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Strategy for Improving the Quality of Islamic Higher Education Management in the Independent Curriculum Era

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Abstract	This research examines strategies for improving the quality of Islamic higher education management in the Independent Curriculum Era. This research uses a qualitative research library-type method, conducting an in-depth study related to the Strategy for Improving the Quality of Islamic Higher Education Management in the Independent Curriculum Era with data and data sources obtained from books and national and international journal articles related to the keywords Strategy, Improving the Quality of Management, Islamic Higher Education, Independent Curriculum. The research results on strategies to improve the quality of Islamic higher education management in the Independent Curriculum era require a holistic and innovative approach to ensure educational institutions can maintain standards of excellence and relevance in facing changes in globalization. Some strategies that can be implemented to improve the quality of Islamic higher education management in the Independent Curriculum era include quality leadership, namely leadership that is visionary and innovation-oriented. Improving Curriculum and Learning, the curriculum must be structured to integrate Islamic values with the latest science and technology. The application of information and communication technology allows educational institutions to increase operational efficiency learning flexibility, and be responsive to student needs. Development of human resources according to the demands of the times, as well as collaboration with various external parties by expanding networks, for example collaborating with other universities to create quality education programs.
Keywords	Quality Management; Higher Education; Independent Curriculum

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1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic higher education has a significant role in improving the quality of education, especially in improving quality management (Nur Efendi & Muh Ibnu Sholeh, 2023) (Dadan, 2019). Society expects universities to do more than provide academic degrees to students. However, it is expected to be able to create superior individuals who can compete in the global era. Islamic universities, in particular, must provide in-depth knowledge about Islam and skills and understanding relevant to global dynamics (Ambarwati et al., 2022). In the Independent Curriculum era, where Indonesian higher education is

experiencing a significant transformation, Islamic higher education needs to adapt to the demands of the times. Introducing the Independent Curriculum offers an excellent opportunity for Islamic higher education institutions to design curriculum and higher education management that combines Islamic values with the needs of modern higher education. This will ensure that Islamic college graduates have a strong understanding of religion and the skills necessary for competitive globalization.

Islamic universities have a big responsibility to follow general developments in higher education and pay attention to Islamic values and uniqueness in curriculum development and educational management (Qoyyim, MA, & Santoso, 2020)(Sukmana, D., & Rahmat, 2019). In the era of the Independent Curriculum, Islamic universities need to ensure that Islamic values can be integrated with the principles of the new curriculum, thereby creating a holistic and balanced learning approach. This will not only provide students with a deeper understanding of Islam but also as an advantage in the quality of Islamic higher education management to continue striving to develop skills and knowledge relevant to current educational needs. To achieve this, Islamic higher education institutions can play an influential role in forming a moral, broad-minded generation ready to compete globally.

The Merdeka Curriculum is not only a response to global educational dynamics but also has significant implications for Islamic higher education. The flexibility promoted by the Merdeka Curriculum allows Islamic universities to adapt the curriculum to Islamic values and principles and the needs of Muslims in a rapidly changing global context (Sukmana, D., & Rahmat, 2019). With the Independent Curriculum, Islamic universities can design learning programs that are more relevant to Islamic teachings while remaining responsive to developments in science and technology (Malik, 2023). This then enables quality management policymakers to integrate Islamic values into the curriculum, thereby creating an educational environment that follows the Islamic religion's teachings and meets the demands of the dynamic times. In addition, the Merdeka Curriculum also strengthens the relevance of Islamic higher education to the needs of the globalization era, enabling Islamic higher education to better compete at the international level while still maintaining the identity and principles of Islamic higher education. Therefore, the Merdeka Curriculum not only creates space for innovation in the education process, but also strengthens the contribution of Islamic universities in preparing quality management in facing challenges in the era of globalization.

