

PAI Teacher's Creativity Strategy in Utilizing Learning Media Based on Independent Curriculum

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Abstract: Implementing the independent curriculum requires teachers to actively design innovative and creative learning actively, especially in using learning media. Along with the development of increasingly sophisticated technology, teachers are required to use media by the times. However, the limited knowledge of teachers and the availability of media facilities are still obstacles to teachers' implementation. This study examines PAI teachers' creativity strategies in utilizing media based on the independent curriculum in class VII at SMP IT Al-Banna Natar. Using descriptive qualitative research with data collection techniques through interviews, observation, and documentation. The results showed that PAI teachers had fulfilled the indicators of creativity in the selection of learning media. Despite the limited facilities at school, PAI teachers implemented several strategies: 1) utilizing the surrounding environment as a learning medium. 2) Improving knowledge and skills 3) Building collaboration with other teachers. The renewal of this research is the application of PAI teachers' strategies to increase creativity by utilizing the surrounding media, which has rarely been studied in previous studies. The implication of this research is expected to enrich the understanding of teacher creativity strategies in utilizing learning media.

Keywords: Creativity, PAI Teacher, Learning Media, Independent Curriculum

Abstrak: Implementasi kurikulum merdeka menuntut guru berperan aktif merancang pembelajaran yang inovatif dan kreatif, khususnya dalam penggunaan media pembelajaran. Seiring dengan perkembangan teknologi yang semakin canggih guru diharuskan menggunakan media sesuai dengan perkembangan zaman. Namun, keterbatasan pengetahuan guru dan ketersediaan fasilitas media masih menjadi kendala para guru dalam mengimplementasikannya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji strategi kreativitas guru PAI dalam pemanfaatan media berbasis kurikulum merdeka, pada kelas VII di SMP IT Al-Banna Natar.

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Menggunakan penelitian kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara, observasi dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru PAI telah memenuhi indikator kreativitas dalam pemilihan media pembelajaran, Meskipun terdapat keterbatasan fasilitas di sekolah, guru PAI menerapkan beberapa startegi dengan cara 1) Pemanfatan lingkungan sekitar sebagai media pembelajaran 2)Meningkatkan pengetahuan dan keterampilan 3)Membangun kolaborasi dengan guru lain. Pembaharuan Penelitian ini ialah penerapan strategi yang dilakukan guru PAI dalam meningkatkan kreativitas dengan memanfaatkan media sekitar yang masih jarang dikaji dalam penelitian sebelumnya. Implikasi penelitian ini diharapkan dapat menjadi rujukan dalam memperkaya pemahaman tentang strategi kreativitas guru dalam pemanfaatan media pembelajaran

Kata Kunci: Kreativitas, Guru PAI, Media Pembelajaran, Kurikulum Merdeka

Introduction

A quality nation can be seen from the quality of its education (Ratnasari & Nugraheni, 2024). It can be seen from the results of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey that the majority of Indonesia's education quality index is ranked 72 out of 78 countries, which is still low from the last few (Nurfatimah et al., 2022).

The curriculum is one of the government's efforts to fix problems and improve the quality of education in Indonesia (Nugraha, 2022). In implementing the independent curriculum, all teachers develop innovative and creative learning that keeps up with the times (Daga, 2021). To optimize PAI learning objectives, learners must be trained in using their cognitive abilities to learn concepts, solve problems, and apply what they learn. Learners should hear, see, propose, and even discuss with others. Their insights about Islam should be broadened and enriched. Therefore, the creativity of PAI teachers is essential for an effective teaching and learning process and the achievement of PAI learning objectives (Ummul Khairina et al., 2022).

One form of teacher creativity is their ability to use learning media by the learning objectives of the independent curriculum (Hamda et al., 2021). Media is indispensable in the innovative learning process, and it is useful as a tool in the process and as a tool to make it easier for teachers to transfer material and knowledge (Wulandari et al., 2023). In the independent curriculum, teachers are given the

flexibility to recognize and use various interesting, innovative, and creative learning media according to the needs of students (Pertiwi et al., 2023).

However, teachers face several obstacles in creative learning. One of the main obstacles is that teachers also have difficulty developing their creativity, making learning less effective (Hasanah et al., 2023). Teachers have difficulty overcoming the limitations of learning media due to a lack of knowledge and skills in using creativity (Nasution et al., 2024) and limited supporting facilities that hinder the achievement of learning objectives (Sa'i & Jinan, 2022). In line with this, PAI teachers at SMP IT Al-Banna Natar face several obstacles in creating creative learning. The main obstacle faced is the limitation of adequate technology facilities, which results in teachers having to share the use of facilities with other teachers. In addition, using manual learning media requires significant time, potentially hindering the achievement of optimal learning objectives.

