THE ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF TEACHING ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT DARUSSALAM HIGH SCHOOL, CIAMIS, INDONESIA

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Abstract: This article aims to analyze the problems and challenges of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at Darussalam High School, Ciamis, Indonesia. The formulation of the problem discussed is related to problems in Islamic Religious Education and challenges in teaching Islamic Religious Education, as well as solutions in overcoming challenges in teaching Islamic Religious Education. This article uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. This research found several things, namely: first, problems with Islamic Religious Education include students' low interest in learning Islamic Religious Education, minimal time allocation, inappropriate teaching methods, inadequate supporting facilities, and infrastructure, as well as internal problems between educators and students. Second, challenges in learning assessment. Third, the solution that can be taken is to build a strong foundation of values, which includes cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. This research suggests that effective strategies are needed so that a quality learning process is achieved and fulfills the main role of Islamic Religious Education. Apart from that, steps such as teaching strategies, methods, learning and teaching media, as well as learning evaluation, especially in Islamic Religious Education, must develop students with basic values and solid knowledge in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

Keywords: issues; learning challenges; IRE; Darussalam High School

Abstrak: Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis permasalahan dan tantangan Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di SMA Darussalam, Ciamis, Indonesia. Rumusan masalah yang dibahas adalah terkait permasalahan dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam dan tantangan dalam pengajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam, serta solusi dalam mengatasi tantangan pengajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam. Artikel ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif. Penelitian ini menemukan beberapa hal, yaitu: pertama, permasalahan Pendidikan Agama Islam antara lain rendahnya minat siswa terhadap pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam, minimnya alokasi waktu, metode pengajaran kurang tepat, sarana dan prasarana kurang mendukung, serta permasalahan diinternal pendidik dan siswa. Kedua, tantangan dalam penilaian pembelajaran. Ketiga, solusi yang dapat dilakukan adalah membangun landasan nilai-nilai yang kuat, yang mencakup aspek kognitif, afektif, dan psikomotorik. Penelitian ini menyarankan strategi yang efektif diperlukan agar proses pembelajaran berkualitas tercapai dan memenuhi peran utama Pendidikan Agama Islam. Selain itu, langkah-langkah seperti strategi pengajaran, metode, media pembelajaran dan pengajaran, serta evaluasi pembelajaran khususnya pada Pendidikan Agama Islam harus membina siswa dengan nilai-nilai dasar dan pengetahuan yang kokoh dalam ranah kognitif, afektif, dan psikomotorik.

Kata kunci: permasalahan; tantangan pembelajaran; PAI; SMA Darussalam

Introduction

Islamic Religious Education aims to shape individuals into comprehensive Muslims, nurturing their human potential, encompassing physical and spiritual aspects, and fostering harmonious living among individuals with Allah, humanity, and the universe (Daulay, 2009; Idris et al., 2022a; Idris et al., 2022b).

Islamic Religious Education endeavours to develop individuals comprehensively. Through Islamic Religious Education, adolescents are equipped with the tools to adopt positive attitudes, and moral education forms the essence of Islamic Religious Education (Idris & Mokodenseho, 2021). Additionally, Islamic Religious Education aims to impart an understanding of Islamic teachings to students and cultivate noble character (Munif, 2016). This aligns with the initial mission of the Prophet Muhammad, who was directed to perfect human morals, both to fulfil occupational needs and to lead a contented life in this world and the hereafter.

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education in schools faces various challenges. Among them, the inadequate success of some students in transforming religious attitudes and behaviours is often associated with the failure to implement Islamic Religious Education in schools. Considering the realities faced by the Indonesian nation with its multifaceted problems, the multidimensional crisis plaguing this nation is considered a consequence of the shortcomings in Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia (Mokodenseho & Wekke, 2017; Wekke & Mokodenseho, 2017).

Islamic Religious Education (IRE), as one of the subjects taught in schools, plays a profoundly strategic role in shaping the character of individuals and the nation's people (students) who are resilient, both in terms of morality and in the realms of science and technology (Alam, 2016; Idris et al., 2021). However, the current reality shows that teaching IRE in schools has drawn the attention of educational experts due to the need for more success in instilling moral and religious values in students (Nugraha et al., 2014). This is evident in the prevalence of social pathologies among adolescents (students), such as drug abuse, robbery, free mixing, street brawls or clashes, and other social disorders. Furthermore, the development of IRE instruction needs to respond more to the advancements of the Industry 4.0

revolution. This is a significant challenge for IRE instruction, particularly in general secondary education.

