# Analysis of the Professional Competency of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum

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| Article Info | ABSTRACT |
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| | **Purpose of the study:** This study aims to describe and analyze the importance of professional competence of islamic religious education teachers, as well as the relevance of this professional competence to the demands of the Independent Curriculum.<br><br>**Methodology:** This research is descriptive-based qualitative research with a literature study approach. Through analysis of documents such as scientific journals, books and related research reports. The data collection method in this study is information collection, using sources as the main data related to the professional competence of islamic religious education teachers, independent curriculum, and curriculum implementation. The data from the sources obtained is then analyzed in depth, evaluating the quality of the data sources, analyzing the data, interpreting the data, and drawing conclusions.<br><br>**Main Findings:** (1) The professional competence of Islamic Religious Education teachers in teaching students has five criteria, namely: mastering the foundations of education, mastering teaching materials, compiling teaching programs, implementing learning programs, and assessing the results of the teaching and learning process that has been implemented. (2) The obstacle for islamic religious education teachers in teaching students is that islamic religious education teachers still do not understand the independent curriculum in terms of its application during learning. (3) There needs to be an increase in the competence of islamic religious education teachers in implementing the independent curriculum effectively for students in the learning process.<br><br>**Novelty/Originality of this study:** The novelty of this research lies in the challenges and opportunities of professional competence of islamic religious education teachers and their application in the independent curriculum. This finding can produce a new model that can be used to develop the competence of islamic religious education teachers in the independent curriculum so that it can provide quite relevant information for islamic religious education teachers in Indonesia. |

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## 1.   INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization and technological sophistication, there are many challenges that must be faced and resolved in the world of education, one of which is problems related to the character and weak

abilities (soft skills) of students. Moreover, recently Indonesian education has experienced a loss of students' knowledge and abilities or what is usually called learning loss, resulting in a crisis and low student learning outcomes due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the Indonesian Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Nadiem Makarim. Making changes to the previous curriculum in Indonesia, which initially used the 2013 curriculum, to become an independent curriculum tailored to students' abilities [1].

The Independent Curriculum is designed to be more flexible and centered on basic knowledge by developing students' creative abilities. This was done to restore learning from the Covid-19 pandemic. The concept of an independent curriculum is emphasized to give teachers and students the freedom to learn outside the classroom and prioritize independence, high professional competence, and good behavior for students and teachers [2].

The atmosphere for independent curriculum learning is fun. In implementing an independent curriculum, media and learning resources cannot be separated from the teacher's tools. So that the implementation of the independent curriculum can run well. Props and examples are facilitated and must continue to be added as needed to support the implementation of the independent curriculum. Learning outcomes can be achieved by combining basic learning material books with appropriate learning media and resources. Students will not get bored because teacher and student interaction increases if they use the right learning media [3].

There are several reasons why teacher professionalism is important. First, teacher professionalism in education greatly influences the progress of learning. Second, the failure of education in Indonesia, one of the causes is the low level of teacher professionalism. Third, Islamic Religious Education teachers play an important role in the progress of student learning in the field of personal formation and spiritual intelligence, so professional performance is needed to achieve this progress [4].

Especially in the Professional Competency of Islamic Religious Education Teachers, where this has a very important role in providing effective learning to students. The essence of effective learning is a teaching and learning process that is not only focused on the results that students will achieve, but rather an effective learning process that is able to provide good understanding, perseverance, intelligence, opportunities, and various traits that are able to bring about good changes in student behavior [5].

Islamic Religious Education has a multidimensional position in the Independent Curriculum. The Independent Curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning and provides flexibility in teaching materials. The Independent Curriculum also provides opportunities for teachers to demonstrate their creativity and consider the multiculturalism that is important in their society. Furthermore, the goal of this curriculum is to produce students who are faithful, obedient, and have good morals. To achieve this goal, a comprehensive development approach is needed, which includes strategic planning, program planning, and program delivery plans. However, the independent curriculum in Islamic Religious Education has several advantages and disadvantages. These include learning planning, assessment, and use of learning media, as well as the need for teacher training and internet access. In addition, the independent curriculum seeks to increase openness, tolerance, and positive pluralism in Islamic Religious Education through student character development [6].

According to Kurniawan et al. [7] with the emergence of the Local Genius 6.0 paradigm and advances in the field of the Internet of Things (IoT), Islamic education teachers face new challenges in preparing the younger generation for this digital era [8]. In fact, the competence of Islamic Education teachers is very important to ensure that the national curriculum is not only relevant in content but also able to facilitate the development of skills that are in accordance with the demands [9]. However, with Local Genius 6.0, which integrates the competence of Islamic Education teachers, there are still many questions about how the competence of Islamic Education teachers can influence the development of an independent curriculum. Therefore, this study examines the important role played by Islamic education teachers in the development of an independent curriculum that is adapted to the Local Genius 6.0 era [7].

According to Mahmudah [10], teachers have an obligation to improve or develop professionally, the way to improve this is through innovative and creative learning media so that students can receive lesson material well. Success in achieving satisfactory results depends on the use of appropriate and appropriate learning media. One indication of success is changes in student behavior that can occur as their knowledge increases. This shows that the use of appropriate and appropriate learning media can have a significant positive impact on students [11].

However, there are still many teachers who have not or even do not use learning media in their teaching process. Some of the reasons for this include: 1) Teachers are still fixated on traditional methods such as taking notes until finished (CBSA). 2) Many teachers do not have experience or training in creating and using learning media. 3) Although some teachers have attended related training, they may still have difficulty or are not fully able to implement the use of learning media in schools [12].

However, you need to know about increasing the Professional Competence of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in increasing competence to create professional teachers by implementing an independent curriculum. This is because teachers are usually less professional in teaching. One of them is in terms of

communication, the form of communication used by a teacher does not build interaction between teachers and students at all, even though the independent curriculum applies that a teacher must be able to develop communication skills to establish good relationships with various parties, especially students. The forms of communication used to build interaction between teachers and students in Islamic Religious Education include: one-way communication, two-way communication, multi-way communication. So that by using this form of communication in an independent curriculum, it can improve the communication and character of a teacher in building, increasing adequate competence for a teacher so that educational goals can be achieved [13].

