

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MERDEKA CURRUCULUM IN MADRASAH IBTIDAIYAH: IMPACT ON LEARING QUALITY

***Nadella Lesmana¹, Anton Tri Hasnanto²**

¹Teknologi Informasi, Fakultas Teknologi, Institut Teknologi dan Sains Nahdlatul Ulama Lampung, Indonesia

²Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung, Indonesia

Correspondence*:

Address: Bandar Lampung | e-mail: nadella@itsnulampung.ac.id¹, antontrihasnanto@raden.ac.id

Abstract

Objective: This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah and its impact on the quality of learning. The Merdeka Curriculum is designed to provide freedom in the teaching and learning process, with an emphasis on the development of student competencies and character, and is expected to improve the quality of education at various levels, including madrasahs.

Design/Methods/Approach: Using a research method that involves a literature review discussing the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and the issues faced in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah related to the impact on the quality of learning in the field.

Findings: The research findings indicate that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah has a positive impact on the quality of learning, particularly in enhancing student participation, the development of critical thinking skills, and collaborative abilities.

Originality/Value: this research also identifies several challenges, such as limited resources and the need for intensive training for teachers to effectively implement the curriculum

Practical/Policy implication: In conclusion, although the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum shows potential to improve the quality of learning, the success of its implementation heavily depends on adequate infrastructure support and the readiness of educators.

Keywords: Merdeka Curriculum, Quality of Learning

JEL Classification: M42, M48 [author should add 1-3 JEL classification number, information guide for the Journal of Economics Literature (JEL) can be found at <https://www.aeaweb.org/jel/guide/jel.php>]

Received: December, 10 2024; Received in revised form: December, 10 2024 Accepted: January 7, 2025

Note: The maximum length of the abstract is 300 words, or it must not exceed the first page

Introduction

The curriculum in the context of the Arabic language is known as *Manhaj*, which literally means a clear path taken by individuals in various aspects of life. On the other hand, etymologically, the term curriculum comes from Greek, specifically *curir* meaning runner, or *curere* referring to "place of the race." This term was initially used in the context of sports, describing the distance that must be covered in a competition. According to Harold Rugg, the curriculum can be understood as a series of experiences that provide maximum benefits for students in developing their abilities, enabling them to adapt and face various situations in life. (Hasibuan 2019).

The curriculum plays a very crucial role in achieving educational success. (Nurul Huda 2017). Without a good and appropriate curriculum, it will be difficult to achieve educational goals and objectives, whether in formal, informal, or non-formal contexts. In Indonesia, the regulation regarding the curriculum is found in the Republic of Indonesia Law number 20 of 2003, specifically in article 1 paragraph 19, which states that the curriculum is a set of plans, guidelines, objectives, content, and procedures in the implementation of education in educational units, including madrasahs. Along with the development of the times, the curriculum continues to be developed to create a more effective curriculum. (Karima Nabila Fajri 2019). In 2021, the government launched the Merdeka Curriculum as a step towards realizing the vision of education in Indonesia. This Merdeka Curriculum is an enhancement of the 2013 curriculum.

This research focuses on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), which faces various challenges even though this curriculum is designed to increase students' creativity, independence, social intelligence, skills, and strengthen national values and patriotism. Some of the problems that arise include insufficient teacher readiness, limited time to teach several subjects, and minimal understanding of the curriculum. Even though the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum are clear, its implementation in the field is still hampered by various factors, especially in MI. This research is important to provide an evaluation of the extent to which the Merdeka Curriculum is implemented at MI and to identify the challenges faced by teachers and schools in implementing it. Apart from that, this research can provide recommendations for improving the learning process so that education at MI becomes more effective, efficient and relevant to current developments. This research also focuses on teachers' readiness in implementing the curriculum, as well as factors that influence their understanding and skills in implementing a student-focused approach.

In 2022, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia issued the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Decree Number 56/M/2022 related to the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum or prototype curriculum (Ngazizah 2023). Additionally, the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia also issued a decree numbered 347 in 2022 containing guidelines for the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs (Anas 2023), making the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah a necessity. The Merdeka Belajar Curriculum was designed in response to the results of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which showed no significant improvement in the last 10-15 years. As many as 70% of 15-year-old students are below the minimum competency level in understanding simple texts or applying basic mathematical concepts. (A Quora dkk 2024).