Method

This study analyses various challenges in teaching Islamic Religious Education at Public Higher Education Institutions. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach utilizing the literature review method or library research (Moleong, 1996). The data collection technique involves gathering various references such as books, articles, documents, and other relevant sources (Sugiyono, 2011) related to the challenges in teaching Islamic Religious Education in Senior High Schools. The data analysis technique utilized in this research is content analysis, encompassing stages of data display, data reduction, and conclusion.

Results and Discussion

Challenges in Teaching Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Senior High Schools

The term "problematic" originates from the word "problem." In the Indonesian dictionary, "problem" means an issue or matter (Susiana, 2017). In any learning environment, issues are likely to arise, including within the realm of IRE. Numerous issues encountered in teaching IRE can hinder the learning process, impeding the achievement of IRE's educational goals. The problems include:

Firstly, students' low interest in learning Islamic Religious Education (IRE). The level of students' interest inherently influences the outcomes of the learning process. Assessing students' learning outcomes requires attention to various factors relating to the teacher-student dynamic. For instance, students' behaviour during the teaching and learning process indicates their engagement or disinterest in the subject matter.

The lack of interest among students in public high schools to engage in IRE learning is influenced by various factors, including family, school, and community environments.

Secondly, there is more time allocation is needed. Time allocation here pertains to the educator's role. In IRE, educators are expected to demonstrate

professionalism in their duties. An educator can be considered professional when they are committed to the quality of the teaching process and its outcomes.

Thirdly, issues concerning educators. Religious education aims to impart skills and shape students' attitudes in practising religious teachings through various avenues. IRE seeks to enhance students' faith, understanding, internalization, and application of Islamic teachings, thus moulding them into Muslim individuals who maintain faithfulness and piety towards Allah SWT while also embodying noble conduct in their personal lives (Suprapto, 2018).

The issue lies in the suboptimal implementation of IRE in public schools due to the need for more IRE teachers. Despite having numerous Indonesian graduates in IRE, not all of them become IRE teachers in schools. Consequently, teaching IRE in public schools is sometimes carried out by teachers who are not specialized in this field, leading to a decline in the quality of IRE in these institutions. Nevertheless, IRE teachers have a more critical role than other general subjects. This is because IRE teachers must not only impart subject matter understanding to students but also shape the students' personalities in line with Islamic teachings. IRE teachers bear responsibility for their students and hold themselves accountable to Allah SWT for their teaching.

Fourthly, issues concerning students. Mu'allimah states that students in an educational institution often come from various religious backgrounds. Some students might be devoutly religious, while others may hail from families less devout or indifferent to religion. Some even come from families that do not care about religion. This significantly impacts the success of IRE in schools. Students from families less committed to religion or those indifferent to it require attention. Without this attention, these students might disregard or underestimate the importance of IRE. Factors influencing students, such as learning motivation, less harmonious family dynamics, economic conditions, intellectual challenges, talents, interests, and the attitude of parents who neglect their children's education, all contribute to this scenario (Irham, 2010).

Taking heed of and considering the issues students face, cooperation between educators and parents is imperative. Educators need to understand the home environment and the circumstances in which the child lives, enabling them to grasp the religious atmosphere of the child's life and understand how parents view the necessity of IRE for their children. However, IRE has traditionally been centred around and seen as the sole responsibility of religious teachers, with parents completely entrusting IRE to these teachers. Nevertheless, collaboration between parents and educators is crucial.

Fifthly, issues concerning facilities and infrastructure. Facilities are essential for facilitating a smooth learning process. The completeness of resources and facilities aids educators in conducting effective teaching processes. According to Barnadib in Jalaludin and Umar Said (1994), educational tools encompass deliberate actions, environments, or objects arranged to achieve educational objectives. Hence, educational tools are not restricted solely to concrete objects but include advice, demands, guidance, examples, punishments, threats, and more.

Sixthly, there are issues concerning Islamic Religious Education teaching methods. Teaching methods refer to how educators deliver subject materials to students, enabling them to comprehend, grasp, and utilize the given subjects.

Thus far, it is still widely felt that the teaching methods in IRE lack variety, often relying heavily on lecturing. The educators feel that through lecture-style teaching, they can monitor disruptive students in the class to prevent them from disturbing other classes. However, the student's comprehension tends to be centred on what the educators convey, resulting in less time wasted. However, this method limits students' understanding of what the educator conveys. Consequently, educators quickly become fatigued, and students become inactive as learning becomes one-directional.

