

## STRENGTHENING THE CREATIVE DIMENSION IN LEARNING ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND CHARACTER THROUGH PROJECT BASED LEARNING MODEL

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**Abstract:** Islamic Education and Moral Education in many schools, including Darut Taqwa High School, is still dominated by lecture methods, which result in low student participation and creativity. This condition encourages the need for more active and contextual learning innovations. This study aims to examine the strengthening of the creative dimension in Islamic Education and Character Education through the implementation of the Project-Based Learning model at SMA Darut Taqwa. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques consisting of observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of Project-Based Learning is able to increase student active involvement, encourage creativity, and produce original works that are relevant to daily life. Teachers act as facilitators who guide the learning process to be more meaningful and contextual. The implications of this study indicate the importance of teacher training to master project-based learning models and the need for school support to create a learning environment that supports character building and creativity in accordance with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum.

**Keywords:** Project Based Learning, Islamic Education, Creative Dimension

**Abstrak:** Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti di banyak sekolah, termasuk di SMA Darut Taqwa, masih didominasi oleh metode ceramah yang menyebabkan rendahnya partisipasi dan kreativitas siswa. Kondisi ini mendorong perlunya inovasi pembelajaran yang lebih aktif dan kontekstual. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji penguatan dimensi kreatif dalam pembelajaran pendidikan agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti melalui penerapan model Project Based Learning di SMA Darut Taqwa. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi, serta dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan Project Based Learning mampu meningkatkan keterlibatan aktif siswa, mendorong kreativitas, serta menghasilkan karya-karya orisinal yang relevan dengan kehidupan sehari-hari. Guru berperan sebagai fasilitator yang membimbing proses pembelajaran agar lebih bermakna dan kontekstual. Implikasi penelitian ini menunjukkan pentingnya pelatihan guru untuk menguasai model pembelajaran berbasis proyek serta perlunya dukungan sekolah agar tercipta lingkungan belajar yang mendukung penguatan karakter dan kreativitas sesuai dengan tujuan Kurikulum Merdeka.

**Kata Kunci:** Project Based Learning, Islamic Education, Creative Demension

## INTRODUCTION

Education plays a very important role in determining the progress of a country, because the future of a nation is greatly influenced by how the education system is designed and run. Currently, various global challenges are being faced by the world of education, which also has an impact on the stagnation of educational progress in Indonesia. As a developing country, Indonesia is required to continue to improve the quality of its education, because the quality of education is one of the benchmarks in measuring the progress of a nation (Sembiring, et al., 2024).

To improve the quality of education in Indonesia and produce a generation capable of competing globally, the government through the Ministry of Education and Culture has launched a new curriculum, namely the Merdeka Curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum is understood as a learning design that provides space for students to learn in a comfortable, relaxed, fun atmosphere, without pressure or stress, so that they can express their natural talents. This concept of independent learning emphasizes freedom in learning and encourages creative thinking (Rahayu et al., 2022).

In the context of the education system in Indonesia, Islamic Religious Education and Budi Pekerti subjects play a very strategic and fundamental role. Islamic religious education and Budi Pekerti not only serves to instill an understanding of religious values, but also plays a major role in shaping the moral

character and noble character of students in accordance with Islamic teachings. Through Islamic religious education, students are taught to understand and practice Islamic teachings as a whole, which includes aspects of faith, worship, morals, and muamalah, so as to create individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also spiritually and socially strong. Character education integrated in Islamic education aims to form a generation that has a noble personality, is able to appreciate differences, uphold justice, and behave honestly, politely, and responsibly in everyday life. This is in line with the objectives of national education which emphasizes the development of the potential of students to become humans who are faithful, pious, noble, and have intelligence and skills that can contribute positively to society (Maghfiroh et al., 2023).

The material contained in Islamic religious education and ethics is relatively broad and complex, so its implementation requires a variety of methods according to the needs and learning objectives. One of the main challenges in the world of education today is the less than optimal learning process. Given that learning objectives include cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, its success is largely determined by the methods and approaches used by teachers in delivering material in the classroom (Amrulloh, 2019).

So far, Islamic religious education learning in schools tends to be dominated

by the lecture and question and answer method, or the so-called verbalistic method. Although this method is not entirely wrong, if used continuously, students can feel bored because they are only passive listeners. In addition, there are certain topics that are actually less appropriate when delivered by lecturing, and it would be more effective if using more active and varied learning methods (Nursalam, 2016).

