also strengthens religious, social, and cultural values in line with the goals of national education.

2. The development of the Pancasila Student Profile character among students at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat is clearly visible through daily practices and project activities. The character dimensions developed include religious values, independence, cooperation, critical thinking, creativity, and social awareness. Students are accustomed to praying together, showing politeness, and maintaining honesty in every activity. Through project activities, students are trained to identify real-life problems, such as waste management, and then to find creative and collaborative solutions. This process fosters self-confidence, discipline, responsibility, and solidarity among students. Therefore, the Pancasila Student Profile character is not only understood conceptually but is internalized in students' attitudes and behavior.
3. The success of the Independent Curriculum implementation in developing the Pancasila Student Profile character at SMP Negeri 1 Rantau Selamat can be seen through changes in students' attitudes, behaviors, and real skills after the application of this curriculum. Students have become more active, critical, creative, and more confident in expressing their opinions. They also show improvements in discipline, responsibility, empathy, and environmental awareness. In addition, project activities provide students with opportunities to produce meaningful works, whether in the form of crafts, digital media, or social actions. Thus, the Independent Curriculum has proven to be an effective strategic instrument in shaping a generation of learners who are not only intellectually capable but also possess strong character aligned with Pancasila values.

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