There is a study similar to this study, where the article discusses the understanding and utilization of learning media by Islamic Religious Education teachers and significant challenges in implementing an independent curriculum. The results of the study indicate that Islamic Religious Education teachers still do not understand the lack of an independent curriculum and tend to use learning media minimally, as well as the lack of facilities and infrastructure to implement an independent curriculum. The gap that occurs is related to the implementation of the independent curriculum, where it is comprehensive in various education and the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in pursuing monotheism and faith as the core of achievement in learning. Similarities: Discussing the independent curriculum policy for professional Islamic Religious Education teachers. Differences: Based on the demands of professionalism of Islamic Religious Education teachers, using Professional Competence in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum [14].

The next research found was an article discussing the ability of Islamic Religious Education teachers to assess learning outcomes in the independent curriculum to meet the competencies expected of students at each level of education. The results of the study showed that teacher competence in dealing with the independent curriculum is the main key factor that determines the success of implementing the existing curriculum in schools and the development of Islamic Religious Education teacher professionalism through training and professional development programs is very important to improve teachers' ability to examine learning outcomes. Through this training, teachers will continue to update their knowledge about the independent curriculum and educational innovations that are currently developing. However, there is a gap, where the independent curriculum has not been fully implemented at all levels of education in Indonesia. But this does not rule out the possibility for teachers to continue to implement the spirit contained in the Pancasila student profile widely. Both from the realm of education and in the values of the curriculum that apply at various levels [15].

Additional studies discuss the idea of the Islamic Religious Education learning method in the independent curriculum and the ability of teachers to implement the independent curriculum in the classroom. At Technical Implementation Unit of State Junior High School 5 Medan, there are only two Islamic Religious Education teachers, which contribute to teacher performance. However, this concern can be overcome by professional Islamic Religious Education teachers who continue to provide the best service in accordance with the main factors of a professional teacher to advance the quality of learning. This is, of course, very worrying. The results of the study, however, show that teacher professionalism in implementing the independent curriculum has received a positive response from teachers and students. New policies, especially those related to Islamic Religious Education learning at Technical Implementation Unit of State Junior High School 5 Medan, will be successful thanks to the professionalism of educators. In addition, this study explains that: (1) The idea that the Islamic Religious Education learning pattern in the independent curriculum involves reflection on learning both in class and outside the classroom through the ark week and extracurricular activities. (2) The quality of teachers in implementing the Islamic Religious Education curriculum must meet the standards for professional teachers with teaching experience and teacher certification. (3) Efforts by schools and teachers to support the independent curriculum [16].

Additional research found that teacher competence contributes to improving the quality of learning. This study focuses on the professionalism of islamic religious education teachers at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Bi'rul Ulum Gemurung Gedangan, Sidoarjo Regency from various competency perspectives, including the ability to plan, implement, and evaluate learning programs. In addition, this study will investigate the factors that support and hinder the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Bi'rul Ulum Gemurung Gedangan, Sidoarjo Regency. One of the factors that supports the professionalism of Islamic Religious Education teachers in improving the quality of learning at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Bi'rul Ulum Gemurung is the availability of facilities that support school learning. The statement states that schools strive to provide supporting facilities for Islamic Religious Education teachers in their efforts to improve the quality of learning. Therefore, teachers must have the ability to communicate about the learning process in the context of applications as well. Mastery of technology and utilization of libraries as learning resources are two main components that hinder teacher professionalism in improving the quality of learning. Libraries and computers are tools that can be used by teachers to obtain important information. Islamic Religious Education teachers at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Bi'rul Ulum Gemurung must improve their skills in technology, especially computers [4].

In short, Islamic Religious Education plays an important role in the Merdeka Curriculum, which aims to improve students' moral and religious competence and encourage creativity and multicultural values among teachers. Despite the obstacles in its implementation, the flexible curriculum and student-centered approach are

intended to enhance the educational experience and achieve national education goals. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the Professional Competence of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in implementing the independent curriculum. Through this analysis, it is hoped that we can obtain a comprehensive picture of the competence of Islamic Religious Education teachers, the challenges and opportunities they face, as well as efforts that can be made to increase teacher professionalism in supporting the successful implementation of the independent curriculum.

## 2.    RESEARCH METHOD

### 2.1. Research Design

The researcher conducted the research using a qualitative descriptive research method with a data collection technique, namely literature study. Qualitative research by reviewing data from various reference books and research results that are relevant to the research to obtain a theoretical basis for the problem to be studied. This qualitative research emphasizes a deep understanding of the problem being studied through literature study. The focus is on interpreting the meaning behind the analysis of the application of professional competence of Islamic Religious Education teachers in the Independent Curriculum.

### 2.2. Data Collection Technique

Data collection in this study was carried out through literature studies. Literature studies are a research method carried out by collecting and analyzing data from various reading sources that are relevant to the study. This study is sourced from books, national journals or previous articles related to this study. This study requires sources that discuss the professional competence of a teacher, especially those that focus on the professional competence of Islamic Religious Education teachers. In addition, this study requires sources regarding the Independent Curriculum. From the second focus that will be discussed, it will then be linked to the form of its application. The professional competence of Islamic Religious Education teachers will conduct an analysis and the results of the analysis will be discussed for their application in learning in the Independent Curriculum. The data sources used in this study have no publication year restrictions, because in the review of the professional competence of Islamic Religious Education teachers, an in-depth discussion is needed so that several literature sources are needed from previous years. However, in the discussion of the Independent Curriculum, the sources obtained came from the year of publication 5 years ago, because the Independent Curriculum began to be used in 2020. Even so, this study also really needs an in-depth discussion of the Independent Curriculum so that this study can produce maximum relevant information.

### 2.3. Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis used in this study is data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. In this study, data collection was obtained from books, scientific articles and journals that are in accordance with this study, in order to find out the Implementation of Professional Competence of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in the Independent Curriculum, then the data that has been obtained is then analyzed and studied in depth, critically and systematically and then described descriptively.

According to Ulber Silalahi in Nurdewi [17] analysis activities consist of three streams of activities that occur simultaneously, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions/verification. Occurring simultaneously means that data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions/verification as something that is interwoven is a cyclical process and interaction before, during, and after data collection in a parallel form that builds general insight called "analysis".

