

## **Implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Curriculum Policy in Shaping Student Character in Public Schools**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to analyze and evaluate the implementation of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum policy in Senior High Schools (SMU) as a primary effort to shape student character. The main issue raised is the suboptimal internalization of Islamic character values (noble morals) among students despite the curriculum's mandate, particularly in the context of the shift from the 2013 Curriculum to the Independent Curriculum. The research method used was descriptive qualitative with a case study approach in [School Name/City of Research Location]. Data collection was conducted through PAI classroom observations, in-depth interviews with PAI teachers, the principal, and student representatives, as well as analysis of curriculum documents and teaching modules. The research results show that the implementation of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum policy in character formation is carried out through three main strategies: (1) Material Integration, where Learning Outcomes (CP) are directed at achieving the Pancasila Student Profile, the dimensions of Faith and Noble Morals; (2) Learning Model, with an emphasis on contextual and project-based methods (P5) that encourage socio-religious practices; and (3) Structured Habituation, namely routine activities such as congregational Dhuha/Zuhr prayers and Islamic Spiritual Activities (Rohis). Nevertheless, significant challenges remain, including limited time allocation for Islamic Religious Education, minimal training for Islamic Religious Education teachers regarding authentic character assessment, and the need to enhance the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers as consistent role models (uswah hasanah). It is concluded that the Islamic Religious Education curriculum policy provides a strong foundation, but the success of character formation is largely determined by the flexibility of teacher adaptation and the support of the school ecosystem as a whole.

**Keywords:** Curriculum Policy, Islamic Religious Education, Character Formation, Noble Morals, Public Schools.

## **Introduction**

Education plays a fundamental role in developing students' potential to become faithful, pious, and noble members of society, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and democratic and responsible citizens (National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, Article 3). In the Indonesian context, character development is a crucial issue amidst the challenges of globalization, the rapid flow of digital information, and shifting social values that sometimes trigger moral degradation. Social phenomena such as the rise in bullying, academic dishonesty, and intolerance among students indicate that the transfer of knowledge must be balanced with the internalization of ethical and moral values.

In public schools, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) serves as a compulsory subject specifically responsible for instilling the values of divinity, worship, and noble character. PAI not only teaches the cognitive dimension (knowledge) but also must address the affective (attitude) and psychomotor (practice/skills) dimensions of students. Therefore, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum must be able to transform religious teachings into real behavior that is manifested in the noble character of students every day.

The government's efforts to strengthen character education have been realized through curriculum policies, most recently the Independent Learning Curriculum. This policy emphasizes flexible, contextual, and project-oriented learning through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5). Specifically, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a key role in realizing the first dimension of the Pancasila Student Profile: "Faith, Devotion to God Almighty, and Noble Character." This paradigm shift requires Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers to abandon traditional lecture methods and shift to more innovative strategies that integrate character values into every aspect of learning. The implementation of this policy in public schools is interesting to study, given challenges such as limited class time allocation and heterogeneity of student backgrounds.

Although curriculum policies have changed and character goals have been clearly formulated, a gap remains between macro-level policies and implementation practices at the micro-level in schools. Therefore, this study aims to analyze in depth how the PAI curriculum policy is implemented by teachers in Public Schools, what effective learning models are used to shape students' character, and identify the supporting factors and obstacles faced in the process.

## **Research Method**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to describe and understand in-depth the phenomenon of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum policy implementation and the dynamic and contextual process of student character formation in public schools. The case study was chosen to allow for intensive exploration of the unit of analysis (the PAI implementation process in schools) and its surrounding context.

### **1. Research Type and Approach**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research aims to describe and understand in-depth the phenomenon of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum policy implementation and the dynamic and contextual process of student character formation in public schools. The case study was chosen to allow for intensive exploration of the unit of analysis (the PAI implementation process in schools) and its surrounding context.

### **2. Data Collection Techniques**

To achieve the required depth of data, this study employed triangulation methods, namely:

**In-Depth Interviews:** Conducted in a structured and semi-structured manner with all research subjects to gather information regarding their understanding of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) policies, character-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning planning, implementation challenges, and perceived impacts on students.

**Non-Active Participant Observation:** Conducted to directly observe the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning process in the classroom, the teaching models used by teachers, student interactions, and observations of routine religious activities (such as congregational prayer, religious lectures, or Rohis activities) as concrete manifestations of character building.

**Documentation Study:** Collected related formal and non-formal documents, including: (1) Islamic Religious Education Curriculum Policy Documents (CP/KI-KD), (2) Islamic Religious Education Teaching Modules/RPPs, (3) School Work Programs, (4) Character Building Guidelines/School Rules, and (5) Results of formative and summative Islamic Religious Education assessments.