Previous studies have provided a diverse picture of teacher creativity in the context of learning media. Among them are teachers who already have a good understanding of the importance of using learning media (Novia Fehbrina, 2024), teachers at SD N Marapala are still used to developing creativity in using makeshift media even though the school infrastructure is inadequate (Telaumbanua et al., 2021), English teachers are used to using media even though they have not maximized it (Meliala et al., 2021), and PAI teachers at SMK N 1 Purwokerto have been creative in using audiovisuals, books, and computers at school (Abida Fadilah Ahmad, 2020). However, there are gaps in the existing literature. Most previous studies focus on describing the level of teacher creativity and identifying the obstacles faced. In contrast, this study examines in depth the strategies applied by the principal and PAI teachers at Al-Banna Natar IT Junior High School in enhancing creativity through the utilization of available learning media.

Based on the interviews' results, PAI teachers have used several media utilization strategies to ensure learning becomes creative, innovative, and guided by PAI objectives. This strategic aspect, namely how teachers actively overcome limitations and optimize existing resources to enhance creativity, has been less explored in previous studies, thus offering a significant novelty.

The article aims to examine more deeply the creativity strategies of PAI teachers in utilizing existing media so that learning becomes innovative and creative to the objectives.

Research Method

Qualitative research methods are used in this research, which provides many results that cannot be explained using statistical techniques or other quantification methods (Jaya, 2020). The approach to the research procedure emphasizes and produces descriptive data about words, people, and visible behavior (Nursanjaya, 2021). This research will describe the strategy of PAI teacher creativity in utilizing learning media based on the independent curriculum. The research was conducted in July-December 2024 at IT Al Banna Natar Junior High School, at Jl. Raya Candi Mas, Kec. Natar, Kab. Lampung Selatan, Lampung.

The two data sources used in this study are primary and secondary data sources. Primary data sources are those directly involved and must be in the research, namely the principal and one PAI teacher, who is the main source of information about the PAI teacher's creativity strategy in independent curriculum-based media. Secondary data sources are supporting sources, namely 24 seventh-grade students and teaching modules for PAI learning materials (Sugiyono, 2020).

The data collection techniques used are passive participant observation, where the researcher only observes and does not participate in it by making direct observations during the PAI learning process in class VII; unstructured interviews using two sources, namely the principal and one PAI teacher, and finally, documentation, which is a data collection technique by studying documented data such as modules, teacher data, and the vision and mission of the school (Marendah et al., 2021). The data obtained will then be analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. There are 3 data analysis techniques used: data reduction, data presentation, and verification/conclusion drawing (Lasiyono & Alam, 2024).

For qualitative research data to be considered scientific and valid, validity testing must be carried out using triangulation (Marendah et al., 2021). Validity was maintained in this study by using three triangulation techniques. Triangulation of sources: To ensure that the data obtained is credible, researchers conducted interviews with 1 PAI teacher and the principal and then compared the results of the findings. The

triangulation technique supports the triangulation of sources that have not been obtained from the results of interviews by conducting observations to see the participation and response of students. Time triangulation: Because the research time affects the credibility of the data, researchers use the interview technique again to get valid and credible data. In addition, researchers test data confidence at various times and situations.

Table 1. Summary of Research Methodology

Research Method Aspect	Description
Research type and approach	Deskriptif, kualitatif
Research subject	PAI teacher, principal, and students in class VII of SMP IT Al-Banna Natar
Research Location	Al-Banna Natar IT Junior High School on Jl. Raya Candimas, natar sub-district, south Lampung district
Research Time	Odd semester 2024/2025
Data source	Using 2 data sources: Primary data: 1 PAI teacher, one principal, Secondary data: 24 seventh-grade students, teaching modules for PAI learning materials and other infrastructure
Data Collection Technique	Passive participant observation, Unstructured interview, documentation
Data Analysis Technique	Data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing
Validity Test	Validity using three triangulations: source, technique, and time triangulation.

Results and Discussion

Results

This study aims to identify the creativity strategies of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in utilizing learning media based on the Merdeka Curriculum at Al-Banna IT Junior High School in Natar, South Lampung. Research data were

obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation with seventh-grade PAI teachers, seventh-grade students, and the principal.

The main challenge faced is the limited facilities, which are still inadequate. This encourages PAI teachers to develop creativity so that learning remains innovative and effective.

Based on the results of an interview with Mr Arief, the principal of Al Banna Natar IT Junior High School, he said:

“The role of the teacher is vital in implementing this independent curriculum, especially with the differentiated learning model, where the teacher acts as a facilitator to achieve creative and relevant learning. As an integrated Islamic-based school, PAI teachers have a great responsibility in instilling faith and morals, so creativity in the use of learning media is essential”.

