Rethinking Islamic Education: Transforming the Curriculum through RAMAH ANAK Approaches

Andi Anugrah Surya Ardhy[1]

[1]Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Malang City, Indonesia
*Co-email: andianugrah.sar@email.com

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Developing an inclusive Islamic education curriculum is an urgent need to improve the quality of education. The Cambridge and Merdeka Belajar curricula, with their innovative principles, have great potential for adaptation in Islamic education. This research aims to identify and explore The RAMAH ANAK approach as a foundation in developing an Islamic education curriculum and analyze the suitability of RAMAH ANAK principles with the values of Islamic education. The methodology used is library research with a qualitative approach involving analysis of literature related to the Cambridge Curriculum, Merdeka Belajar, and Islamic education. The research results show that integrating the advantages of the Cambridge Curriculum and Merdeka Belajar creates a more holistic and inclusive approach called the RAMAH ANAK approach. These principles align with Islamic educational values such as justice, compassion and character development. Apart from that, the advantages of The RAMAH ANAK approach also support the formation of Islamic solid character and inclusive learning. Thus, the findings of this research can be the basis for developing educational policies that are more RAMAH ANAK and in line with Islamic values. The conclusions of this research indicate that the RAMAH ANAK approach has great potential to improve the quality of Islamic education, but further research is needed to test its effectiveness in various educational contexts.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in Indonesia currently faces several significant challenges that affect its quality and effectiveness. One of the main problems is the need for more attractiveness of learning for students. Many Islamic educational institutions still use traditional teaching methods that are less attractive to students, such as one-way lectures and memorization without in-depth understanding (Sungkowo et al., 2024;

Syafi'i & Yusuf, 2021). This method often does not stimulate students' interest in learning, making them feel bored and less motivated to participate (Amaly et al., 2023). Lack of student involvement is also critical in Indonesia's Islamic education system. The dominant learning process is teacher-centered, making students passive and participating less (Emawati et al., 2024). In many cases, students must be allowed to interact with learning material or develop their critical thinking actively. As a result, students often become mere recipients of information rather than active participants in the educational process, ultimately hindering their critical and analytical skills.

In addition, the Islamic education curriculum often needs to pay more attention to developing critical and analytical skills. Too much focus on theoretical and dogmatic aspects without emphasizing practical applications makes students less prepared to face real-world challenges (Putri & Setiawan, 2022). Critical thinking, problem-solving, and in-depth analysis are often poorly developed, so Islamic education graduates tend to be less competitive in the job market (Omar, 2022). Meanwhile, teaching methods that are less innovative and not in line with current needs are one of Indonesia's most significant challenges in Islamic education (Mansir et al., 2023). Many educational institutions still need to be fixated on conventional approaches no longer relevant to current technological developments and social dynamics. Limitations in the use of educational technology, lack of application of active learning methods, and minimal integration between theory and practice are the main obstacles to improving the quality of Islamic education.

Comprehensive reform is needed in Indonesia's Islamic education system to overcome this challenge. The Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is an innovation in the Indonesian education system that offers more freedom in the learning process (Dian et al., 2023). The central concept of this curriculum is to provide autonomy to schools and teachers to organize the learning process according to individual student needs and local context. By providing this freedom, the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum encourages creativity, innovation and more relevant and meaningful learning for students. Teachers are no longer bound to one rigid teaching method but can use various strategies to achieve the set learning goals (Fauzan et al., 2023).

One of the main advantages of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is its ability to adapt learning to individual student needs (Amini et al., 2023; Sihombing et al., 2021). Each student has a different learning pace and learning style, and this curriculum allows teachers to adapt their approach to be more effective. For example, more visual students can be given learning materials with more pictures and videos. In contrast, more kinesthetic students can be given physical activity assignments. Thus, each student can learn how best suits them, ultimately increasing learning effectiveness. The Merdeka Belajar Curriculum also emphasizes the importance of learning that encourages creativity and innovation. Within the framework of this curriculum, students are encouraged to think critically and creatively and to develop complex

problem-solving skills. Collaborative and interdisciplinary learning projects are an important part of this curriculum. For example, projects that combine aspects of art, science, and technology can help students understand the concepts taught in a more in-depth and comprehensive way (Muslihati et al., 2023).