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah aims to enhance students' creativity, independence, social intelligence, and skills, as well as to strengthen the values of patriotism and nationalism. (Yunandra 2022). With the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, it is hoped that education can become more adaptive and relevant, thereby producing graduates with deep understanding, solid skills, and good character. Although the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum have been well formulated, in practice there are various shortcomings that lead to the emergence of several obstacles. Based on previous research, many educational institutions have not fully implemented the independent learning curriculum in all classes, due

to the fact that this curriculum is still new and teachers are not fully prepared and lack knowledge and experience related to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. (M. Sofyan, Alnashr Melisa Yusrina, Agus Syakroni 2023).

Curriculum renewal has a significant impact on the learning process, as through this renewal, teaching methods and models can become more effective and efficient, and contribute to the improvement of the quality of education in Indonesia. The curriculum in Indonesia has undergone several changes, including the transition from the Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP) to the 2013 National Curriculum. In 2021, the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology launched the Independent Learning Curriculum.

In the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, the approach prioritized is one that focuses on students. (Mokh Firmansyah 2019). This approach aims to develop the personality, experience, background, perspective, talent, interest, capacity, and individual needs of students in the learning process. Intense interaction between educators and learners becomes the focal point, where educators function as facilitators and guides who understand and respond to the learning needs of each individual.

However, in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, there are several challenges that need to be taken seriously. One of the main issues is the allocation of learning time, where there is a lack of sufficient time to teach certain subjects in madrasah ibtidaiyah schools. (Putri 2019). This implementation is also reinforced by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which issued a decision regarding the independent learning curriculum. In the regulations of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, as stated in Decision No. 347 of 2022, there are references regarding the basis for implementing the independent curriculum in madrasah ibtidaiyah.

Thus, in the context of education, objectives refer to various targets set to be achieved through the learning process. The targets and desired outcomes will be formulated in the mutually agreed-upon objectives. This goal serves to guide and direct every step and action to stay on the right path and not deviate. In addition to determining direction, goals also play a role in supervising and controlling educational activities. In addition, objectives also serve as guidelines in the development of specific goals, learning activities, curriculum implementation, and evaluation to obtain feedback.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development Merdeka Curriculum

The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the importance of learning activities that allow students to develop their interests, talents, and creativity independently. This approach prioritizes enjoyable learning experiences, aimed at fostering independence, critical thinking, creativity, and innovation. (Sugiarti 2022). However, these skills have not yet been fully integrated into the current Islamic education system. Research shows that a multidimensional curriculum can enhance higher-order thinking skills in students at the elementary and secondary education levels. (Yosepha, A., Ali, M., Wahyudin, D., & Rusman 2023). The Merdeka Curriculum presents itself as a solution to face the challenges in various sectors of life in the current digital era and modernization. The goal is to create skilled, critical, independent human resources with high competitiveness, both at the local and international levels. Therefore, educators need to create engaging learning content so that students can develop critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and character skills. These skills are very important for students to navigate the advancements in digital technology, such as computers and the internet, which support faster and more efficient learning. The Merdeka Curriculum also includes various extracurricular learning activities equipped with comprehensive content, providing students with ample time to deepen their understanding of concepts and enhance their competencies. (Zainuri 2023). In the context of intra-curricular learning, educators and students can focus on important material while still having the flexibility to explore topics, prioritizing effective

processes to achieve better outcomes. The Merdeka Curriculum was introduced by Nadim Makarim, the Minister of Education and Culture.

Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is mandated for all educational institutions, both schools and madrasahs. (Atikoh 2023). To facilitate this process, educators and government officials in the field of education have issued operational guidelines (IKM) from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. These technical guidelines serve as a framework for independently implementing the Merdeka Curriculum (Hastasasi, W., Harjatanaya, T. Y., Kristiani, A. D., Herutami, I., & Andiarti 2024). The IKM guidelines provide fundamental guidance that can be further developed by educational institutions to enhance their learning outcomes. The implementation of the independent curriculum can be carried out through five stages. First, analyze the characteristics of the madrasah, including strengths, weaknesses, and achievements obtained to determine the appropriate strategy for achieving future goals. Second, formulate the vision, mission, and objectives that the madrasah aims to achieve clearly, in detail, and measurably. Third, organizing learning to be implemented optimally, including determining subjects that align with the characteristics of the madrasah. Fourth, preparing curriculum documents such as the Lesson Implementation Plan document (RPP). Fifth, assistance in the design, evaluation, and development of learning assessments. These five steps serve as a reference for schools and madrasahs that can be developed by each educational unit. (Zainuri 2023).