In line with that, Mrs. Gita, PAI teacher, also emphasized that:

“The role of PAI teachers is very important in the independent curriculum, especially in an Islamic-based school like this school; the role of PAI teachers must be more prominent, especially in implementing the learning of belief and morals.”

To overcome limitations, PAI teachers and principals apply strategies to utilize the surrounding environment as a learning medium, adjusting the media to the material taught according to the characteristics of the Merdeka Curriculum. Ms. Gita utilizes environmental resources such as plants, nature, objects, and community social interactions, encouraging students to think creatively and critically through hands-on practice.

To ensure the effectiveness and relevance of the media, PAI teachers also collaborate with other subject teachers through consultation and exchange of ideas. In addition, to improve teachers' creativity, especially PAI teachers, the principal also organizes training to enhance their skills and knowledge in developing learning media.

Based on an interview with the Principal, Mr. Arief said that all teachers, especially Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, regularly attend training every semester. This training aims to increase motivation, broaden insights about implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, and develop teaching skills. The JSIT

Foundation and the Education Office organize the training program through the MGMP (Subject Teacher Consultation) program.

Although the training has not focused explicitly on learning media, participation in these workshops and training has significantly contributed to deepening teachers' understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum and encouraging the development of creativity, including in the utilization of learning media.

Researchers also use indicators in measuring the extent of PAI Teacher creativity at IT Al Banna Natar Junior High School, especially in using the media, namely:

Table 2. Indicators of teacher creativity in using learning media

Indicator	Research Results
Fluent thinking skills	1. PAI teachers generate ideas in determining the media for the teaching module. Limited access to digital media, which must be used alternately with other teachers, encourages them to utilize the surrounding environment as an alternative. Natural resources, plants, and social interactions in the community are integrated as learning media relevant to the material taught.
	2. PAI teachers apply media according to the learning theme, such as material about the universe as a sign of Allah's power. Teachers use plant and natural media directly so that students can experience the material firsthand.
Flexible thinking skills	3. PAI teachers have been flexible by utilizing the environment and existing materials for learning media, such as nature, plants, objects, and society as an alternative.
	4. PAI teachers are flexible in overcoming obstacles to using learning media, including limited time and a lack of digital media, which allows them to utilize

	existing materials at school.
Detailed thinking ability	5. PAI teachers enrich their ideas by improving their skills and knowledge in detail, starting from the teaching module, the suitability of the material with the media, the usefulness of the media used, and increasing reverence by attending several trainings from schools and internet tutorials.
Rational thinking ability	6. PAI teachers are original in utilizing new and interesting media. The interview results stated that PAI teachers carry out several processes in determining and creating new media by collaborating and asking other teachers for advice.
Ability to evaluate	7. Teachers evaluate the learning media used at the end of each semester by giving instruments to students.

The above data are based on interviews and observations researchers have conducted several times. In addition to relying on predetermined indicators, students' response as material recipients is a reinforcing factor.

Image 1. Observation activity to observe the surrounding environment



Observations in class VII showed students' high enthusiasm for using environmental media. They actively observed, identified problems, and sought solutions using the surrounding environment. This indicates that the PAI teacher has demonstrated creativity in using learning media, which aligns with PAI's learning objectives and the characteristics of the independent curriculum. Although media use is not applied to every material, this observation confirms the approach's effectiveness in improving learners' engagement and understanding.

Discussion

PAI Teacher's Creativity in Utilizing Learning Media

According to Warisman, creativity is the ability to produce something new or existing, which can only be achieved through our thinking (Waritsman, 2020). Meanwhile, according to Abdi Siburian, a teacher's creativity creates certain conditions in teaching and learning (Siburian et al., 2023).

The success or failure of a lesson depends on how creatively the teacher uses the media. A creative teacher can attract students to learn more actively (Abida Fadilah Ahmad, 2020). Teachers must be creative and innovative in the learning process, especially in the independent curriculum.

According to Utami, five indicators can measure the extent of creativity in using learning media (Suardi, 2021), including:

1. Teacher fluency in utilizing media

Fluent thinking ability is defined as the ability to generate many ideas and solutions quickly and effectively (Rahmaniati et al., 2022).

In this case, the PAI teacher at SMP IT, Albanna Natar, provides a concrete example of how fluent thinking skills can be implemented in educational practice. Limitations are not a barrier but rather a trigger for innovation. By utilizing the surrounding environment and integrating it with learning materials, teachers can create meaningful learning experiences for students.

2. Flexibility of the teacher with the media used

The independent curriculum allows for more flexible learning, and teachers can determine what methods and media to use during the learning process according to the circumstances in their respective regions (Deliana et al., 2024).

It was found that PAI teachers are flexible and can adapt to limitations. This reflects their ability to think creatively and innovatively when designing learning experiences. By utilizing the resources available in the school and surrounding environment, these teachers can create practical and enjoyable learning, even in challenging conditions.