1.    Data Reduction
      Data reduction is a form of analysis that sharpens, classifies, directs, removes unnecessary, and organizes data in such a way that the final conclusion can be drawn and verified.
2.    Data Presentation
      Miles & Huberman define a presentation as a collection of structured information that allows for drawing conclusions and taking action.
3.    Drawing Conclusions
      According to Miles and Huberman, drawing conclusions is only part of an activity from a complete configuration. During the research activity, conclusions are also verified for their truth.

### 2.4. Research Procedures

The research procedure begins with data collection through in-depth literature study. Furthermore, data from several literatures are analyzed to find gaps and provide inspiration and ideas for conducting research. The researcher also records all data and information obtained during the data analysis process. The final step is to describe the results of the analysis in the form of valid writing and draw conclusions based on the results of the analysis obtained.
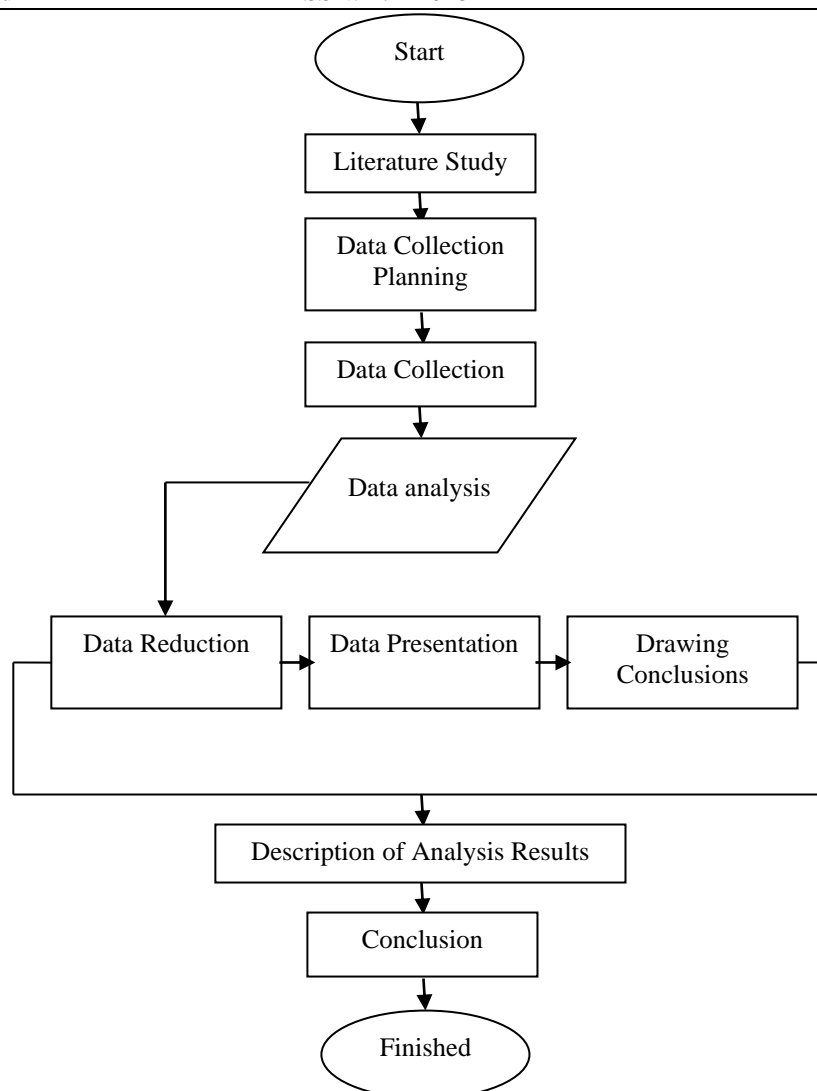
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Figure 1. Research Procedures

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
### 3.1. Theoretical Foundations of Islamic Religious Education Teacher Professional Competence

Part of the four basic competencies, professional competencies, must be possessed by all teachers, including Islamic religious education teachers. According to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, "professional" comes from the word "profession", which means "work or career" in English, and "professional" comes from the word "profession", which means "professional" is someone who has special abilities and expertise in carrying out his work. According to a more detailed definition, a professional is someone who has the necessary abilities and skills to carry out his or her job according to his or her area of expertise. There is also a more specific definition of a professional, which is someone who is reliable and trusted because he has the ability, expertise, knowledge, responsibility, discipline, and expertise in carrying out his duties so that the results of his work are satisfactory.

Based on some opinions, a professional is a skill or proficiency that each profession has based on a specific area of expertise, which is used to facilitate the execution of tasks related to their job. The definition of islamic religious education teacher professional competence is expertise in mastering Islamic religious teaching materials and noble morals thoroughly and in-depth with the aim of providing guidance to students so that they can achieve the competency standards that have been set by the National Education System and Standards [18].

In addition, Imam Al-Ghazali stated that the duties that professional teachers must have are as follows: First, they must have compassion, because the practice of teaching is a professional skill, and compassion is very important to create confidence and calm in teachers and students. Second, professional teachers must be knowledgeable people, so those who teach should not expect praise or compensation from others. Third, teachers must be able to direct students and become honest supervisors. They should also remind students that the

purpose of Learning is a way to get closer to the Supreme Creator. The purpose of learning is not only to achieve a specific goal, but the most important thing is that knowledge is developed and disseminated with the aim of getting closer to God.

Thus, a teacher's professional competence can be defined as the teacher's ability to master learning as a whole, including planning, implementing, and evaluating learning according to their area of expertise. A teacher must have the following professional competencies:

1. Understand the learning materials, structures, concepts, and scientific mindsets that support the subjects taught
2. Understand the basic competency standards of the subjects taught
3. Able to develop reflective activities consistently with the aim of improving proficiency [19].

Competence is a combination of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that are reflected in a person's way of thinking and acting. Competence, in the context of teachers, is the ability and authority of teachers to carry out their abilities, competencies, and rational actions to meet certain verifications in the implementation of educational tasks. A teacher's job depends on the teacher's ability, which consists of the following four components [20], [21]:

1) Social Competence

Social Competence is related to the ability of educators as part of society to communicate and get along effectively with students and all parties.