Apart from the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum implemented in Indonesia, the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum in several schools in Indonesia has also shown various significant benefits, especially in developing students' analytical and critical skills. The Cambridge curriculum is known for its research-based approach and emphasis on developing higher-order thinking skills. In this curriculum, students are encouraged to understand information and analyze, evaluate, and apply it in different contexts (Qomariyah & Khasanah, 2023). This approach aims to equip students with the skills needed to succeed in the challenging era of globalization. One of the main advantages of the Cambridge Curriculum is its focus on research and project-based learning (Najah & Setiati, 2020). Students can engage in projects that challenge them to conduct independent research, collect data, and draw conclusions based on their findings. This approach improves students' analytical skills and builds their ability to work independently and develop critical thinking. Studies conducted by Anindya and Pamungkas (2023) show that students studying under the Cambridge Curriculum have better analytical skills than those studying under the national curriculum.

In addition, the Cambridge Curriculum emphasizes the importance of learning based on problem-solving (Islam & Fajaria, 2022). Students are taught to identify problems, explore various solutions, and choose the most effective solution. This approach helps students develop critical thinking skills that are critical in their daily lives and future careers. For example, in science subjects, students learn theory and conduct experiments that allow them to apply the concepts learned in real situations. It prepares them to face academic and professional challenges more confidently and competently.

However, there is a significant gap between the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum and the Cambridge Curriculum. The Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, implemented by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, emphasizes freedom and flexibility in learning. It gives teachers and schools more autonomy to adapt learning to individual student needs and local conditions. This approach allows for adapting learning materials to make them more relevant and meaningful and encourages creative and innovative learning. In contrast, the Cambridge Curriculum has a more structured approach based on international standards. This curriculum emphasizes developing analytical and critical skills through research and project-based learning. Although solid in academic aspects and higher-order thinking skills, the Cambridge Curriculum may lack flexibility in adapting to local contexts and the specific needs of Islamic religious education. It is because the curriculum is designed with a global perspective,

which may not always be based on the values and goals of religious education in Indonesia.

Another area for improvement is in the assessment aspect. The Merdeka Belajar Curriculum tends to be more adaptive with various assessment approaches, from formative assessments to authentic assessments, which provide a comprehensive picture of student development. On the other hand, the Cambridge Curriculum relies more on standardized test-based assessments, which, although effective in measuring academic achievement, may not fully reflect students' social, emotional and moral skills, which are an essential focus in Islamic religious education.

Thus, integrating the advantages of the Merdeka and Cambridge Curriculum to create a more holistic and adaptive approach is a strategic step in improving the quality of Islamic religious education. The combination of these two curricula can provide a comprehensive solution that combines flexibility and innovation with structure and high academic standards. Based on the background above, this research aims to develop and integrate the advantages of the Merdeka and Cambridge Curriculum into The RAMAH ANAK approach, known as the RAMAH ANAK approach. The main aim of this approach is to create a solid foundation to improve students' competence in learning, especially in the context of Islamic religious education. The RAMAH ANAK approach is expected to combine the flexibility and innovation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum with the academic structure and analytical skills of the Cambridge Curriculum, thereby creating a holistic and adaptive learning environment.

METHOD

This research uses a library research method with a qualitative approach to explore and identify RAMAH ANAK principles in developing the Islamic education curriculum. The first step involved collecting data from relevant literature sources, including books, journal articles, research reports, and policy documents related to the Cambridge curriculum, Merdeka Belajar, and Islamic education. Literature is selected based on its relevance and contribution to understanding the curriculum principles discussed. Content analysis was carried out by dissecting and examining each literature source to identify the main principles of the Cambridge and Merdeka Belajar curriculum, as well as possible adaptations in Islamic education. This content analysis and evaluation results are then used to produce recommendations for educational policies that are more RAMAH ANAK and in line with Islamic values.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Setting the Foundation: Principles of The RAMAH ANAK approach in Islamic Education

The RAMAH ANAK approach in the educational aims to create a supportive, inclusive, and adaptive learning environment for students (Ardhy, 2024). This concept

emerged as a response to challenges in the educational process, where each child has different needs and learning styles. The RAMAH ANAK approach considers students' individual needs and aims to create a comprehensive and holistic learning environment. It is in line with Islamic education, which emphasizes the importance of character formation, understanding religion, and developing academic skills.

The RAMAH ANAK approach is formed by integrating fundamental principles that support effective and enjoyable learning for students. In this context, the RAMAH ANAK approach combines the active, reflective and creative learning approach adopted from the Cambridge Curriculum with the flexibility and personalization of learning found in the Merdeka Belajar curriculum (Ardhy, 2024). The RAMAH ANAK approach considers various aspects, such as reflection, active participation, motivation, and adaptation to individual student needs. It means that teachers and instructors need to understand the characteristics of their students well and adapt learning methods and strategies to fit their individual needs. In this way, RAMAH ANAK creates a learning environment that is inclusive adaptive, and allows students to thrive.