Based on the results of preliminary interviews conducted by researchers in class XI at SMA Darut Taqwa to teachers who teach Islamic religious education and ethics in the class, researchers noted that one of the background obstacles when learning Islamic religious education and ethics is the lack of student interest in the material presented. The teacher mentioned that the learning method used tends to be monotonous and lecture-based, so students look less enthusiastic and are often passive during the learning process. However, the main challenge facing education today is the lack of effectiveness in the learning process.

In addition, teachers revealed that the limitation of innovative learning methods is one of the causes of the lack of variety in the delivery of material. This makes students feel bored, especially when the material taught is theoretical and requires in-depth understanding.

Another obstacle found is the lack of active involvement of students in learning, both in discussions and group activities. Teachers said that students tend

to prefer passively receiving material rather than participating in learning activities that demand creativity and cooperation. This factor is exacerbated by the low ability of some students to understand the basic concepts of Islamic religious education and ethics taught, so that more complex material is difficult for them to digest.

The Project Based Learning model is an approach that allows teachers to organize the learning process in the classroom through the implementation of projects. The project contains complex tasks based on challenging questions and problems, and encourages students to design solutions, solve problems, make decisions, conduct investigations, and work independently (Wahyuni & Fitriana, 2021).

In this learning model, the teacher acts as a guide and learning facilitator, so that in solving problems, students do more activities independently or in groups with teacher guidance. (Fikri, 2020) So this research is important to do with the aim of knowing how much influence will be generated if the application of project-based learning models on students' creative thinking skills.

Some previous studies have shown that the application of Project Based Learning can increase students' learning motivation and help them better understand the values taught, especially in subjects that demand understanding and application of morality, such as Islamic religious education and ethics. However, the application of this method in learning

Islamic religious education and ethics at the high school level is still relatively minimal. Most of the research related to Project Based Learning is more focused on science or technology subjects, while the potential for its application in moral and spiritual value-based subjects such as Islamic education and ethics has not been studied in depth.

So far there are several studies on the Project Based Learning model to develop learning creativity. Dewi Anggelia, Ika and Arifin researchers revealed that this research aims to find out how the application of Project Based Learning with the results of this research shows that the learning model applied is in accordance with the achievement of creativity and the independent curriculum, because students can accept Project Based Learning as a learning model that helps them in developing their creativity in learning (Dewi Anggelia et al., 2022).

Then there are researchers As'ari, Nur and Nursikin explaining this research aims to find out the benefits of implementing Project Based Learning for Islamic religious education subjects during learning. The results of this study indicate that Project Based Learning is able to increase the creativity of students in carrying out projects and improve the ability of participants (As'ari et al., 2022). Furthermore, researcher Natadadya Puspa Rineksiane revealed this research aims to find out the application of the Project Based Learning learning method applied in order to help students to be able to think

critically (Rineksiane, 2022).

Although there have been many studies that discuss creativity and the application of the Project Based Learning learning model, in practice, there are still a number of problems in the field. Among them are the limited supporting facilities and the readiness of students in managing the learning process independently, as found in SMA Darut Taqwa. As one of the pesantren-based educational institutions that began implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, this school faces challenges in implementing Project Based Learning, especially related to access to technology.

Unlike previous studies, which were mostly conducted in public schools with adequate technological facilities, this study provides a unique perspective on teachers' strategies in strengthening students' creative dimensions in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum in a pesantren environment. This makes this research relevant as a contribution to the development of learning models that are adaptive to local conditions and still oriented towards strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile, especially in the creative dimension.

This research has an important role in developing the potential of students, because basically project-based learning and student creativity are two interrelated elements. If these two things can be applied simultaneously, it will create a learning process of Islamic religious education and ethics that is more meaningful and imprinted for students.

Therefore, the focus in this research is limited to two main aspects, namely: how the implementation of Project Based Learning at Darut Taqwa Purwosari High School in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum and how to strengthen students' creative dimensions in learning Islamic religious education and ethics through the implementation of Project Based Learning.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach which aims to describe in depth the strengthening of learning material for Islamic Religious Education and Ethics based on the creative dimension through the Project Based Learning model at Darut Taqwa High School. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is suitable for understanding the learning context as a whole and in depth, especially in exploring the processes and interactions that occur between teachers and students during learning activities. The location selection at Darut Taqwa High School is based on the characteristics of a pesantren-based school, which combines formal education and religious education in one environment. This school is implementing the Merdeka Curriculum but faces various limitations, especially in terms of technological facilities and innovative learning methods. This condition provides an opportunity to explore how the Project Based Learning model can be applied in a challenging

situation but still relevant to the needs of students. In addition, SMA Darut Taqwa has a strong commitment to character building and Islamic values, making it a representative place to study the effectiveness of project-based learning model in strengthening students' creative dimension.