2) Personality Competencies

Personality Competency is a personal ability that reflects a mature, exemplary, and noble personality.

3) Professional Competencies

Professional Competence is an ability related to mastery of learning materials in a very broad and in-depth field of study which includes mastery of the content of subject curriculum materials.

4) Pedagogical Competence

Pedagogic competence is an ability related to students' understanding and educational and dialogical learning management.

"Competence" comes from the English word "ability", which means ability or proficiency. Competence, according to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, is the ability to determine. In Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 concerning teachers and lecturers, competence is defined as a set of knowledge, skills, and behaviors possessed, lived, and mastered by teachers and lecturers when they carry out their professional duties [22].

In the design and implementation of the curriculum, competence is the key. Iskandar said that competence is knowledge, skills, and values that are reflected in habits and actions. This is in line with the formulation of the Religious Education Curriculum, which states that competence is knowledge and skills that are reflected in the habit of thinking and acting, and these habits must be able to be implemented consistently and continuously and have the ability to adapt to their environment.

Then we move on to the term "professional", which is defined as a special ability to do something. However, Sudjana argues that the word "professional" is derived from the word "nature", which means livelihood, and "thing", which means a person who has expertise. Based on this understanding, it can be understood that professional work requires special skills to maximize work results [23].

In article 28 paragraph (3) point c of the National Education Standards states that what is meant by professional competence is an ability to master learning materials thoroughly and in-depth so that students can meet the national education standards. According to Hamzah B Uno, a teacher must have professional competence that includes the abilities that a teacher must have. A teacher must have a professional competence that includes the ability to plan, implement, evaluate, and develop learning. According to Suharsimi Arikunto, professional competence is the mastery of learning materials, learning methods, which must be possessed by a teacher and teachers are able to apply it in the learning process [24]. Meanwhile, Marintis Yamin stated that the requirements for professional teachers include: 1) having the ability to educate, 2) having integrated expertise, 3) being physically and spiritually healthy, 4) having the ability to teach, 5) having extensive experience and knowledge. So it can be concluded that the Professional Competence of islamic religious education Teachers is very important to improve students' critical thinking skills. This is the main reason why the competence of a teacher, especially islamic religious education, is very important to encourage students' critical thinking skills. Qualified teachers have a deep understanding of teaching materials and effective teaching approaches. Professional islamic religious education is able to create and implement learning strategies that encourage students to think critically, such as discussion, debate, and case analysis. They are also able to create a safe learning environment where students feel safe to ask questions, express opinions, and learn different perspectives. They teach students not only to passively receive information, but also to evaluate, analyze, and question information [25].

The professional competencies can be divided into three parts, namely:

1) Competence in the cognitive field (understanding), meaning the intellectual ability of teachers such as mastery of subjects, knowledge of teaching methods and student behavior, knowledge of guidance, knowledge of counseling guidance, knowledge of school administration, knowledge of how to assess student learning outcomes, knowledge of society and other general knowledge.

2) Affective competence (attitude), which means the readiness and willingness of teachers to various things related to their duties and professions, for example, appreciating their work, loving and having a feeling of pleasure in the subjects they teach, tolerance towards their fellow professionals, and having a strong will to improve their work ethic.

3) Psychomotor competence (skill), meaning the ability of teachers in various skills to do something, for example; skills in teaching, guiding, assessing, using teaching aids, getting along or communicating with students, skills in fostering a spirit of learning for student participants, skills in preparing learning plans, skills in carrying out classroom administration.

If the three areas of professional competence mentioned above are analyzed, they do not stand alone, but are interconnected and influence each other, where the cognitive, affective and psychomotor fields have a hierarchical relationship, meaning they are based on each other.

Professional Competence of an experienced islamic religious education Teacher can relate the subject matter to real-world situations, making the lesson more interesting and relevant for students. They also help students learn to think critically by understanding how religious concepts can be applied in everyday life. Experienced islamic religious education teachers can also manage classes effectively, providing opportunities for all students to participate and work together. There are several ways to improve teachers' professional competence, such as:

1) Continuing Education and Training.
   Teachers can participate in these activities to improve their professional competence such as participating in training activities, seminars, or pursuing higher formal education [26].

2) Be active in the teacher community.
   Being active in the teacher community can provide opportunities to share experiences, knowledge, and best practices with peers [27].

3) Utilizing Technology in Learning.
   The use of technology in learning has a positive and significant effect on teacher competence, because it makes lessons more enjoyable and teachers easy to convey material [28].

4) Conduct classroom action research
   With this classroom action research, teachers know what needs to be improved, with what teachers are improving it, and who is being improved. Therefore, the teacher will know the condition of the class [29].

5) Read and write a lot
   By reading, a teacher can expand the knowledge that will be possessed, and also by writing a teacher can hone the ability to think critically.

From these three ways, it is hoped that it will be able to improve teachers' professional competence and provide motivation and innovation in conducting learning in the classroom and teachers will be able to present thematic learning that is fun, meaningful, and comfortable for students.

### 3.2. Concept and Application of the Independent Curriculum

The Merdeka Curriculum has a philosophy that emphasizes the freedom of quality learning and in accordance with human nature. Freedom of learning in the Merdeka Curriculum promotes education that recognizes natural human rights to learn and gain free experiences, in accordance with the potential and character of each individual. Education is expected to develop new human characters and a new society [30].

The concept of an independent learning curriculum proposed by the Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim emphasizes the application of the main principles of learning, namely the role of the teacher according to Ki Hajar Dewantara and student autonomy with educational goals. This concept not only allows students to learn, but also gives them the opportunity to improve their own skills and abilities at home with the supervision of teachers and parents [31].

Freedom of thought is the core or concept of the Independent Curriculum. It is the teacher who determines freedom of thought, which means that the teacher is the main pillar in supporting educational success. In the current era of digitalization, technological advances have an impact on the quality of education. The concept of independent curriculum education combines literacy abilities, knowledge, skills and attitudes, as well as mastery of technology in every activity carried out by both teachers and students [32]. Through this idea, students are given the freedom to think and use their knowledge as best as possible. Apart from that, the initial concept of the Independent Curriculum was to provide breadth for educational staff such as teachers and students [33].