The RAMAH ANAK approach in developing an Islamic education curriculum focuses on nine principles designed to create a learning environment to support students' overall development. Specifically, RAMAH ANAK principles are an acronym that represents the various main components of this learning approach. The following is a complete description of each principle, are reflective, active, motivation, analytics, holistic, adaptive, reasoning, enthusiasm, and creative.

Reflektif (reflective) – the reflective approach allows students to reflect on and critically assess their learning processes. In Islamic education, this reflection supports the formation of a solid Islamic character through self-evaluation and continuous improvement. Students are invited to introspect their actions and understanding, which aligns with the concept of muhasabah in Islam, which emphasizes the importance of self-evaluation in achieving continuous self-improvement.

Active – active learning prioritizes student participation through discussions, experiments and projects. This method aligns with Islamic educational values that encourage personal involvement and responsibility. Students receive information passively and participate actively in the learning process, reflecting the principles of charity and the spirit of doing good in Islam.

Motivation – a reward system that builds students' intrinsic motivation is essential to encourage enthusiasm for learning and a love of knowledge. In Islamic education, appreciation and recognition for students' efforts and achievements can foster self-confidence and a desire to continue learning, as recommended in the hadith, which encourages the pursuit of knowledge as worship.

Analitis (analytics) – developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills is essential for understanding and addressing contemporary challenges in Islamic societies. Islamic education, which is based on the Al-Quran and Hadith, encourages its followers to think critically and logically, preparing students to become wise and responsive leaders to social dynamics.

Holistic – education that includes academic, emotional, social and physical aspects ensures balanced and complete development for students. This holistic principle reflects the concept of insan kamil in Islam, where individuals are expected to develop holistically in all aspects of their lives.

Adaptive – adapting teaching methods to individual student needs supports inclusivity and attention to the diversity of student abilities and interests. This approach allows each student to learn according to their abilities and pace, creating an inclusive and responsive environment for each individual's unique needs.

Nalar (reasoning) – using critical thinking as the core of the learning process prepares students to make wise, evidence-based decisions. In Islam, using reason and reasoning to seek the truth is an obligation, reflected in various verses of the Koran that encourage its followers to think and reflect.

Enthusiasm – a learning environment that generates enthusiasm and excitement is essential for creating a positive learning atmosphere and supporting exploration. Enthusiasm for learning can foster a sustainable curiosity and deep interest in knowledge through the spirit of lifelong learning recommended in Islam.

Creative – encouraging creativity and innovation in the learning process helps students become innovative thinkers and solutions in facing real-world problems. Creativity in Islam is valued as a form of expression and discovery beneficial to the people, so education encouraging innovation can produce individuals who can make positive contributions to society.

From Theory to Practice: Potential for Implementing The RAMAH ANAK approach in Islamic Education

RAMAH ANAK principles are very compatible with core values in Islam, such as justice, compassion and character development. In Islamic teachings, education aims to transfer knowledge and form strong character and noble morals (Manurung et al., 2024). Principles such as reflective, active, motivational, analytical, holistic, adaptive, reasoning, enthusiastic and creative in The RAMAH ANAK approach are aligned with this goal. For example, the reflective principle encourages students to reflect on their actions and improve themselves through the concept of *muhasabah* in Islam, namely self-introspection for continuous improvement (Jailani & Risma Mega Utami, 2024).

Compassion and justice, two fundamental values in Islam, are also reflected in RAMAH ANAK principles. Adaptive and motivational principles emphasize adapting teaching methods to individual student needs and providing rewards that build intrinsic motivation, reflecting a sense of compassion and justice in education. By providing fair attention and treating each student with compassion, this approach can help create an inclusive and supportive learning environment, which is very important in Islamic education (Ilham et al., 2023).

In addition, the RAMAH ANAK-based approach can also help create a learning environment that supports the holistic development of Muslim children, ensuring they are ready to face the challenges of the modern age. Islamic education does not only focus on academic aspects but also students' spiritual, emotional and social development. This approach can provide a more comprehensive and balanced approach by incorporating RAMAH ANAK principles. For example, holistic principles ensure that education covers all aspects of children's development, including physical, emotional, social and spiritual, so that children grow into complete and balanced individuals (Karimullah, 2023).

Another development opportunity is using technology and innovative teaching methods in a RAMAH ANAK-based approach. By utilizing modern technology and an active learning approach, this curriculum can increase student engagement and make learning more exciting and relevant. For example, the use of interactive educational applications and project-based learning can help students understand Islamic religious concepts in a more practical and interesting way and develop their critical and analytical skills (Aditya Firdaus et al., 2023).

