

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

Given the importance of education in the growth of nations and countries, the prosperity of a nation is largely dependent on the quality of its educational system. Education is a humanitarian process which is then called humanization. As Allah SWT says in QS. An-Nahl verse 78:

وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِنْ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ
وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ ۗ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (٧٨)

The verse above explains that education is a place for humans. Education is a learning process, where people can communicate through their senses, where information enters the soul or heart, which ultimately produces attitudes, behavior and civilization. Moreover, education not only builds but also provides patterns, colors or models for civilization itself.

One of the Islamic-based educational institutions is “*Pesantren*” or Islamic boarding school, which has long existed in Indonesia. Because most of Indonesia’s population adheres to Islam, the country has built a *pesantren* education system. Etymologically stated, Islamic boarding school is a long standing establishment that instructs students

in a range of religious studies. The terms "Pesantren" in Islamic history and Hindu history have similar etymologies. Namely, the principle of teaching religious knowledge in a dormitory setting. In terms of terminology, however, KH. Imam Zarkasih (in Fitri and Ondeng, 2022) describes boarding school as an Islamic educational establishment with a dormitory system, in which the mosque serves as the hub of activity and the teaching of Islam under the direction of the *kyai*, with *santri* acting as the primary students. Nowadays, boarding school is an Islamic educational institution that has its own characteristics. Technically, Islamic boarding school is a place where *santri* live, said (KH. Abdurrahman Wahid in Fitri & Ondeng, 2022). Islamic boarding schools are educational institutions that have existed since the expansion of the Islamic movement throughout the archipelago. As the next generation of the nation's and religion's warriors, Islamic boarding schools serve as a nurturing ground for young people who are obedient and devoted, who are expected to contribute to the advancement of society, their families, and themselves in the future.

Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi (in Fitri and Ondeng, 2022) argues that Islamic boarding schools, given the development and demands of the current era, can be broadly classified into three types. First, the traditional boarding schools that still maintain old traditions, which are centered on book learning. Second, semi-modern boarding schools,

which are boarding schools that combine traditional and modern boarding schools. The learning system combines the curriculum of traditional boarding schools in the study of classical books and also the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) or the Ministry of National Education (Kemendiknas) curriculum. Third, modern Islamic boarding schools are those where the curriculum and learning systems are organized in a modern way, as well as their management. The Islamic boarding school itself gives its students with two potentials during the educational process: community potential and educational potential, which can result in students who are capable of mastering not just religious knowledge but also science and a wide range of perspectives in the pursuit of scientific advancement.

The learning process in the education system itself cannot be separated from the curriculum, whether it is the education system in boarding schools or the education system in public schools. In the sense that without a curriculum, education cannot be implemented, which prevents the achievement of educational objectives and the optimization of the learning process (D. Lestari et al. 2023). Therefore, it is important for a teacher to understand the curriculum that will be applied in learning. Curriculum is a tool used to achieve educational goals. therefore, it can be said that curriculum is an essential component of the process of education reform in Indonesia (Angga et al. 2022). The curriculum was created with the aim of facilitating the educational

process. But in reality, the curriculum in Indonesia has changed from time to time. This change began in 1947 until 2013, where the government implemented the 2013 Curriculum (Kurikulum 13). However, as stated by the Directorate General of Higher Education (Kemdikbudristek) in February 2022, they have launched the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) and the Independent Teaching Platform.

Each curriculum has different learning methods. The method in implementing the independent curriculum is a project-based approach. What is prioritized by the independent curriculum is the freedom and creative thinking of students and teachers. Therefore, most learning methods used by teachers in the teaching and learning process are more based on student projects. In the independent curriculum, students are positioned as subjects in the learning process, students are given the space to make their own decisions in undergoing the learning process. As Allah SWT says in QS. Al-Alaq verses 1-5:

إِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ (١) خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ (٢) إِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ
الْأَكْرَمُ (٣) الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ (٤) عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ (٥)

The above verses explain the importance of reading, seeking knowledge and gaining a better understanding through the learning process. By learning, students can understand various natural events and

social relationships. The more students learn, the more knowledge they gain. Until finally, the potential that exists in students can develop optimally and give birth to a great civilization for mankind.