The selection of informants was done purposively, by choosing subjects who are considered to know and understand the problems under study, such as Islamic Religious Education and Ethics teachers, principals, and students. The development of informants was done by snowball, which is based on recommendations from the initial informants to other informants who are considered relevant and contribute to the completeness of the data.

Data were collected through three main techniques, namely observation, interviews and documentation. Observations were made directly during the learning process to observe teacher and student activities, as well as how the Project Based Learning model was implemented in the classroom. In-depth interviews were conducted with Islamic religious education and ethics teachers who implemented the Project Based Learning model, school principals, and some students who participated in the learning. In addition, documentation was used as a supporting data source which included lesson plans, student project results, and visual documentation during the learning process.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman which consists of three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by sorting and simplifying data according to the research focus. Data presentation is done in a narrative manner so that information can be organized clearly and systematically. The last process is conclusion drawing, which is done by examining the patterns and meanings of the data that has been analyzed.

The validity of the data in this study was maintained through triangulation techniques, namely comparing and confirming data from various sources and different collection techniques, such as observation, interviews, and documentation. With this strategy, the data obtained becomes more accurate, credible, and scientifically accountable. Through this approach, the research is expected to be able to contribute in developing innovative, contextual, and oriented learning models that strengthen character values and creativity of participants.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This research aims to explore the strengthening of the creative dimension in learning Islamic Religious Education and Budi Pekerti through the Project Based Learning model at Darut Taqwa High School, Pasuruan. Based on the results of interviews and observations, various information was obtained related to

implementation practices, challenges, and the impact on student engagement and creativity. These findings are presented systematically in accordance with the research problem formulation.

### **Project Based Learning Model**

The Project Based Learning learning model is one of the recommended approaches in the Merdeka Curriculum to support the strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile. In line with that, Mia Roosmalisa Dewi in (Dewi, 2022) argues that Project Based Learning is a suitable learning model to meet the demands of 21st century education because it involves critical thinking, communication skills, cooperation, and creativity. In line with that, Hakkinen in (Almulla, 2020) says that Project Based Learning is an effective way to develop the abilities needed in the 21st century, by emphasizing critical thinking processes as well as problem solving, interpersonal communication, information and media literacy, cooperation, leadership and working in teams, innovation and creativity. Project Based Learning is a learning model that involves students in designing, making, and displaying products that are used to solve real-world problems.

The Project Based Learning model is an approach that emphasizes active student involvement through contextual, meaningful, and challenging project activities. The application of this model aims to change the pattern of learning that

was previously conventional and teacher-centered into student-centered learning.

Although the definition of Project Based Learning may vary, specifically Project Based Learning is a learning approach that places students on questions or challenges from the real world through a process of deep inquiry. Project Based Learning organizes learning through projects that engage students in authentic situations, where they can explore and apply subject matter to complex problems related to the professional context for which they are preparing. The hallmark of Project Based Learning is its ability to develop students' thinking skills, encourage creativity, cooperation, and facilitate students in accessing and presenting information independently (Chiang & Lee, 2016). Usually, Project Based Learning demands students' active and voluntary participation in meaningful learning activities, mostly done in the form of teamwork.

Based on the results of interviews, according to M. Nur Zuhri Fauzi, one of the PAI and ethics teachers at SMA Darut Taqwa, said that the main challenge faced is the limited access of students to electronic devices, because SMA Darut Taqwa is a pesantren-based school that does not equip students with facilities such as laptops or smartphones. This makes the application of the main principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which demands student independence in exploring material, not optimal. Although

there are facilities such as internet cafes in the pesantren environment, their number and function are not sufficient to support students' independent learning needs. In response to this, the school provides a solution in the form of strengthening the role of the library and providing teaching materials in printed form which are selected and curated directly by the teacher. This is part of the strategy to keep encouraging students to be active and creative, even with limited facilities.

Islami Religious Education teachers at Darut Taqwa High School chose to apply the Project Based Learning model as an alternative to the lecture method which has been considered monotonous and less effective in encouraging student participation. According to M. Nur Zuhri Fauzi, Islamic materials have actually been taught intensively in pesantren. Therefore, learning at school needs to be made more contextual and interesting so that students do not feel bored. One of the efforts made is by assigning students to make projects in the form of scientific articles based on real issues they encounter in the surrounding environment.