The Impact of the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

According to Firdaus in his writing, he states that the implementation policy of the Merdeka Curriculum is currently still in the adaptation phase. This new curriculum offers several advantages compared to the evaluation of the previous curriculum. (Firdaus, R., & Permana 2024) Based on the literature review, these advantages include: 1) The Teacher Driving Program, which focuses on improving the quality of teachers' performance in pedagogical competence; 2) The School Driving Program, which implements the Independent Curriculum according to students' learning needs and aims to shape the Pancasila Student profile; 3) Strengthening the Pancasila Student profile to prepare students for technological advancements, social and cultural changes, and future job market challenges with an emphasis on active student roles. However, there are several shortcomings in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly related to teacher readiness and infrastructure in elementary schools. Many teachers have not fully understood the characteristics of this curriculum, which results in difficulties in authentic planning and assessment. Additionally, the lack of adequate facilities, such as classrooms, school accessibility, guidebooks, internet connectivity, and learning tools, becomes an obstacle in realizing the Pancasila Student profile. .

Method

In this research, the researcher applied the literature study technique, which is considered more efficient in terms of time and effort. Literature review is a research method that collects data through the reading of various literatures. This research is based on previous studies relevant to the research title, with the aim of developing and updating existing studies. Through books, journals, and other library sources, the researcher obtains data that aligns with the research theme. This method is known as a literature review, which plays an important role in forming a conceptual framework in the form of a research formulation, which can subsequently serve as the basis for future studies. This method also serves to ensure the accuracy of the research to be conducted. By collecting data from literature reviews, researchers obtain information that will be included in this study. This library method is very useful in presenting research data sources without the need to conduct field research directly, so this study does not rely on discussion or interview results, but rather on data that has been reviewed and deemed valid. After the researcher finds data sources that align with the theme, the researcher will review the literature, take notes, and process the data to compile information as needed.

Result and Discussion

The Merdeka Belajar Curriculum provides students with the opportunity to develop skills independently, as well as encouraging collaboration between teachers and students in creating an innovative and productive learning environment. (Boang Manalu dkk., 2022). Within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum, students have the opportunity to study various relevant environmental, social, and economic issues at the local, national, and global levels. They are encouraged to understand and address the challenges around them, while also developing critical thinking skills and actively participating in finding innovative solutions. The characteristics of these students will be reflected in the "Pancasila Student Profile," which is one of the missions of the Ministry of Education.

Therefore, teachers are considered the frontline in the successful implementation of the independent curriculum. Therefore, the internalization of the new curriculum paradigm must be optimally carried out by the teachers. However, there are still various obstacles faced by teachers regarding their readiness to learn new things. One example is the lack of understanding regarding the characteristics of the curriculum, which hinders the process of developing learning tools, including Learning Outcomes (LO), Learning Objectives (LO), and the Learning Objectives Flow. (ATP). Constraints in lesson planning have become the main challenge faced in schools. Many technical issues arise in the field, reflecting weaknesses in the implementation of the independent curriculum. In addition, obstacles also arise in the aspect of evaluation or assessment, where many teachers are not yet ready to implement authentic assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum. Authentic assessment, which includes cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, presents a unique challenge for teachers.

On the other hand, research by (Utari, A. R., Roza, Y., & Maimunah 2023) shows that teachers' understanding of the national assessment implemented in the Merdeka Curriculum is still low. Although various efforts to align understanding of the Merdeka curriculum have been intensively carried out by the Ministry of Education through training, research by (Rohim, D., & Rigianti 2023) reveals that special training on the curriculum is still considered insufficient. The results of the study by (Rahayu, R., Rosita, R., Rahayuningsih, Y. S., Hernawan, A. H., & Prihantini 2022) also indicate that teachers' insights and knowledge in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum are still inadequate, due to limited training time and the minimal information received by teachers about the Merdeka Curriculum.