Seventhly, issues in learning evaluation. It has been widely observed that the evaluation system in IRE primarily focuses on the cognitive domain. Questions in Islamic studies exams often prioritize cognitive aspects and rarely address questions carrying the weight of spiritual and religious values functional in daily life. Although practical learning elements are included in

the teaching process, examinations mainly measure cognitive aspects and are reflected in the report card. Consequently, instances arise where a student less proficient in Quran recitation receives a higher score on the report card than a student adept at Quranic recitation. There are also cases where a disinterested student, compelled to attend religious classes, gets higher grades than an actively engaged and diligent student in religious studies. Such evaluation practices are disadvantageous for students. Continuous evaluation might enrich a student's cognitive knowledge but does not instil noble morals.

Challenges in Teaching Islamic Religious Education at the High School Level

Islamic religious education in schools faces challenges, both internally within the discipline itself and externally related to Islamic religious education.

Internally, challenges in Islamic religious education include: Firstly, IRE struggles to translate cognitive religious knowledge into meaning and values, lacking in instilling profound religious understanding and values that students should internalize. Secondly, IRE encounters difficulties in collaboration and synergy with non-religious programs. Thirdly, it needs to be more relevant in addressing socio-cultural contextual changes. Fourthly, IRE predominantly focuses on metaphysical aspects and is abstract or supra-rational (Muhaimin, 2009; Idris et al., 2021).

Externally, obstacles facing IRE include: Firstly, the growing influence of materialistic, consumerist, and hedonistic cultural trends impacting societal and student lifestyles. Secondly, there is a decline in the dedication of IRE teachers, leading to transactional approaches to their work. Thirdly, parents at home pay less attention to their children's religious education. Fourthly, a decline in societal social control. Fifthly, the educational orientation is becoming more materialistic, rationalistic, and individualistic (Muhaimin, 2009). Sixthly, the specificity of learning outcomes based on competency standards and basic competency indicators results in measurable and observable learning outcomes. However, the aspects of being religious, like attitudes, behaviours, and religious mentality, are an ongoing process that is challenging to measure and observe (Muhaimin, 2009).

In addressing these internal and external challenges, several solutions can be proposed: Firstly, the educational paradigm of religious education should emphasize being religious (possessing religious values) within each individual. This approach focuses on instilling religious values deeply in one's heart, manifested in everyday behaviour, such as trustworthiness, honesty, discipline, obedience, humility, and tolerance towards others. Religious education should transcend beyond cognitive understanding (knowing) and practical religious activities (doing) to reach the core of the Islamic faith (*qalbu*) that is reflected in daily conduct. Thus, religious education in schools should not solely aim at mastering subject materials but rather train students in experiencing, analyzing, and evaluating religious learning.

Secondly, the school's responsibility for Islamic religious education should not solely rest on religious teachers. However, it should be a collective responsibility involving the entire school community, including the principal, administrative staff, and the surrounding community. This collaboration helps implement religious programs in school life. Cultivating religious practices within schools is a solution in the educational process, an ongoing endeavour. This includes addressing students who have not yet learned to read the Quran, incorporating religious rituals and symbols into school life, and involving non-religious teachers in various religious aspects, such as leading congregational prayers, conducting religious teachings, and communal prayers at the beginning and end of lessons. Additionally, establishing agreements among students to uphold Islamic teachings in school, like applying penalties within the class for those who disrupt order, encourages a sense of accountability among students. Psychologically, junior and senior high school students generally feel more ashamed in front of their peers than their teachers. Therefore, fostering such practices aids in implementing religious school programs and fostering student solidarity.

Thirdly, religious education in the students' daily lives is brought into their contextual realm. This involves examining the reality of religion in society through conducting research, simple observations within their capabilities, followed by collective critical analysis, ideally based on Quranic and Hadith references, and even historical approaches, to discern the best path in their perspective, inherent with Islamic religious values.

Fourthly, abstract and metaphysical aspects within religious education that are challenging for students to grasp or read can be formulated into observable behaviours. While directly observing such elements might be challenging, indicators toward the metaphysical can be understood at a young age. Just like in psychology, where the soul cannot be seen, an individual's psychological indicators can be read through their behaviour, character, and body language. In religious education, for instance, indicators like interest in religious matters, showing respect, and critiquing things that contradict religious teachings serve as cues for religious interest. Similarly, dressing, behaviour, speech, religious devotion, honesty, and fairness indicate religious sentiment.

The fifth solution, from an external perspective in Islamic religious education, is to build a positive opinion regarding Islamic religious education among students. No matter how strong external influences may be, if internal Islamic religious education has already been instilled within them, their faith will remain in their hearts. If they ever stray, they will quickly return to the path of religion. As part of the initial steps when students are admitted to school, an agreement should be made with parents that educating a child is not solely the school's responsibility but also that of the parents and the community.