However, implementing the Independent Curriculum is not easy and is full of challenges. Islamic universities face various complex obstacles, ranging from structural changes to developing appropriate management strategies. One of the main challenges is adapting the curriculum to the quality of Islamic higher education (Qoyyim, MA, & Santoso, 2020). Islamic universities need to be more responsive to change, requiring a practical management approach to ensure the curriculum is relevant and able to prepare students to compete in the era of globalization (Arifin, Z., & Supriyanto, 2020). In facing this challenge, Islamic universities must be able to update their internal structures and develop appropriate management strategies to effectively integrate the needs of the globalization era into the curriculum. Only with a holistic and adaptive management approach, Islamic higher education will be able to overcome challenges and ensure that the Independent Curriculum can be implemented effectively for the success of higher education in Indonesia.

Human resource management and technology integration are crucial focuses in realizing the vision of the Independent Curriculum, especially for Islamic universities. Islamic universities must be able to recruit, develop, and retain quality academic staff who not only master academic material but also understand and apply Islamic values in the learning process. In addition, Islamic universities need to ensure that lecturers and educational staff can implement innovative curricula that reflect Islamic values and principles (Alharbi, 2020). Integrating technology into the learning process is also crucial but requires a mature strategy to be integrated effectively into the curriculum. Islamic universities must improve the quality of education management in the era of the independent curriculum while still paying attention to Islamic values in its use. With a holistic approach to managing human resources and integrating appropriate technology, Islamic higher education institutions will be able to achieve the

goals of the Independent Curriculum in improving the quality of higher education in Indonesia while maintaining Islamic identity and principles.

Another thing that needs to be considered is performance evaluation and monitoring, an essential aspect of improving the quality of higher education management in the Independent Curriculum era. A practical evaluation system must be able to do two main things, namely measuring student learning outcomes and evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum in preparing students to face the challenges of the globalization era. Evaluating student learning outcomes includes not only academic assessments but also aspects of soft skills and professional abilities relevant to the field's needs. In addition, curriculum evaluation must consider responses from the industrial world and changes in the demands of the globalization era. Continuous performance monitoring is also needed to find areas that need improvement and ensure that universities continue to adapt to environmental changes. With a solid performance evaluation and monitoring system, universities can be more responsive to the needs of students and industry and can continue to improve the overall quality of higher education in the Independent Curriculum era.

Financial and resource management is also essential in supporting the Independent Curriculum implementation in higher education. Higher education institutions need to be able to manage resources efficiently and effectively (Fadhli, 2020)(Fitrah, Muh, Ruslan, 2018). This is necessary in order to be able to finance innovative learning activities following the demands of the Independent Curriculum. Good management will enable universities to allocate funds appropriately, prioritize investment in necessary learning facilities, and support curriculum development that is responsive to change. Effective financial management is also essential to ensure the sustainability of educational programs offered by universities. In this way, universities will be able to meet long-term financial needs and provide quality educational services following the vision of the Independent Curriculum. This will help build a strong foundation for adaptive and innovative higher education in Indonesia.

Many studies have examined improving the quality of Islamic higher education management. Some are studies on improving the quality of Islamic higher education, challenges. This research discusses the challenges in improving the quality of Islamic higher education in facing the Independent Curriculum Era. Through a qualitative approach, this research analyzes various factors that influence the quality of Islamic higher education and formulates strategies to improve this quality. The research results show the need to integrate Islamic values into the curriculum, increase lecturer competence, and use information technology in learning (Qoyyim, MA, & Santoso, 2020). Study of the Role of Management in Implementing the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Higher Education. This research examines the role of management in implementing the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Higher Education. Using a qualitative approach and case studies at UIN Jakarta, this research analyzes how Islamic education management manages curriculum changes, adjusts internal policies, and supports lecturers and students in understanding and implementing the Independent Curriculum. The research results show that the role of management is significant in ensuring the successful implementation of the new curriculum (Sukmana, D., & Rahmat, 2019). Study of Curriculum Innovation and Development Strategy for Islamic Higher Education. This research discusses curriculum innovation and development strategy for Islamic higher education in the Independent Curriculum Era. Through literature analysis and case studies, this research identifies several curriculum innovation models that can be implemented in Islamic universities, as well as practical development strategies to support the implementation of the new curriculum (Fikri, AM, & Abdurrahman, 2021). Study on Evaluation of the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Higher Education: Managerial Review. This research evaluates the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Higher Education using a managerial approach. Through surveys and interviews with stakeholders in several Islamic higher education institutions, this research identifies factors that influence curriculum implementation, challenges faced, and strategies that can be implemented by Islamic higher education management to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of curriculum implementation (Arifin, Z., & Supriyanto, 2020). These