One of the main objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum is to develop individuals who have character, are able to contribute to society, and have a national spirit. Education must be directed at forming humans who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also have integrity and moral values.

The learning principles of the Independent Curriculum based on Ki Hajar Dewantara's views can be classified into two, namely general principles and specific principles [34]. The general principles of learning the Independent Curriculum according to Ki Hajar Dewantara are as follows:

1. Principle of Independence
   Students are given the freedom to study according to their interests and talents.
2. Principles of Natural Nature
   Learning must be done in a natural and enjoyable way, so that students can learn optimally.
3. Principle of Balance
   Learning is carried out by balancing cognitive, affective and psychomotor components.

The following are the specific principles of the Independent Curriculum according to Ki Hajar Dewantara [35]:

1. Tut Wuri Handayani Principles
   Teachers do not function as learning centers, they act as facilitators and guides. The tut wuri handayani principle can be applied by providing teachers with support and guidance during the learning process and creating a learning environment that encourages students to participate actively and creatively.
2. Swaratama Principle
   Teachers respect students' potential and talents and give them the opportunity to develop them optimally.

These principles are in accordance with Ki Hajar Dewantara's ideas about student-centered education. Education must not only be able to develop students' talents and potential, but also prepare them to become independent citizens and contribute to society.

The following are some of the basic principles contained in the Independent Curriculum:

1. Learner-Based Education
   The Merdeka Curriculum is implemented with a learner-centered learning method, which means providing opportunities for students to be actively involved in their own learning process.
2. Aligning with National Culture
   The Merdeka Curriculum seeks to integrate Indonesian cultural values in the educational process, so that each individual can reflect and build character in accordance with the nation's traditions and values.
3. Character Development
   Education in the Merdeka Curriculum focuses on building student character, which includes aspects of independence, responsibility and social awareness.
4. Innovation and Futuristic
   The Merdeka Curriculum needs to adapt to current developments and encourage innovation in educational methods so that it can meet the changing needs of society.

One of the programs in the Merdeka curriculum is the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5). Based on the Guidelines of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Number 56 of 2022, the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) is a co-curricular activity that focuses on a project approach to strengthen efforts to achieve competencies and characters in accordance with the Pancasila Student Profile based on Standards. The Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) can provide opportunities for students to practice Pancasila values in their daily lives and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) in the Islamic Religious Education curriculum is an effort to connect literacy learning with the values and characters of the Pancasila Student Profile into Islamic Religious Education subjects [36].

In the context of the Independent Curriculum which emphasizes independent and learner-centered learning, Differentiated learning is a learning method that emphasizes the learning needs of learners in terms of learning readiness, learning profile, interests, and skills. Differentiated learning is one form of concrete implementation of Ki Hajar Dewantara's pedagogical vision. It shows how the vision is applied in modern education, becoming a real representation of the vision in the current educational context. In the article, the relationship between this vision and practice is explained by referring to the basic understanding of differentiated learning. Differentiated learning, according to the article, is a process in which students have the opportunity to learn according to their individual abilities, interests, and needs, so that they do not experience frustration or feelings of failure in their learning experience [37].

Based on research written by Baktiar Nasution, Sa'diyah, Firmansyah, Muhammad Erikko Abimayu, in implementing Differentiated Learning with learning styles in Islamic Religious Education subjects, here the author takes an example of prayer material, according to what the author has found in the field. Before entering the prayer material, the teacher must have a mapping related to the learning needs of students so that during the learning process the teacher can find out what is needed for students. In prayer material, learning is not only

carried out with lectures, but prayer material can be presented with the learning style of each student (visual, auditory and kinesthetic), for visual learning styles the teacher displays prayer worship material with learning media such as power points containing images of prayer movements. As for the auditory learning style, the teacher displays prayer material using Islamic cartoon animation videos. For the kinesthetic learning style, the teacher directly asks students to practice prayer movements. The description above is a description of how to apply differentiated learning using visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning styles in Islamic Religious Education subjects at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level [38].

The Merdeka Curriculum has greatly improved the quality of learning in Indonesia. This curriculum gives teachers, students and the community the freedom and comfort to create more creative and innovative content and learning approaches according to what they want. This promotes the quality of learning, benefits teachers, schools, communities, critical thinking efficiency, communication skills, and collaboration skills [39]. Teachers must be ready to adapt to changes in the curriculum because they play an important role in implementing the Independent Curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum focuses on important, relevant and in-depth material to encourage creativity and innovation as well as improve soft skills and character through Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5). By using the independent curriculum, it is hoped that useful and effective learning can increase students' faith, piety and noble morals as well as foster their creativity, taste and initiative to become lifelong learners of Pancasila. Thus, the Merdeka Curriculum is not only oriented towards academic achievement, but also towards the formation of a complete and characterful person, in accordance with the hopes of the founders of the Indonesian nation.

## 3.3. Analysis of Islamic Religious Education Teacher Professional Competencies in the Context of the Independent Curriculum

The Independent Curriculum is an educational approach that provides greater freedom to teachers and students in the learning process. The intent is to enable teachers to develop learning methods and media that suit student needs and the local context. This curriculum requires teachers to understand the philosophy and structure of the curriculum in order to apply its principles well. The Independent Curriculum requires teachers to not only be presenters of material, but also designers of interesting and effective learning experiences [40]. This means that teachers must be able to design learning activities that suit student characteristics and the classroom context, and be able to animate learning with creative methods. These skills include analyzing student needs, selecting relevant topics, and adapting material to the latest developments.

In implementing the Independent Curriculum, the use of varied learning media is very important to increase student involvement. Media can be in the form of teaching aids, digital technology, or other learning resources that can help understand learning concepts. Teachers' lack of understanding in selecting and using appropriate media can limit the effectiveness of the learning methods applied. The Merdeka Curriculum encourages teachers to apply teaching methods that are responsive to students' needs and interests. This includes the ability to adapt to different situations in the learning process, for example, changing strategies when learning that students are having difficulty understanding material. Without these skills, teachers will find it difficult to create a flexible and dynamic learning environment.