Additionally, the creative principles in RAMAH ANAK encourage students to think outside traditional boundaries and explore innovative solutions to their problems. In the context of Islamic education, students are invited to connect religious teachings with contemporary challenges, such as social and environmental issues, to contribute positively to society. Thus, this curriculum prepares students to succeed academically and become agents of change who bring Islamic values into real-life practice.

Building the Future: The Advantages of The RAMAH ANAK approach in Improving Islamic Education

The RAMAH ANAK approach offers many advantages in Islamic education, especially in developing Islamic character. One of the fundamental principles of this approach is reflection, which invites students to reflect on and assess their learning process. In Islamic education, reflection is critical because it helps students understand and internalize religious teachings in depth. For example, when students reflect on their actions and their impact on others, they can develop more ethical and moral attitudes, which align with Islamic values such as justice, compassion, and responsibility (Tambak et al., 2021).

In addition, the active principles in the RAMAH ANAK approach support learning that involves students directly and practically. In the context of Islamic education, this means that students not only learn about religious teachings theoretically but also apply them in everyday life. Through discussions, experiments, and projects, students can develop essential social and emotional skills, such as cooperation, communication, and empathy. This active learning helps students better understand and appreciate Islamic values and apply them in real and meaningful ways (Ijudin et al., 2022).

The RAMAH ANAK approach also emphasizes the importance of inclusive learning tailored to individual student needs. The adaptive principles in this approach ensure that every student gets the attention and support they need to thrive, regardless of their background or abilities. In Islamic education, inclusivity is essential because it reflects Islamic teachings about equality and justice. By adapting teaching methods and learning materials according to individual needs, teachers can help all students, including those with special needs or learning challenges, to reach their full potential (Salabi, 2023).

An inclusive approach also means that the curriculum can be adapted to cover various student learning styles and interests. For example, several students may better understand religious concepts through arts-based activities, while others may be more interested in analytical and critical approaches. By providing a variety of teaching methods and activities, the RAMAH ANAK approach ensures that each student can learn in the most effective way. It increases student engagement and motivation and helps them develop skills and knowledge relevant to their lives (Aseery, 2024).

The RAMAH ANAK approach's analytical and creative principles also provide significant advantages in Islamic education. By emphasizing the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, this approach helps students to understand and overcome contemporary challenges in Islamic societies. For example, students are invited to analyze social and environmental problems from an Islamic perspective and look for creative solutions that align with religious values. This approach improves students' intellectual abilities and prepares them to become leaders and innovators who can bring positive change in society (Yusmaliana et al., 2023).

The RAMAH ANAK approach also encourages students to explore and express their ideas innovatively. In Islamic education, students can develop creative projects that combine religious teachings with modern technology, art, or other media. For example, students can create short films or multimedia presentations about Islamic values, which helps them understand the concepts and promotes religious da'wah and education to others. Thus, this approach helps students to develop crucial 21st-century skills, such as creativity, collaboration, and communication, which are sorely needed in a changing world (Suraijiah et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

The RAMAH ANAK approach integrates reflective, active, motivational, analytical, holistic, adaptive, reasoning, enthusiastic and creative principles to improve the quality of Islamic education. These principles are taken from the advantages of the Cambridge Curriculum and Merdeka Belajar, creating a more holistic and inclusive curriculum. The alignment of The RAMAH ANAK approach with the core values of Islamic education, such as justice, compassion and character development, shows deep compatibility. This approach supports the formation of Islamic character through reflective, active and value-based learning and encourages students' holistic development. Education that includes academic, emotional, social and physical aspects ensures that Muslim children grow into individuals of balance and integrity. This approach also emphasizes adapting teaching methods to individual needs, supporting inclusivity and attention to the diversity of students' abilities and interests.

The potential for improving the quality of education through The RAMAH ANAK approach is very significant. This approach can bring about major positive changes in Islamic education by creating a learning environment that supports students' physical, mental, emotional, and social development. Further research and empirical studies are needed to test the effectiveness of this approach in various Islamic educational contexts. These studies can provide deeper insight into how RAMAH ANAK approaches can be practically and optimally implemented at various levels of education. The findings of this research can also serve as a basis for developing education policies that are more RAMAH ANAK and in line with Islamic values, strengthening the education system as a whole. Recommendations for further research include further exploration of the practical implementation of RAMAH ANAK approaches and the development of specific curricula tailored to different levels of education to test their overall effectiveness and impact.

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