studies provide insight into improving quality, the role of management, and implementing the Independent Curriculum in Islamic higher education. However, no one has specifically studied improving the quality of Islamic higher education management in the Independent Curriculum Era. The researcher will discuss the Strategy for Improving the Quality of Islamic Higher Education Management in the Independent Curriculum Era of this research.

Overall, the Merdeka Curriculum is an essential milestone in developing higher education in Indonesia. However, an in-depth understanding of developing effective management strategies for managing the quality of Islamic higher education in the Independent Curriculum era is required to ensure its success. Thus, research on strategies for improving the quality of management of Islamic higher education in the Independent Curriculum era is very relevant and essential for education development. High in Indonesia. It is also important to consider how Islamic values can be integrated with the principles of the Independent Curriculum to create an educational environment that aligns with religious teachings and meets modern higher education standards.

2. METHODS

This research is a qualitative type of library research or library research. It aims to identify, analyze and conclude the strategies used in improving the quality of Islamic higher education management in the Independent Curriculum era. Data sources were obtained from books and relevant national and international journal articles with the keywords Strategy, Management Quality Improvement, Islamic Higher Education, and Independent Curriculum. This research seeks to obtain a comprehensive understanding from various relevant sources. Data collection techniques are carried out by searching for books and scientific articles through the "Publish or Perish" (POP) tool, which is a search tool for scientific literature, and searching through the Elsevier Scopus database, which is known as one of the broadest and most credible databases for scientific literature. This research seeks to obtain relevant and reliable sources. Data analysis was carried out using the content analysis method. This involves systematically grouping, interpreting, and understanding the contents of books or articles discovered through literature searches. Thus, this research will provide an in-depth and detailed understanding of the strategies used in improving the quality of Islamic higher education management in the Independent Curriculum era.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

Management Quality Improvement Strategy

The strategy to improve the quality of management is an essential approach in managing higher education institutions, especially in the era of independent curricula, which demands rapid and innovative adaptation to change. (Cecep Alba, 2011). At the level of Islamic higher education, this strategy becomes more important because these institutions must maintain the quality of education following Islamic principles, remaining relevant to the times' demands and society's needs. Several strategies can be used to improve the quality of Islamic higher education management. First, strengthening quality leadership is the primary key to improving the quality of management. Effective leadership will provide direction and motivation to all organization members to work towards the stated vision and mission. According to Shahrill Ahmad Razman et al. (2019), in a study of Islamic higher education management in Malaysia, transformational leadership was proven to be effective in motivating academic and non-academic staff to achieve better(Shahrill Ahmad Razman, Kamarul Azmi Jasmi, 2019). Second, applying information and communication technology (ICT) in higher education management can help operational efficiency and effectiveness. The use of management information

systems (SIM) and online learning platforms (e-learning) has been proven to increase learning accessibility and flexibility, as well as facilitate more efficient administration and data management processes. Furthermore, human resource (HR) development is essential in the management quality improvement strategy. Training and development for academic and non-academic staff must be taken seriously to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to perform their duties well(Gibson, I., Ball, A., & Crawford, 2015). According to Saleh & Ismail (2017), training for academic staff at Islamic universities in Indonesia can improve performance in teaching and research(Saleh, AM, & Ismail, 2017). Collaboration and partnerships with various external parties such as industry, government, and society can improve the quality of Islamic higher education management. Through this collaboration, Islamic higher education institutions can expand their networks, obtain additional resources, and adapt their curriculum and learning activities to the needs of the world of work and society.(Al-Ani, WAK, & Al-Emran, 2018). In designing and implementing strategies to improve the quality of management, it is important for Islamic higher education institutions to pay attention to the local domain, and adapt strategies that are in accordance with Islamic values and community needs. Overall, the strategy to improve the quality of management is an important basis in ensuring that Islamic higher education institutions remain relevant and of high quality in the era of the independent curriculum.