Meanwhile, in Madrasah schools that prioritize 100% religious education, they are often referred to as madrasah diniyah. Generally, madrasah diniyah are established in the environment of traditional salaf pesantren and in various regions, usually initiated by alumni of salaf pesantren who wish to educate the younger generation with the richness of classical intellectual traditions. In this madrasah, the yellow book is often used, covering lessons in theology, Arabic language, jurisprudence, principles of jurisprudence, hadith, exegesis, and mysticism. Currently, this model of madrasah is considered rare. (Suharyanto 2019). Meanwhile, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, abbreviated as MI, is one form of formal educational institution that provides general education with an emphasis on Islamic teachings at the primary education level, under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Madrasah Ibtidaiyah is often referred to as a people's school because the majority are established by the community or foundations, rather than by the government, making most of them private institutions. (Suharyanto 2019).

An excellent madrasah is a madrasah that has a strong academic culture and a curriculum that is always in line with the developments in science and technology, as well as having high academic and non-academic achievements, better than other madrasahs. (Buchari, A., & Saleh 2017).

One of the main causes that result in suboptimal education quality in madrasahs is the inadequate allocation of funds from the government. The limitation of funds has implications for the lack of adequate facilities and infrastructure to support the teaching and learning process, thereby hindering the effectiveness and efficiency of education in madrasahs. This certainly affects the ability of madrasah graduates to compete in the world of education and the job market.

In addition, Islamic education practices in Indonesia generally have not yet reached a level of education oriented towards values. The ongoing educational process is still focused on low cognitive aspects, resulting in graduates lacking a deep understanding of Islamic values and principles. As a result, madrasah graduates often cannot compete with general school graduates who have received a more comprehensive values education.

The quality of teaching in madrasahs is a crucial issue that must receive serious attention. Many teachers do not have an educational background relevant to the subjects they teach, resulting in a less than optimal understanding of the learning material. To address this issue, regular training and competency development programs for teachers are needed so that they can carry out their teaching duties more effectively and contribute to the improvement of education quality in madrasahs.

The low academic achievement of madrasah graduates causes them to have difficulty continuing their education to the junior high school level. This results in madrasahs becoming the second choice after public elementary schools and attracting students with inadequate quality. To improve the quality of education in madrasahs, serious efforts are needed from the government, society, and all related parties in facing the various challenges that madrasahs encounter in implementing the independent curriculum.

Conclusion and Implication

The Merdeka Curriculum offers significant opportunities for students to hone independent skills, critical thinking, and actively participate in addressing relevant issues at the local, national, and global levels. With this approach, the learning process becomes more innovative and productive, supported by effective collaboration between teachers and students. One of the main objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum is to realize the "Pancasila Student Profile," which emphasizes the importance of developing students' adaptive and solution-oriented character in facing the challenges of the times. However, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in schools and madrasahs faces several challenges. The main obstacle lies in the readiness of teachers, which includes a lack of understanding of the new curriculum, the preparation of learning tools, and the implementation of authentic assessments that encompass cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Madrasah, as an educational institution based on Islam, also faces limited funding, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, and low teacher competence. This affects the effectiveness of learning, which in turn impacts the quality of graduates. To address this challenge, serious efforts are needed from various parties. The government needs to increase funding allocation for madrasahs and provide intensive training for teachers to better prepare them for the challenges posed by the Independent Curriculum. In addition, society and educational institutions must collaborate to create a strong academic culture, improve a value-oriented education system, and encourage the implementation of innovative learning approaches to enhance the overall quality of education.

The government aims to implement the Merdeka curriculum to create more flexible and relevant education, but educators at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah may face challenges in implementing it, especially due to limited resources and training. Conflicts of interest can arise between government efforts and educators' difficulties in implementing the curriculum. Madrasahs also face challenges in integrating the Merdeka curriculum with the religious identity they maintain, which can affect the quality of education. On the other hand, parents expect quality education for their children's future, but students may have difficulty adjusting to the new curriculum. In addition, tensions arise between educational supervisors who demand achievement of certain standards and teachers who feel they need more time and support for effective implementation of that curriculum.