3. Ability to detail in the use of media

The ability to create ideas and add or detail the details of an object, concept, or situation so that it becomes more interesting (Febriyanti et al., 2021).

From the data in the field, PAI teachers continuously enrich ideas in detail and deepen knowledge through developing relevant teaching modules, adjusting materials with effective learning media, evaluating the usefulness of the press, and increasing references through training and online tutorials. This professional development aims to create innovative, creative, and meaningful student learning.

4. Ability to reason in media utilization

Reasoning is the ability to consider and think of many new and interesting ideas that aim to make the applied media not monotonous and more enjoyable for students (Febriyanti et al., 2021).

PAI teachers also do this through a process that involves consultation with peers, observation of other teachers' practices, and adaptation of media according to the material and conditions of students. Teachers also develop strategies to overcome boredom, such as providing pre-viewing questions for videos or learning outside the classroom, which encourages students to think critically. This approach shows that teachers are not arbitrary in applying media but consider its effectiveness in increasing learner engagement and understanding.

5. Evaluating the Applied Media

Evaluating the effectiveness of learning media is an essential step in improving the quality of learning (Pratiwi et al., 2023). PAI teachers conduct periodic evaluations, especially at the end of each semester, to ensure that the learning media used is by students' needs. This can increase students' interest in learning and facilitate a more effective learning process.

PAI Teacher's Creativity Strategy in Utilizing Learning Media Based on Independent Curriculum

The independent curriculum requires students to be creative, and teachers' roles as educators must also be creative (Isnaini et al., 2024).

The role of the teacher is very important in implementing this independent curriculum (Daga, 2021), especially with the differentiated learning model. The teacher is a facilitator in achieving learning that is required to be creative and innovative according to the times.

Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala said:

كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ....

" Thus Allah explains His verses to you so that you may think" (QS. Al-Baqarah 2: Ayat 219).

In this verse, Allah commands humans to process what He created for them through thought because Allah has given them a reason to sharpen their brains. By trying to use their minds, Allah wants humans to develop (Wahidar, 2018).

Teachers face significant challenges in developing creativity, especially related to limited facilities and a lack of in-depth understanding of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in PAI learning. This impacts the effectiveness of using innovative and relevant learning media.

In the context of an independent curriculum, PAI teachers can implement strategies in dealing with the problems they face, such as:

1. Media Utilization with the Surrounding Environment

When the environment is used as a learning resource, it can make learning activities more enjoyable for students and increase the variety of learning activities they can engage in (Neni, 2021).

Using the surrounding environment as an alternative learning media at SMP IT Albania nature has proven effective in increasing students' creativity. By integrating the environment as a learning resource, students can directly practice the material taught through observation and exploration. This approach allows students to identify relevant examples that match the learning concept while encouraging the development of critical thinking skills in finding and analyzing information.

2. Improving Knowledge and Skills

By attending training or seminars, teachers can gain new knowledge and skills about things that support their work, such as learning media (Syahrone, 2020).

To improve teachers' abilities, especially PAI teachers at SMP IT, Albanna Natar attended several educational seminars related to the independent curriculum. By actively participating in various workshops and trainings, teachers can gain essential knowledge and skills to develop creativity, including using learning media following

the independent curriculum. This training is an essential foundation in the ongoing effort to improve the quality of learning through improving teacher competence.

3. Building Collaboration with Other Teachers

According to Kasmawati, to develop teacher creativity, teachers can collaborate with other teachers to share experiences and new ideas in teaching. This will encourage teachers to increase their creativity in organizing education (Kasmawati, 2020).

In line with the above statement, PAI teachers at SMP IT Albanna Natar often exchange ideas with other subject teachers who use the independent curriculum. This is to make it easier for PAI teachers to detail and find the right media by adjusting their students' needs.

Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, PAI teachers at IT Junior High School Al Banna Natar have shown good creativity in utilizing learning media despite facing limited facilities. This creativity is evaluated based on several indicators, such as fluency, flexibility, ability to detail, reason, and consider the media used. The research findings show that PAI teachers can overcome limitations by utilizing alternative media, such as the surrounding environment, effectively increasing students' enthusiasm and involvement. In this case, PAI teachers have implemented several strategies that have proven successful, including 1) Utilizing the surrounding environment as learning media, 2) Increasing knowledge and skills, and 3) collaborating with other teachers to share ideas and experiences in the utilization of learning media. With these strategies, PAI teachers can design relevant, innovative learning using the principles of the independent curriculum.

Academically, this research is expected to contribute significantly to developing learning theory, especially in PAI learning and implementing an independent curriculum. Practically, this study aims to inspire PAI educators to design innovative and interesting learning media even in schools with limited facilities. As a recommendation, further research is suggested to adopt a quantitative approach to measure the effectiveness of the strategies applied more measurably.

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