Islamic Higher Education

Islamic Higher Education is an integral part of the education system, which has its characteristics in offering advanced level education based on Islamic values.(Nurhayati & Rosadi, 2022). Within the scope of Islamic higher education, education does not only aim to provide academic knowledge, but also to shape character and personality following Islamic teachings. Islamic higher education combines general knowledge with an understanding of the Islamic religion so that students become skilled intellectuals and devout and responsible Muslims. Islamic higher education covers various fields of study, ranging from religious sciences such as tafsir, hadith, fiqh, and ushul fiqh to general sciences such as social, natural, and technological sciences. (Dadan, 2019). Through Islamic higher education, students are expected to gain a holistic understanding of the world and the afterlife and be able to integrate this knowledge into everyday life.

Islamic higher education also has a strategic role in maintaining and developing the Islamic identity of a nation(Abduh, 2020). In countries with a majority Muslim population, Islamic higher education institutions have the responsibility to strengthen Islamic awareness and promote Islamic values in society. On the other hand, Islamic higher education institutions in non-Muslim countries often become a bridge to introduce the religion of Islam to non-Muslim communities, thus becoming an essential part of efforts for inter-religious dialogue and peace between ummah. (Abduh, 2020).

However, like higher education in general, Islamic higher education is also faced with various challenges and changes. One of the main challenges is maintaining the relevance of the curriculum to current developments and community needs. According to Abdulrahman Khudair Alharbi (2020), in his article about the challenges and opportunities of Islamic higher education in the era of globalization, Islamic higher education institutions need to continue to evaluate and innovate the curriculum to remain relevant and competitive at the global level. (Alharbi, 2020).

Information and communication technology (ICT) is also increasingly important in Islamic higher education. By utilizing technology, Islamic higher education institutions can increase educational accessibility, expand learning reach, and increase administrative efficiency. However, using technology also challenges maintaining Islamic values and avoiding content that does not follow religious teachings. Cooperation between Islamic higher education institutions at both regional and international levels can be an effective solution to facing this challenge. This collaboration can facilitate the exchange of experiences and resources and expand collaboration networks in various fields of study and research. Overall, Islamic higher education is essential in building a society with culture and integrity and can compete globally. By continuing to innovate and adapt to changing times, Islamic higher education

institutions can remain relevant and significantly contribute to the development of the people and nation.

Independent Curriculum

The Independent Curriculum is a concept that places freedom, creativity, and autonomy as the primary foundation of the educational process(Arifin, Z., & Supriyanto, 2020). This concept aims to free education from limitations and rigid standards, providing more excellent space for innovation, exploration, and adaptation to students' needs and potential. (Rahmafitri, 2024). The Merdeka Curriculum reflects the spirit of freeing education from traditional shackles and enabling the holistic development of students' potential.

In its implementation, the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the importance of flexibility and adaptation in designing and implementing the curriculum at every level of education. This means that the curriculum is no longer static and tied to a predetermined structure but is more dynamic and responsive to the needs and development of students, the environment, and the demands of the times. (Mailin, 2021)(Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020). At the higher education level, the Independent Curriculum encourages educational institutions to pay more attention to the needs and interests of individual students in designing the curriculum. In this way, students can choose courses that suit their interests, talents, and career goals, making learning more relevant and meaningful. This aligns with the student-centered learning approach, placing students as active subjects in the learning process.