However, the implementation of the Independent curriculum currently presents several problems for teachers and students. Oktaviani and Asfihana (2024) presents their research findings on the challenges faced by teachers and students in implementing the independent curriculum in English lessons. The findings reveal that the challenges faced by teachers and students include the lack of technology facilities in schools to support teaching and learning activities, no books for teaching materials, limited time and lack of independent learning development in the application of literacy and numeracy, and differentiated learning techniques that requires a lot of preparation. Meanwhile the challenges faced by students include students' limitations in using technology media. However, the previous research had its limitations, so the researchers gave suggestions to future researchers to increase teacher participation to see the differences in teaching practices in independent curriculum schools and to gather broader perspectives from the findings. The previous researchers also recommended further investigation into solutions for the challenges encountered. Therefore, this study addresses those knowledge gaps.

The researcher has made observations about the problems

experienced by EFL teachers in an Islamic boarding school in implementing the independent curriculum, one of which is the limited technology owned by the schools and students' limitations in using technology. The implementation of the independent curriculum requires a lot of preparation and new costs to facilitate technology, online media training for teachers, procurement of books for students, and preparation in developing lesson plans that are in accordance with student characteristics, and teachers must make the content of the material relevant to the learning outcomes.

Based on the above observations, here the researcher intends to conduct further research on what challenges are experienced by EFL teachers when implementing the independent curriculum at the Darussalim Tanah Laut Islamic Boarding School. With the title “**Islamic EFL Teacher's Practices in Independent Curriculum Implementation: A Case Study at Pondok Pesantren Darussalim**”. This research uses a case study design and was conducted in 2024. The researcher conducted observations and interviews with EFL teachers about the challenges they face and their solutions.

B. Definition of Key Terms

The researcher defines several key terms used in this study to avoid misunderstanding. The researcher provides a definition of several key terms that are important to understand as follows:

1. Islamic EFL Teachers

Islamic is a heavenly religion based on teachings sourced from the Qur'an and Hadiths. Whereas, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers refers to an educator who teaches English to learners living in non-English speaking countries, such as Indonesia and Egypt. Islamic EFL Teachers in this study refers to teachers who teach English at Darussalim Islamic Boarding School.

2. Practice

Practice is an activity carried out to apply certain theories, methods, or things that are carried out to achieve certain goals and fulfill the interests that have been planned and arranged previously by certain people or groups. Practice in this study aims to find out how the practices carried out by EFL teachers in implementing the independent curriculum.

3. Challenge

Challenge is a situation or state that calls for a lot of work or problem-solving to accomplish a desired result. This can include obstacles, difficulties, or hurdles that must be solved in order to achieve success or a particular accomplishment. Challenges can come from internal or external factors, and often require strategy or creativity to deal with. The challenges in this study aim to find out what challenges EFL teachers face in implementing the independent curriculum.

4. Independent Curriculum Implementation

The independent curriculum is part of learning system with a new paradigm that aims to improve the quality of learning and produce a more character-oriented education. In the implementation of the independent curriculum, teachers have the freedom to choose teaching media that are suitable for the learning content and students' needs. Teachers can use a variety of media, from digital technology to traditional resources. The implementation of the independent curriculum in this study focuses on teachers' perspectives on the challenges they face in teaching English.

C. Research Questions

Based on the background description above, the formulation of questions in this study is as follows:

- 1) How is the independent curriculum implementation practiced by EFL teachers at Darussalim Islamic Boarding School?
- 2) What are the challenges faced by EFL teachers in implementing the independent curriculum at Darussalim Islamic Boarding School?

D. Objectives of Study

In this study, the researcher has the following research objectives:

- 1) To find out the process of implementing the independent curriculum by EFL teachers at Darussalim Islamic Boarding

School.

- 2) To find out the challenges faced by EFL teachers in implementing the independent curriculum at Darussalim Islamic Boarding School.

E. Significance of Study

Based on the research objectives to be achieved, the researcher hopes that this research can provide information and be beneficial for teachers, and other researchers who discuss the implementation of independent curriculum.

1. For EFL teachers, especially EFL teachers who implement independent curriculum, the findings provide valuable information on what challenges they face in implementing independent curriculum and how they can be addressed.
2. For Islamic boarding schools, this research is hoped to be useful as evaluation material for what needs to be improved and developed after seeing the challenges that researcher examined about the practice of implementing an independent curriculum in Islamic boarding schools.