REFRENSI

A Quora dkk. 2024. "Merdeka Belajar:Memamhami Konsep Pembelajaran Masa Kini" 2.

Vol. 9 No. 3 (2024): Edisi Desember 2024

P-ISSN : 2540-816X E-ISSN : 2685-620

Anas. 2023. "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) (Studi Analisis Kebijakan) KMA RI No 347 2022." *Journal of Creative Student Research (JCSR)* 1.

Atikoh. 2023. "Dinamika Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Analisis Holistik Terhadap Proses, Problematika, Dan Solusinya." *Jurnal Of Islamic Education*.

Buchari, A., & Saleh, E.M. 2017. "Merancang Pengembangan Madrasah Unggul." *Jurnal Of Islamic Education Policy*.

Firdaus, R., & Permana, J. 2024. "Kelebihan Dan Kekurangan Implementasi Kebijakan Kurikulum Merdeka Di Sekolah Dasar." *Jurnal Basicedu*.

Hasibuan, Muhamad Yusuf. 2019. "Managemen Kepala Sekolah Dalam Implementasi Kurikulum Pendidikan Di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Swasta Arridho Tanjung Morawa." *Jurnal At-Tazaka*.

Hastasasi, W., Harjatanaya, T. Y., Kristiani, A. D., Herutami, I., & Andiarti, A. 2024. "Panduan Pengembangan Kurikulum Operasional Di Satuan Pendidikan (Guide to Operational Curriculum Development in Educational Units). Jakarta: Badan Standar Kurikulum Dan Asesmen Pendidikan Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Reset Dan Teknologi Republik In."

Karima Nabila Fajri. 2019. "Proses Pengembangan Kurikulum," *Islamika*."

M. Sofyan, Alnashr Melisa Yusrina, Agus Syakroni, Irma Nur Afidah. 2023. "Kesiapan Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Dalam Menghadapi Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka." *RESEARCH JOURNAL ON TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT*.

Mokh Firmansyah, Iman. 2019. "Pendidikan Agama Islam: Pengertian, Tujuan, Dasar Dan Fungsi," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*.

Ngazizah, Inggit Wijayanti dan Intan Nur. 2023. "Kesiapan Madrasah Mengimplementasikan Kurikulum Merdeka Di MIN 2 Bantul," *Jurnal Elementaria Edukasia* 6, no. 2.

Nurul Huda. 2017. "Manajemen Pengembangan Kurikulum," *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*.

Putri, Arum Ekasari. 2019. "Evaluasi Program Bimbingan Dan Konseling : Sebuah Studi Pustaka." *(Jurnal Bimbingan Konseling)* 2.

Rahayu, R., Rosita, R., Rahayuningsih, Y. S., Hernawan, A. H., & Prihantini, P. 2022. "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Di Sekolah Penggerak (Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum in Driving Schools)." *Jurnal Basicedu*.

Rohim, D., & Rigianti, H. A. 2023. "Hambatan Guru Kelas Iv Dalam Mengimplementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Di Sekolah Dasar." *Jurnal Basicedu*.

Sugiarti, Arti prihatini dan. 2022. "Citra Kurikulum Baru: Kesiapan Guru Dalam Menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka." *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra Indonesia*.

Suharyanto, S. 2019. "Manajemen Pendidikan Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Proceeding Annual Conference on Madrasah Teacher."

Utari, A. R., Roza, Y., & Maimunah, M. 2023. "Pemahaman Guru Matematika Terhadap Asesmen Nasional Pada Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar." *Jipm (Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Matematika)*.

Yosepha, A., Ali, M., Wahyudin, D., & Rusman, R. (2023). 2023. "The Role of Multi-Dimensional Curriculum Design in Improving Higher-Order Thinking Skills. International." *Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*.

Vol. 9 No. 3 (2024): Edisi Desember 2024

P-ISSN : 2540-816X E-ISSN : 2685-620

Yunandra. 2022. “Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Di Madrasah | Diversifikasi Madrasah.”

Zainuri, A. 2023. “Manajemen Kurikulum Merdeka (Merdeka Curriculum Management).”