The Merdeka Curriculum also encourages educational institutions to increase the involvement of stakeholders, including industry, society, and government, in designing the curriculum(Mustari & Rahman, 2022). By involving external stakeholders, educational institutions can ensure that the curriculum they prepare can meet the job market's needs and create graduates ready to compete in the world of work. However, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum also faces several challenges. One of them is the preparation of human resources who can design, implement and evaluate a curriculum per the principles of the Independent Curriculum. This requires providing skills and knowledge for educators and education managers and sufficient support from the government and related institutions.

Another challenge is ensuring the quality and accountability of education in the Independent Curriculum(Rosani, 2023). Even though it provides greater freedom for educational institutions, the Independent Curriculum still requires practical evaluation and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that quality standards are maintained and measurable. The Independent Curriculum is a revolutionary concept in education, offering a new paradigm in designing and implementing the curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum is expected to create a more responsive, inclusive, quality education system by providing freedom, flexibility, and stakeholder involvement.

Strategy for Improving the Quality of Islamic Higher Education Management in the Independent Curriculum Era

The strategy to improve the quality of Islamic higher education management in the Independent Curriculum era requires a holistic and innovative approach to ensure educational institutions can maintain standards of excellence and relevance in facing the dynamics of change.(Fitrah, Muh, Ruslan, 2018)(Asnawan, 2020). In this case, several strategies can be implemented to improve the quality of Islamic higher education management by considering the principles of the Independent Curriculum. First, quality leadership is the primary key in the management quality improvement strategy. Visionary, inclusive, and empowerment-oriented leadership can create a work environment conducive to innovation and development. Transformational leadership has proven effective in motivating academic and non-academic staff and building an organizational culture oriented towards learning and continuous improvement (Shahrill Ahmad Razman et al., 2019).

Second, applying information and communication technology (ICT) is essential in improving the

quality of Islamic higher education management in the Independent Curriculum era. Management information systems (SIM) and online learning platforms (e-learning) can facilitate more flexible and efficient administration, data management, and learning processes. Technology also allows educational institutions to develop services that are more personalized and responsive to individual student needs (Gibson et al., 2015). Furthermore, developing human resources (HR) is a strategy that is no less important in improving the quality of Islamic higher education management in the Independent Curriculum era. Training and development for academic and non-academic staff need to be taken seriously to improve the skills and knowledge of academic staff in carrying out their duties well. Research shows that training for academic staff in Islamic universities improves their performance in teaching and research (Saleh & Ismail, 2017). Lastly, collaboration and partnerships with various external parties such as industry, government, and society are also effective strategies for improving the quality of Islamic higher education management in the Independent Curriculum era. Through this collaboration, Islamic higher education institutions can expand their networks, obtain additional resources, and adapt their curriculum and learning activities to the needs of the world of work and society (Al-Ani & Al-Emran, 2018). In designing and implementing strategies to improve the quality of management, Islamic higher education institutions need to consider the local domain and ensure that the strategies adopted follow Islamic values and the principles of the Independent Curriculum. In this way, Islamic higher education institutions can strengthen their position as superior educational institutions capable of making significant contributions to the development of the people and nation.

Discussion

Islamic higher education plays an essential role in shaping the character and thinking of Muslims and contributing to the progress of the people and the country. In changing times, improving the quality of Islamic higher education has become very important(Fitrah, Muh, Ruslan, 2018). The Independent Curriculum Era is one of the Indonesian government's efforts to provide freedom to universities in designing curricula that suit the needs of the times and the characteristics of each institution. (Malik, 2023). In this case, Islamic higher education management has a significant role in designing and implementing effective quality improvement strategies.