The learning process with the Project Based Learning model at Darut Taqwa High School is carried out in several stages, which involve students actively and in groups. The following are the stages of its implementation: (1) Students are divided into groups of 4-5 people; (2) Each group is asked to identify a real problem related to the subject

matter. For example, in fiqh material on adultery, students are asked to examine the phenomenon of promiscuity in the surrounding environment; (3) Students formulate the background and focus of the problem based on the phenomena they find; (4) Students conduct data collection by interviewing either direct sources such as teachers or community leaders, or peers; (5) The group compiles a scientific article based on the results of observations and interviews; (6) The results of the article are presented to the class as a form of project evaluation.

This model provides ample space for students to develop creativity, critical thinking, and communication skills, despite the limitations of technological infrastructure. This is in line with Vygotsky's theory of constructivism which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and collaboration in building new knowledge. In Project Based Learning, students learn in an authentic and meaningful context, where they actively discover, solve problems and create real products (Bell, 2010). In addition, Kolb's Experiential Learning theory reinforces the importance of experiential learning, where students acquire knowledge through a cycle of concretization, reflection, conceptualization, and application. Through this process, students not only understand the material theoretically, but are also able to connect it with social reality, so that Islamic values can be internalized more deeply and relevantly.

### **Strengthening the Creative Dimension in the Pancasila Student Profile**

The Merdeka Curriculum is one of the policies of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, Nadiem Makarim, which carries the concept of activities based on direct experience and the development of relevant abilities. In the Merdeka Curriculum, both teachers and students are encouraged to have independence in the learning process. There are a number of main principles in the Merdeka Curriculum, including learning can take place at various times and places, freedom of choice, personalized learning, project-based, involving field experience, and data interpretation skills (Noor et al., 2023).

One of the main focuses in the Merdeka Curriculum is the formation of the Pancasila Learner Profile. The Pancasila Learner Profile is a form of implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum concept designed to support the improvement of the quality of education in Indonesia, especially in the aspect of instilling character values in students (Purnawanto, 2022). The Pancasila Learner Profile consists of six main dimensions. The six competencies are: (1) faith and fear of God Almighty, and noble character (2) single-minded diversity (3) mutual cooperation (4) independence (5) critical reasoning and (6) creativity (Nahdiyah et al., 2022). One of the concerns in this study is the creative dimension. This dimension refers to the ability of learners to produce original

ideas, works, or actions that are useful, and able to solve problems with innovative approaches.

In today's digital era, the ability to think creatively and critically as a characteristic of Pancasila learners is an important aspect that cannot be ignored. Students who have this character are able to adapt quickly, face various challenges with confidence, and contribute positively to society and the nation. This ability is in line with the vision of Indonesian education, which is to create a generation that is sovereign, independent, and has a personality in order to realize an advanced Indonesia through the formation of the Pancasila Student profile (Lilihata et al., 2023).

The results showed that Project Based Learning became an effective means in growing and strengthening students' creative dimensions. Through self-designed projects, students not only learn to solve problems technically, but are also challenged to compile original ideas and present them in the form of scientific work. This process is in line with Guilford's (1950) view that creativity is the ability to generate new and useful ideas in solving problems. Thus, students are invited to manage information, think systematically, and adapt their approach to the context of the problem at hand.

In addition, Carl Rogers' Humanistic theory emphasizes the importance of giving learners the freedom to express themselves and develop their creative potential. PjBL facilitates this

need by allowing students to be active subjects in learning. Although limited digital access is an obstacle, teachers can overcome it through physical literature-based approaches and utilization of local resources. This proves that strengthening the creative dimension does not solely depend on technological sophistication, but rather on the effectiveness of pedagogical strategies that are adaptive, contextual, and motivate students to think innovatively and productively.

### **Project Based Learning as Strengthening the Creative Dimension in Islamic Religious Education and Budi Pekerti Materials**

The learning context of Islamic Religious Education and Ethics has special characteristics, namely integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects which aim to form noble morals and student spirituality. At Darut Taqwa High School, the application of Project Based Learning in this subject not only functions as a learning method, but also as a strategy to build the character and creativity of students.

Projects designed in Islamic religious education and ethics learning are directed at sensitizing students to social and moral issues around them. The process of finding problems, interviewing sources, and writing scientific articles becomes an effective platform in instilling religious values while sharpening creativity. Project Based Learning also strengthens collaborative attitudes,

responsibility, and communication skills which are part of the noble values of Pancasila.