In this context, islamic religious education teachers' lack of understanding also creates a gap between the expected competencies in implementing the Independent Curriculum and the real conditions faced in the field. The Merdeka Curriculum requires teachers to have skills in designing learning, using varied media, and implementing adaptive teaching methods, which current teachers may not fully master. Often, these problems arise due to inadequate training curricula or lack of support from educational institutions. If teachers do not receive adequate training in understanding the Merdeka Curriculum and its implementation strategies, they may not be prepared enough to implement it effectively in the classroom.

This gap between expected competencies and reality can ultimately have a negative impact on student learning outcomes. Students may not get a quality learning experience if teachers do not have the skills needed to optimize the new curriculum. As a result, student motivation and involvement in the learning process can decrease. To address this gap, there is an urgent need for professional development programs for islamic religious education teachers, including ongoing training and opportunities to collaborate on best practices. In this way, it is hoped that teachers can develop the skills needed to face the demands of this new and complex curriculum.

A deep understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum is essential for successful implementation. When islamic religious education teachers understand and are able to apply the curriculum well, they can create a learning environment that is not only interesting but also supports the optimal development of student creativity and skills. When islamic religious education teachers can implement the Merdeka Curriculum efficiently, they contribute to creating a supportive learning environment. This environment is characterized by positive interactions, mutual trust, and freedom of expression. In fact, students who feel engaged and motivated to learn are more likely to invest in their educational process.

The independent curriculum is specifically intended to encourage students in learning to develop according to their interests, potential talents and natural needs. The independent curriculum is also intended to

solve several problems related to the quality of Indonesian people and current educational problems. The implementation process is not as easy as imagined. However, there are many problems or challenges that need to be addressed to achieve national education goals through the Independent Curriculum [41]. To implement the Independent Curriculum successfully, teachers in educational units, especially islamic religious education teachers, must overcome and face several challenges. Some challenges that need to be considered are as follows:

1.  Challenges in integrating Islamic religious values with a freedom of learning approach.

One of the significant problems in Islamic religious education is how to integrate religious values with a freedom of learning approach. On the one hand, Islamic values provide a moral and ethical basis that teaches ethics, tolerance and good actions. In contrast, freedom of learning values interest and diversity of views, encourages intellectual exploration and experimentation, and provides opportunities to look into multiple points of view in the process of seeking truth. Integrating these two aspects is an interesting and complex challenge, as it involves bridging the gap between tradition and modernity, as well as combining religious values with diverse academic and social developments.

In Islamic Religious Education, efforts to combine religious values with a freedom of learning approach have a significant impact. This can help a generation that not only understands Islamic teachings better, but is also able to apply Islamic values in dynamic modern life. This merger can also stimulate students' intellectual growth to a greater extent, while remaining loyal to the moral foundations adhered to by the Islamic religion.

It is very important to have a deep understanding of Islamic teachings and how they can be applied in the contemporary world which continues to experience change. It is important to create learning plans that combine religious teachings with approaches that encourage creativity, critical thinking, and active student participation. This challenge requires a holistic educational approach, qualified teachers, relevant curricula, and wise use of technology to convey religious messages. In this way, Islamic Religious Education can combine eternal values with contemporary learning freedom, producing students who not only have good academic qualities, but also have a deep understanding of the morality and ethics contained in Islamic religious teachings.

Therefore, a balanced and holistic approach is needed that respects Islamic religious teachings while encouraging intellectual exploration and growth. In situations like these, it is crucial for educators, curriculum developers, and Islamic education stakeholders to work together to create an approach that combines deep Islamic values with constructive freedom of learning.

2.  Challenges in maintaining the relevance of Islamic teachings and the development of modernization

Entering an era of technological progress, globalization and rapid social change, maintaining the relationship between Islamic teachings and the development of modernization in Islamic education has become a complex and important challenge. For centuries, Muslims have been guided by strong spiritual principles and moral principles, while modernization resulted in major transformations in the way people live, interact, and understand the world. This challenge reflects deeply on how Islamic teachings can remain a guide and guidance in an increasingly complex world. Although religious values provide strong moral and ethical guidance, technological advances, globalization, and ongoing social change raise questions about how these values can be articulated and implemented in the modern world.

Given these challenges, it is important to find solutions. A balance that allows Islamic teachings to remain relevant and significant amidst changes in the contemporary world. Islamic Religious Education is very important to overcome the differences between religious values and the progress of modernization. Modernization brings advances in science, technology and culture that can influence the way people think and act, although Islamic teachings provide guidance on morality, ethics and human relationships with God Almighty and each other.

It is important to address these challenges with a smart and comprehensive approach. Islamic education must explore the basic values of these teachings in more depth and bring them into a framework of understanding that is relevant for the current generation. This involves constant discussion between tradition and modern contexts, enabling students to understand timeless values and apply them in the real world. Furthermore, Islamic religious education must create a learning environment that encourages critical thinking, a deep understanding of religious teachings, and the application of Islamic values in everyday life.

In addition, it is important to incorporate elements of modernization that are in line with Islamic values while maintaining distance from actions that conflict with Islamic religious principles. The use of technology in Islamic Religious Education can help convey religious messages in a more interactive and interesting way, as well as help students understand how Islamic teachings can be applied in increasingly complex daily life.

3.  Challenges in utilizing technology and digital learning tools in accordance with Islamic religious values

Islamic religious education teachers must have a strong understanding of Islamic teachings and sufficient technological skills to create balanced and meaningful learning experiences to meet these challenges. The use of digital learning tools and modern technology must be done with proper guidance and supervision to be in accordance with religion. However, possibilities come with difficulties. Today's technology allows for more interactive and unique learning, which can be adapted to each person's unique learning style. In addition,

digital-based applications can be used to convey religious teachings in innovative ways that combine text, images, audio and video. The use of online platforms can help form inclusive learning communities where students can interact and share their religious knowledge.