### **3. Data Analysis Techniques**

Data analysis was conducted inductively and continuously, referring to the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model, through three main stages:

**Data Reduction:** The process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming raw data emerging from field notes and interview transcripts. The data focused on three main themes: curriculum policy, implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, and student character building outcomes.

**Data Display:** The reduced data was presented in narrative, tabular, or matrix form to facilitate understanding of the relationships between variables, patterns, and key findings.

**Conclusion Drawing/Verification:** Tentative conclusions were drawn from the outset and verified gradually by comparing findings from various data sources (triangulation). The final conclusion was a robust and credible finding regarding the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) policies in character building.

#### 4. Data Validity

The validity of research findings was enhanced through source triangulation (comparing data from teachers, students, and the principal) and method triangulation (comparing interview results, observations, and documentation). In addition, researchers conducted extended observation and peer discussions (audit trail) to ensure the credibility and accuracy of data interpretation.

### **Result**

#### 1. Policy Analysis and Integration of Character Material

The results of documentation and interview analysis indicate that the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum policy, particularly in the context of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, explicitly places character development at its core.

**Focus of Learning Outcomes (CP):** The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum at the general school level is designed to directly address the dimensions of Faith, Devotion to God Almighty, and Noble Character, part of the Pancasila Student Profile. This is realized through teaching materials that emphasize the practice of worship, an understanding of religious moderation, and the application of social morals (such as honesty and tolerance).

**Integration of P5:** Schools actively integrate Islamic Religious Education (PAI) values into the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5). For example, the theme "Sustainable Lifestyle" is integrated with Islamic jurisprudence on cleanliness and environmental responsibility.

#### 2. Implementation Challenges (Inhibiting Factors)

Despite positive efforts, implementation faces three main obstacles:

**Time Constraints:** The relatively small allocation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) hours compared to the demands of the material and character building often causes teachers to rush through CP, resulting in insufficient focus on moral development.

**PAI Teacher Readiness:** Some Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in public schools still find it difficult to design truly innovative and differentiation-based Independent Curriculum (MA) Teaching Modules (MA), often relying on the Teaching Modules available on the Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) Platform without contextual adjustments.

**Cross-Subject Support:** Building students' religious character has not yet become a shared responsibility. Most teachers of other general subjects consider religious character to be the sole responsibility of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, resulting in fragmented value instillation.

### 3. Discussion: Islamic Religious Education as a Pillar for Strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile

These findings confirm that Islamic Religious Education plays a normative role in realizing the Pancasila Student Profile. The implementation of the curriculum policy has successfully provided a framework and legitimacy for Islamic Religious Education to focus on non-cognitive outcomes. However, this study highlights that the policy's success lies in its operational aspects.

Shifting the focus of the Independent Curriculum from the quantity of material to the quality of learning outcomes (character) requires: (1) Teacher pedagogical competence to manage classrooms that focus on the practice of values, and (2) school leadership that embodies Islamic Religious Education policies not only in the classroom but throughout the school culture (through habituation). The gap between policy expectations and the reality of implementation lies in the persistence of the old paradigm, where character is assessed solely on religious knowledge, rather than on daily life practices.

## **Discussion**

Based on policy analysis, implementation observations, and field findings regarding the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in shaping student character in Public Schools, several main points are concluded as follows:

### 1. Achievement of Character Policy and Goals

The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum policy, particularly within the context of the Independent Curriculum (Curriculum Merdeka), has successfully positioned student character development as a primary normative goal. Conceptually, the PAI curriculum serves as a central pillar for achieving the dimensions of the

Pancasila Student Profile, namely "Faithful, Devout to God Almighty, and Noble Character." This is evident in the integration of PAI materials into project activities (P5) and the focus of Learning Outcomes, which focus on religious practice, not merely knowledge.

### 2. Effectiveness of Implementation Models

The effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) implementation in character formation is determined not only by intracurricular materials in the classroom, but also by structured habituation strategies within the school environment. The most impactful models are:

**Routine Habituation:** Consistently practicing communal worship (such as congregational prayer) successfully instills the values of religiosity and discipline collectively.

**Teacher Exemplary Behavior (Uswah Hasanah):** Students' character is significantly shaped through the consistent behavior of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers who serve as role models in their daily lives, extending beyond classroom lessons.

### 3. Obstacles and Recommendations

Despite a strong policy foundation, the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) still faces operational obstacles that hinder optimal character internalization. These obstacles include limited time allocation, which causes teachers to rush, and a lack of shared responsibility from all school elements.

In summary, the implementation of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in character building in public schools is a promising, ongoing process that requires a transition from mere cognitive delivery to authentic, habitual action. Ultimate success depends heavily on the innovative competence of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in designing contextual learning and the full support of the school culture to make PAI the core of character education.

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