

An Examination of the Implementation and Challenges of the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah Aliyah: A Case Study on the Al-Qur'an Hadith Subject

Muliyani¹, Suarni², Sartini³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Muhammadiyah Kendari

muliyani@umkendari.ac.id

Abstract

The objectives of this study are: 1) Assessing the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in class X Qur'anic Hadith subjects in MAN 1 for the 2022/2023 school year, and 2) Identifying obstacles educators face in the implementation. The method used is descriptive qualitative research. The study subjects included the Deputy Head of Madrasah for Curriculum, Teachers of Qur'anic Hadith, and Students at MAN 1 Kendari. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation, with data analysis techniques through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions. The results showed that implementing the Independent Curriculum in MAN 1 Kendari had been carried out but was not fully successful. In this context, the Merdeka Curriculum is no longer focused on cross-interest; Grade 10 students learn all the basic material, which becomes the basis for determining majors in grade 11. This process includes learning planning in the form of Learning Objectives Flow Planning, Learning Objectives, and Making modules, implementing the learning process through the stages of observing, questioning, collecting information, and strengthening material, as well as assessment, which includes formative and summative functions. These assessments are carried out directly by educators, including cognitive assessments such as knowledge, skills in reading the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as skills in revealing knowledge material, and also through written assessments.

Keywords: *Implementation, Independent Curriculum, Al-Qur'an Hadith*

Introduction

Indonesian national education aims to develop abilities, shape character, and foster national civilization. It is in line with Q.S An-Nahl paragraph 125, which also emphasizes the importance of education, and article 31 of the 1945 Constitution, which guarantees the right to education for all citizens (Fatimah & Winarti, 2022). The curriculum is an educational plan that reflects the community's and nation's needs and demands (Bahri, 2017; Saifuddin, 2015). Conceptually, the curriculum is the result of a response to the needs of the younger generation to meet the requirements of the progress and development of the nation. In a juridical context, curriculum is a public policy derived from the philosophical foundation of

the state and embodied in legal decisions in the field of education. In Indonesia, curriculum is central to education and must be implemented at every school level (Triwiyanto, 2015). The aim is to design education that is effective in achieving the educational goals that have been set nationally. By integrating the needs of society and the nation's philosophical values, the curriculum serves as a tool that guides the learning process and character-building of the younger generation, as well as a foundation for advancing the nation and facing various future challenges.

The curriculum system in Indonesia has undergone several changes, from the Education Unit Level Curriculum in 2006 to the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum (Bahri, 2017; Saifuddin, 2015). It continues to be a problem that hampers Indonesia's education system. The Merdeka Curriculum aims to increase students' independence of thinking. This application creates obstacles for schools, educators, and students. However, all independent curricula have the same goal under national education standards.

The change from the 2013 curriculum to the independent curriculum does not necessarily guarantee the success of education and teaching in Indonesia. Many components must be prepared, such as educator manuals, student textbooks, and teaching module materials. Curriculum Merdeka is offered as an additional option in learning recovery, along with other options such as Curriculum-13 and Curriculum Darurat, offering flexibility in project-based learning, soft skills development, and character (Ningrum, 2022; Sari & Noor, 2022).

The purpose of this study consists of two main aspects that focus on Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 1 Kendari. First, this study aims to explore and understand the picture of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum on the subjects of the Qur'an Hadith in class X, which involves analyzing the learning process, materials, and approaches used in implementing this new curriculum. Second, this study also explores the obstacles educators face in implementing the Independent Curriculum for the same subjects. It includes challenges, obstacles, and other issues teachers may face in implementing and adapting to the Independent Curriculum. These two objectives are interrelated and provide a comprehensive view of how the Merdeka Curriculum is applied and experienced at the grade level in the context of MAN 1 Kendari.

This research has significance because the Merdeka Curriculum is a new educational initiative that aims to reform education in Indonesia, especially in the subjects of the Qur'an Hadith. This research reveals a detailed picture of how this curriculum is implemented at the classroom level, providing valuable insights for education stakeholders, including teachers, school administrators, and policymakers. Analysis of the constraints encountered in this implementation is also very important, as it will help identify areas that require more support, training, or other resources. The results of this research can be used to improve and optimize the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at various other levels of education and provide guidance for best practices in teaching the Qur'an Hadith. In addition, this research also contributes to the academic literature on Islamic education and education curricula in Indonesia and could be the basis for further research in the future.