In efforts to utilize technology and digital learning tools in accordance with Islamic religious values, it is important to remember the values of Islamic teachings which encourage ethics, justice and tolerance. Islamic religious education teachers' efforts to integrate modern technology into learning is to produce a generation that is not only academically intelligent, but also has a deep understanding of religious teachings and is able to apply these teachings in an increasingly digital world. Therefore, technology can function as a useful tool to improve religious understanding and practice, as well as to strengthen the principles of Islamic teachings which are the basis of Islamic Religious Education.

To overcome these challenges, islamic religious education teachers can implement several strategies or solutions, among others:

a.  Increase competence

Improving capabilities in the Independent Curriculum is an important step for islamic religious education teachers to achieve more inclusive and learner-centered learning. By gaining this ability, islamic religious education teachers will be able to do their jobs better in integrating Islamic religious values with a more modern and adaptive learning approach. To become superior islamic religious education teachers, they must have leadership and spiritual abilities. These two abilities make them inspirations and moral enforcers, especially in building the profile of Pancasila students based on the religion of moderation or Islam Rahmatan lil Alamin.

b.  Integrating Islamic religious values

In implementing the Independent Curriculum, Islamic religious principles must be included. This is very important to ensure that Islamic Religious Education is still relevant and meaningful in a more inclusive and adaptive education. Developing students' soft skills and character together with Islamic religious values is very important to form a generation that has superior personalities and strong morals. islamic religious education teachers are strategically responsible for helping students integrate religious teachings with personality development and soft skills needed in modern life. islamic religious education teachers can teach effective communication skills and empathy through stories. By incorporating Islamic religious values into the Merdeka Curriculum, islamic religious education teachers not only teach religious concepts, but also help students understand how Islamic religious values can be applied in everyday life. This helps build students who have a solid understanding of religion, strong morality, and relevant critical thinking skills.

c.  Select relevant material

In the Independent Curriculum, islamic religious education teachers play a very important role in instilling moral and social values that produce a more cultured student life. In learning Islamic Religious Education, selecting important and relevant material is very important. Islamic religious education teachers must ensure that the material taught reflects the important values and teachings of the Islamic religion so that students gain a deep understanding of religious teachings and how to apply them in everyday life. A islamic religious education teacher is also expected to provide enjoyable education. Students must always be in a happy and contented state when learning. In other words, religious teachers must apply the value of happiness so that students feel comfortable in their class.

d.  Developing flexible learning

The Merdeka Curriculum will enable islamic religious education schools and teachers to adapt, improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education subject matter. Apart from that, the curriculum is adapted to local wisdom, culture, and the vision and mission of the education unit. This kind of flexibility is needed so that the curriculum students study remains relevant to environmental dynamics, modern problems and students' learning needs. The Merdeka Curriculum prioritizes kindness. Seeing the diversity of the Indonesian education system, the implementation of the curriculum will not be forced and will apply equally to all schools. The level of readiness of an education to implement the curriculum varies, and each requires full support, including different time to prepare to use the curriculum.

Therefore, flexible and inclusive development is essential in Islamic Religious Education, enabling teachers to accommodate the different needs, learning styles and levels of understanding of students. The aim of flexible development is to create an Islamic religious education environment that can adapt to the needs, learning styles and responsibilities of islamic religious education teachers.

The Types of Teacher Professional Development Activities According to Sudarwan Danim, when viewed from the perspective of institutional initiatives, teacher professional development is carried out through various strategies in the form of education and training (diklat) and non-training, including [42]:

A.  Education and Training
1)  In-House Training (IHT) Training in the form of IHT is training that is carried out internally in a teacher's work group, school, or other place designated to hold training.
2)  lnternship program The internship program is a training that is carried out in the world of work or relevant industries in order to improve the professional competence of teachers.

  3) School partnerships Training through school partnerships can be carried out between good schools and bad schools, between public schools or private schools.

  4) Distance learning Training through distance learning can be carried out without presenting instructors and trainees in one specific place, but with internet training systems and the like.

  5) Tiered and special training This type of training is carried out in authorized training institutions, where the program is arranged in stages starting from the basic, intermediate, advanced, and high levels.

  6) Short courses at colleges or other educational institutions. Short courses are intended to train and improve teachers' abilities in several abilities such as the ability to conduct classroom action research, compile scientific papers, plan, implement, and evaluate learning.

  7) Internal coaching by schools This internal coaching is carried out by school principals and teachers who have the authority to foster, through official meetings, rotation of teaching tasks, the provision of additional internal tasks, and discussions with peers.

  8) Further education Teacher development through further education is also an alternative for improving teacher qualifications and competencies. Teachers' participation in further education can be carried out by providing learning assignments both domestically and abroad for outstanding teachers.

 B. Non-education and training

  1) Discussion of Education Problems This discussion is held periodically with discussion topics in accordance with the problems experienced by the school.

  2) Seminar Teacher participation in seminar activities and fostering scientific publications can also be a model of continuous coaching for the improvement of teacher professionalism.

  3) This workshop is carried out to produce products that are useful for learning, improving competence and career development.

  4) Research Research can be carried out by teachers in the form of classroom research, experimental research, or other types in order to improve the quality of learning.

  5) Writing books/teaching materials Teaching materials written by teachers can be in the form of diktat, textbooks, or books in the field of education.

  6) Making learning media Learning media made by teachers can be in the form of teaching aids, simple practicum tools, or electronic teaching materials or learning animations.

  7) Creation of technological works/artworks Technological works/artworks made by teachers can be in the form of works that are useful for the community or educational activities and works of art that have aesthetic value recognized by the community.

Islamic Religious Education teachers have professional competence, but they also have greater duties, where these responsibilities are not shared by other teachers. Apart from being responsible for transferring knowledge to their students, islamic religious education teachers must also act as mentors, so that they can carry out this responsibility [43]. As drivers of free learning, teachers are expected to act as facilitators and drivers of change in schools [44]. In the Pancasila student profile project activities, teachers are expected to be able to apply the principles of the four Pancasila student profiles: holistic, contextual, student-centered, and exploratory.

To increase the profile of Pancasila students, there are four principles. First, based on holistic principles, teachers have more freedom in the learning process because they act as educators who work together with people who influence student learning [45]. Islamic religious education teachers work together with educators, education staff and students. This includes providing a plan for implementing the Pancasila values that need to be instilled, talking about curriculum content, and complying with assessment guidelines and learning needs. The learning process is expected to support the development of students' overall competence and intelligence [46].