In this case, the Project Based Learning model not only supports the achievement of learning outcomes in Islamic religious education and Budi Pekerti subjects, but is also in line with the mission of the Merdeka Curriculum to realize students who are characterized, creative, and adaptive. Therefore, the implementation of Project Based Learning at Darut Taqwa High School is an example of good practice in implementing contextual learning based on spiritual and national values in a situation that is technologically limited but socially and culturally rich.

Strengthening the Pancasila Learner Profile provides a space for students to experience first-hand the learning process, which not only strengthens character, but also opens up opportunities to learn from the surrounding environment. Through this activity, students are given the opportunity to explore various themes or actual issues that are relevant to their daily lives (Lilihata et al., 2023). That way, they can take concrete actions in response to these issues, according to their developmental stages and needs. The project also aims to encourage learners to be able to make a positive contribution and impact on the surrounding environment.

Strengthening the creative dimension in learning Islamic Religious

Education and Ethics through Project Based Learning is evident in students' involvement in all stages of the project. The creative dimension as part of the Pancasila Learner Profile is manifested in students' ability to create ideas, express opinions, develop ideas into concrete works, and their courage in presenting their thoughts in front of the class. This process not only enriches students' cognitive competence in understanding Islamic values, but also instills an attitude of responsibility, cooperation, and adaptability.

Based on the results of research conducted at SMA Darut Taqwa, it can be concluded that the application of Project Based Learning in learning Islamic religious education and Budi Pekerti significantly affects the strengthening of the creative dimension of students. Through a series of project stages such as identifying real problems, collecting data, writing scientific articles, and presenting the results, students are not only trained to think critically and systematically, but also to create original works that are relevant to their daily lives. This activity shows that Project Based Learning is able to encourage students' active involvement and develop creativity as one of the important dimensions in the Pancasila Student Profile.

The condition of pesantren-based schools with limited access to digital technology is not a major obstacle in the implementation of Project Based Learning. Instead, this limitation is responded

adaptively by teachers by maximizing local resources such as libraries and printed teaching materials. This strategy proves that strengthening the creative dimension does not solely depend on technological means, but rather on the effectiveness of the pedagogical approach and the role of the teacher as a facilitator of contextual and meaningful learning.

Conceptually, these findings strengthen the theoretical significance of Project Based Learning as a 21st century learning model that emphasizes the principles of critical thinking, collaboration, and innovation. Within the framework of Merdeka Curriculum, Project Based Learning is not only a method, but also a transformative approach to instill Islamic values, morality, and character development through hands-on learning experiences. Therefore, the application of Project Based Learning in Islamic religious education and Budi Pekerti learning at Darut Taqwa High School can be used as a learning model that is contextual, adaptive, and oriented towards strengthening the character and creativity of students in order to form a complete Pancasila Student.

This model provides ample space for students to explore, find meaning from learning, and express it in the form of relevant work. The teacher acts as a facilitator who facilitates students' needs, provides appropriate direction, and creates an active and fun learning atmosphere. This is in line with the spirit

of Merdeka Curriculum, which is oriented towards differentiated, student-centered learning, and fosters a complete Pancasila learner profile, including in the aspect of creativity.

## CONCLUSION

The application of Project Based Learning in learning Islamic Religious Education and Budi Pekerti significantly affects the strengthening of the creative dimension of students. Through a series of project stages such as identifying real problems, collecting data, writing scientific articles, and presenting the results, students are not only trained to think critically and systematically, but also to create original works that are relevant to their daily lives. This activity shows that Project Based Learning is able to encourage students' active involvement and develop creativity as one of the important dimensions in the Pancasila Student Profile. The condition of pesantren-based schools with limited access to digital technology is not a major obstacle in the implementation of Project Based Learning. Instead, this limitation is responded adaptively by teachers by maximizing local resources such as libraries and printed teaching materials. This strategy proves that strengthening the creative dimension does not solely depend on technological means, but rather on the effectiveness of the pedagogical approach and the role of the teacher as a facilitator of contextual and meaningful learning. Conceptually, these

findings strengthen the theoretical significance of Project Based Learning as a 21st century learning model that emphasizes the principles of critical thinking, collaboration, and innovation. Within the framework of Merdeka Curriculum, Project Based Learning is not only a method, but also a transformative approach to instill Islamic values, morality, and character development through hands-on learning experiences. Therefore, the application of Project Based Learning in Islamic religious education and Budi Pekerti learning at Darut Taqwa High School can be used as a learning model that is contextual, adaptive, and oriented towards strengthening the character and creativity of students in order to form a complete Pancasila Student.

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