Improving quality in Islamic higher education requires adopting a comprehensive and integrated strategy. Some strategies that can be implemented include: 1) Improving the Curriculum and Learning, the curriculum must be structured to integrate Islamic values with the latest science and technology. Learning must also be designed to be more interactive collaborative, and utilize information technology. This will help increase student understanding and the relevance of education to the needs of society and the job market(Al-Ani, WAK, & Al-Emran, 2018). 2) Human Resource Development: lecturers are one of the key elements in Islamic higher education. Therefore, developing lecturers through training, workshops, and professional development programs is very important. Apart from that, lecturers must also be encouraged to get involved in research and scientific publications to enrich students' learning experiences and expand the scope of knowledge(Nurhayati & Rosadi, 2022). 3) Strengthening Research and Community Service: quality research relevant to community needs and community service is an integral part of Islamic higher education(Saleh, AM, & Ismail, 2017). Institutions must encourage lecturers and students to engage in research that benefits the people and the country. In addition, research results must also be implemented in community policy and practice. 4) Improving Facilities and Infrastructure: adequate facilities and infrastructure support the learning process, research, and community service(Saleh, AM, & Ismail, 2017). Therefore, institutions must continue investing in updating and improving facilities, such as laboratories, libraries, and comfortable and technologically advanced classrooms.

Islamic higher education management has an essential role in ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of institutions in achieving educational and research goals. In this case, some of the essential roles of management include 1) Strategic Planning; management is responsible for formulating and implementing institutional strategic plans that follow the vision, mission, and values of Islamic higher

education. This includes setting long and short term goals, developing policies, and efficient resource allocation. 2) Resource Management, management must manage institutional human and material resources efficiently and effectively. This includes managing funds, facilities, and human resources to support educational, research, and community service activities. 3) Quality Development, management is responsible for ensuring the quality of Islamic higher education through developing relevant curricula, increasing lecturer competence, and monitoring the learning and research process. This involves regular monitoring and evaluation of institutional and individual performance. 4) Leadership and Motivation, management needs to provide inspirational leadership and motivate lecturers, students, and education staff to excel and contribute optimally to achieving institutional goals(Qoyyim, MA, & Santoso, 2020). This involves effective communication, coaching, and recognition of achievements.

The Independent Curriculum Era provides freedom for universities to design curricula that suit the characteristics and needs of each institution as well as the demands of the times. Concerning Islamic higher education, the Independent Curriculum Era provides opportunities to increase the relevance of the curriculum to Islamic values and the integration of information technology in the education process. Management of Islamic higher education needs to utilize this freedom wisely to implement more effective quality improvement strategies(Warits, 2017)(Akhtar, MN, & Husain, 2020). For example, in implementing the Independent Curriculum Era, Islamic higher education institutions can design curricula that are more flexible, inclusive, and responsive to student and industry needs. A curriculum that integrates a student-centered learning approach, digital technology, and Islamic values will be more relevant and capable of producing high-quality and competitive graduates. Apart from that, the Independent Curriculum Era also provides opportunities for institutions to develop educational and research programs that are more innovative and solution-oriented. For example, institutions can design study programs that emphasize solving social, economic, and environmental problems using interdisciplinary and technology-based approaches. In this review, we have explored quality improvement strategies, the role of management, and their relevance to the Independent Curriculum Era in the context of Islamic higher education. By implementing the right strategy and taking advantage of existing opportunities, Islamic higher education can continue to contribute to forming a quality generation and encourage the development of the people and the country.

4. CONCLUSION

The strategy to improve the quality of Islamic higher education management in the Independent Curriculum era requires a holistic and innovative approach to ensure that educational institutions can maintainstandardexcellence and relevance in facing changes in globalization. Some strategies that can be implemented to improve the quality of Islamic higher education management in the Independent Curriculum era include quality leadership, namely leadership that is visionary and innovation-oriented. Improving Curriculum and Learning, the curriculum must be structured to integrate Islamic values with the latest science and technology. The application of information and communication technology allows educational institutions to increase operational efficiency learning flexibility, and be responsive to student needs. Development of human resources according to the demands of the times, as well as collaboration with various external parties by expanding networks, for example collaborating with other universities to create quality education programs. By implementing this strategy in a holistic and integrated manner, Islamic higher education institutions are expected to strengthen their position as superior educational institutions capable of making significant contributions to the development of the people and nation following the principles of the Independent Curriculum.

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