Sixthly, the strategy for strengthening Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in schools also involves the ability of religious teachers to collaborate externally with organizations such as Institution for the Development of Quranic Recitation (LPTQ), Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Mental Development and Coaching (Bintal), religious NGOs, and even companies engaged in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives that can be utilized to promote religious moments. Consider observing some non-Muslim schools with extensive places of worship used for community activities; for instance, almost every Mardiyuana school has a place of worship. In contrast, Islamic schools or public schools, whose residents are predominantly Muslim, do not have adequate places of worship. If there are any, they are very small, unsuitable, and often located in a corner of the building. If facing difficulties in building sufficient worship facilities, schools could use the places of worship owned by the surrounding community,

preceded by establishing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the school and the community.

Seventhly, to oversee the religious education policy on a community scale at the district, regency, provincial, and national levels, Islamic religious teachers need to be part of several organizational frameworks capable of exerting pressure on religious education policies. At the high school level, there is the Subject Teacher Working Group (MGMP) for Islamic Religious Education at the local level. At the same time, externally, there are associations like Indonesian Teachers Association (PGRI), Association of Madrasah Teachers (PGM), Association of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Indonesia (AGPAII), and others. Hence, these organizations are responsible for monitoring educational policies. Within religious education, the AGPAII organization has emerged nationally, regionally, at the district and branch levels. The stronger AGPAII becomes, the more it reinforces the role of Islamic Religious Education at the national level.

Upgrading the Quality of Islamic Education as a Solution to Address Contemporary Challenges

Efforts to address challenges up to the present moment reveal that, in general, the condition of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia is still characterized by various weaknesses, namely: (1) Human Resource Weaknesses, (2) Management Systems, (3) Financial Resources, and (4) Facilities and Infrastructure. Islamic educational institutions have yet to be able to adequately strive towards realizing Islam in line with its ideal aspirations. These institutions have yet to achieve a transformative realization of Islam. Islamic Higher Education Institutions have yet to accomplish a civil society that upholds human values such as justice, togetherness, equality, commitment, honesty, and others. The outputs produced by Islamic educational institutions must align with society's desires, resulting in a gap between these institutions and society (Putra, 2019).

Efforts to enhance the quality of Islamic education demand the revitalization of every existing component. Several vital components that require attention and joint improvement efforts are as follows: (1) The Curriculum Component needs to be maximally activated to serve as a tool ensuring the success of the educational process. (2) The Objective

Component is a crucial aspect of educational activities. Objectives are central components of other elements. (3) Material Component refers to the content and structure of the program designed to achieve predetermined educational objectives. (4) Strategic Component. The curriculum implementation is described by the methods employed in teaching, assessment, guidance, counselling, and the approach to observing school activities. (5) The Media Component is a supporting tool in the learning process. Media aids in conveying curriculum materials for easier comprehension and mastery by students. (6) The Evaluation Component is equally significant within an educational institution. Evaluation is conducted to assess the extent to which the learning outcomes have been achieved (Hidayat, 2015).

The professionalism of an educator undoubtedly influences the various components mentioned. Therefore, an educator should possess three key elements: (1) Mastery of scholarly fields, knowledge, and skills to be imparted to students. These must be developed through research activities encompassing literature review and fieldwork. This ensures that the knowledge imparted to students remains current and relevant to societal needs. (2) Ability to efficiently and effectively convey the acquired knowledge. Educators must study pedagogical sciences and educational theories related to didactics, methodologies, and teaching approaches. (3) Possession of noble character and ethics that encourage students to practice the acquired knowledge and allow educators to serve as role models. Consequently, various efforts can be made to enhance the quality of Islamic education by improving the existing components within educational institutions. This approach enables addressing existing challenges without forsaking the identity of institutions as Islamic-based educational entities.

Conclusion

Islamic religious education at the high school level faces various problems, including 1) low interest of students in IRE learning, 2) Lack of time allocation, 3) Issues with educators, 4) Issues with students, 5) Issues with facilities and infrastructure, 6) Issues in the teaching methods of IRE, 7) Issues in Learning Evaluation. Islamic religious education in schools has encountered challenges concerning Islamic education, whether internally or externally. Efforts in facing the current challenges acknowledge that,

generally, the condition of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia is still characterized by various weaknesses: (1) Human Resources Weakness, (2) Management System, (3) Funding, and (4) Facilities and Infrastructure. There is a need to improve the quality of Islamic education by reactivating every existing component within the educational realm. Key components that require attention and improvement include (1) Curriculum Component, (2) Objective Component, (3) Material Component, (4) Strategic Component, (5) Media Component, and (6) Evaluation Component. Therefore, these efforts can be made to enhance the quality of Islamic education by rectifying the components within the educational institution itself to address the challenges without forsaking its identity as an educational institution that integrates Islamic values.

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