Second; contextual principle, this principle is in line with the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW: "*Educate your children according to their time, because they do not live in your time*" (HR. Ali Bin Abi Talib). Contextual learning is an educational method that emphasizes the process of student involvement as a whole in finding and connecting information with situations that occur in the real world [47].

Third; learner-centered principles. In Surah An-Nahl verse 125, Allah SWT says, which means, "*Call (humans) to the path of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction and refute them in a good way. Indeed, your Lord is the one who knows better about those who stray from His path and He is the one who knows better those who are guided.*" In this verse, Allah SWT told the Prophet Muhammad SAW and his followers to learn and teach by using good learning methods for teaching. This learning method encourages students to become active learning subjects and be responsible for their own learning. By using a project-based learning approach, the Pancasila student profile allows students to be more active, interactive and contextual. This approach also allows students to develop character values in the Pancasila student profile through direct interaction with their environment [48].

Fourth, the exploratory principle. The exploration model can help teachers improve students' overall understanding by using it as a facilitator and guide in the learning process. The exploratory principle is

associated with the spirit of opening up a wide space for students' self-development process. The Pancasila student profile project is very suitable for students' self-development process because it has many choices for material, time, and adjustments to learning objectives. The exploratory principle can encourage activities in the project to strengthen the profile of Pancasila to fulfill and strengthen students' knowledge [49].

The teacher's contribution in forming the Pancasila student profile is to shape students' attitudes and personalities to form the six dimensions of the Pancasila student profile in the Independent Curriculum by providing advice which is a way to educate students not to make mistakes, teach tolerance, which is a national trait that everyone must have, and instill discipline, which is very important to be implemented in the school environment to form students who are disciplined and love their country, where many agendas are carried out both at school and in the community to foster patriotism.

The role of islamic religious education teachers in implementing differentiated learning in the independent curriculum differentiated learning is an approach in which teachers not only deliver material in the same way, but also consider the unique characteristics and needs of each student. It would feel unfair to teach and assess students in the same way without considering their differences. To meet the needs of their students, teachers must be able to identify and understand the unique traits of each student. The goal is to create a more inclusive and effective learning experience so that every student can reach their best potential in a fair and supportive learning environment. Differentiated learning is a method intended to help teachers meet the unique needs of each student. It allows students to study the subject matter according to their individual abilities, interests, and needs. By following uniform standards, Students can learn without feeling stressed or frustrated [50].

Marliana said that there are five different learning objectives. The first goal is to increase students' awareness of their ability to achieve learning goals, and the second goal is to increase the difficulty level of tasks so that students are more motivated and achieve better learning outcomes. The third goal is to determine the difficulty level of the assignment so that students are more motivated and achieve better learning outcomes. This will encourage educators to be more innovative.

The implementation of Differentiated Learning certainly has various challenges that need to be observed, as follows:

1) Limited duration: Teachers don't have much time to give special attention to each student. This is because each school has set a schedule for teachers and the subjects they teach. As a result, teachers may not have enough time to assess and divide students' knowledge based on their individual knowledge levels.

2) Implementing differentiated learning involves many steps, so teachers who rely solely on convenience will not be able to get through it. From the initial stages of assessment to continuous evaluation, subject matter planning to teaching implementation, all of these things are bound to make teachers stressed. In addition, you must also help students individually and in groups. This kind of condition is difficult for teachers, especially with many students.

3) Huge expenses: Supporting different learning processes is difficult, especially if you are just starting out and require considerable expenses. Schools should have access to a variety of resources and teaching materials to help each student learn. Educational institutions must also prepare subject matter [51].

The Islamic educational component is an educational approach that recognizes individual differences within a study group and strives to provide a learning experience that suits the needs and pace of each individual. Meanwhile, the differentiated learning component and the Islamic education component complement each other. These two components can be combined to achieve the same educational goal, which is to increase the diversity and richness of students' understanding in learning. Teachers can understand each student's unique needs for understanding and learning speed through differentiated learning. Thus, the alignment between the differentiated learning component and the Islamic Education component can bring significant benefits in education. By integrating these two components, teachers can create inclusive and challenging learning experiences for all students, as well as assist students in understanding and appreciating diversity and Islamic Religious Values [52].

Implementation of the independent curriculum in improving the professionalism of Islamic Religious Education teachers In the implementation of the independent learning curriculum, the management of human resources is very important for the successful implementation of the new curriculum in educational units. Human resources management will run well and efficiently only if the human resources owned are competitive and in accordance with their fields. Therefore, to ensure that the products produced meet the standards, schools must have the ability to manage human resources wisely [53].

This study shows that islamic religious education teachers are different in implementing an independent curriculum. This means that some teachers are already very capable, others are quite capable, and others still need to learn a lot. This is important because it shows that more focused and continuous training is needed to improve teachers' abilities. This research can also be used by policymakers to create laws or programs that help teachers implement the Independent Curriculum. However, there was a shortcoming in this study: few teachers were studied and the methods lacked depth. Therefore, further research should involve more teachers, using a

variety of research methods, such as direct observation and in-depth interviews, and looking at progress in teachers' abilities in the long term. To get a better picture, further research can also concentrate on things that affect teachers' abilities, such as the training they received and assistance from the principal.

## 4.    CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the data that has been studied, it shows that (1) Professional competence in teachers is very important in designing and implementing the independent curriculum, because a professional national teacher must have special expertise in planning, implementing, and developing learning in order to meet educational standards in the independent curriculum (2) Teacher professionalism in implementing the islamic religious education subject learning curriculum is required to understand the philosophy and structure of the independent curriculum, be able to design interesting and effective learning, and islamic religious education teachers must be able to apply the principles of the Pancasila lesson profile. with this, the application of the independent curriculum in islamic religious education can produce a generation with Pancasila character and noble morals. (3) Efforts made by teachers to apply islamic religious education subjects in the independent curriculum that are differentiated, the relevance of Islamic teachings, and the use of technology according to Islamic values. With this, teachers can create an inclusive and effective learning environment.

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