Method

This research method is descriptive qualitative research, which is directed to examine the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in class X Hadith Qur'an Subjects at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Kendari (Firman, 2018; Haris, 2012). Conducted under natural conditions from March 28, 2023, to April 14, 2023, this study involved the deputy principal for curriculum, 3 Qur'an Hadith teachers, and MAN 1 Kendari students as primary data sources and school documents as secondary data sources. Data collection techniques include direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis involves data reduction, presenting data in narrative form, and drawing credible conclusions. To ensure data validity, researchers use techniques such as Observation Extension, Observation Persistence, and Triangulation, which include checking data validity from multiple sources and using various data collection methods (Cresswell, J. W., 2010). This approach allows the study to provide a detailed and accurate picture of the object under study.

Results

Implementation of the Independent Curriculum on the Subjects of the Qur'an Hadith

In Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Kendari, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum has been applied to the subjects of the Qur'an Hadith class X. This curriculum is a new mechanism in the world of education, which is not only a set of plans and arrangements for learning content, but also as a vital tool to achieve educational goals in Indonesia.

The Merdeka Curriculum was created as a process of simplification or refinement of the 2013 Curriculum. According to an interview with the Vice Principal for Curriculum of MAN 1 Kendari, Curriculum Merdeka prioritizes internal learning that aims to improve the skills and competencies of students, focusing on essential material for character development. Unlike the 2013 Curriculum, which already determines majors starting in grade 10, the Merdeka Curriculum provides more flexibility by determining new majors in grades 11 and 12.

In addition, in the Merdeka Curriculum, students who major in science will not study social studies subjects such as Economics and History, and vice versa. It differs from the 2013 Curriculum, which requires all subjects to be studied, including science and social studies. There are also differences in learning between these two curricula, where the Merdeka Curriculum no longer recognizes cross-interests.

Implementing the Independent Curriculum was a bit difficult at first, especially for novice educators. However, this obstacle can be minimized after being given training and guidance in implementing it. It shows that although significant differences exist between the Merdeka Curriculum and the 2013 Curriculum, especially in learning and majors, proper implementation can make this transition work effectively.

Taking all these aspects into account, implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Kendari offers an innovative and responsive approach to the needs

of learners, with the hope of improving their skills and competencies in a more sustainable and targeted way.

In implementing the Independent Curriculum in MAN 1 Kendari, educators carry out careful and structured learning planning. Learning is a complex system in which components such as objectives, materials, methods, and evaluation are interrelated. As part of this process, educators consider various aspects such as media, methods, strategies, and approaches to be used in teaching activities, direct and face-to-face communication, and different learning environments.

Learning Planning

Before implementing the Independent Curriculum in the first year, the school had provided special guidance to assist educators in developing lesson plans. It is done so that learning can run under the principles of the Independent Curriculum. Deputy Principal for Curriculum MAN 1 Kendari stated in an interview: "Educators are given guidance (Bimtek or Diklat) on how to arrange learning in the independent curriculum and how educators arrange ATP, TP, and teaching modules so that educators have preparation in implementing teaching using the Independent Curriculum."

From this interview, it can be concluded that special guidance has helped educators develop effective planning using ATP, TP, and teaching modules so the learning process can run well.

Good planning in learning is a key factor in successfully implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Educators must develop a complete and interactive plan that encourages students to actively participate. It creates a fun and effective learning atmosphere, which ultimately helps educators give their best in teaching. Thus, careful learning planning in the context of the Independent Curriculum is an important step in ensuring a successful learning process and responsive to the needs of learners.

Implementation of learning

Implementing learning in the independent curriculum at MAN 1 Kendari, especially the subjects of the Qur'an Hadith, reflects a significant transformation in the teaching approach. This process involves the active role of the vice principal for curriculum in developing a curriculum structure that adapts class hours to the Rahmatan Lil Alamine Pancasila Student Project. It means taking 20% to 30% of the total number of hours for P5 project implementation, an approach that facilitates project creation within the framework of an independent curriculum.

The process of implementing this learning is carefully arranged, starting from the introduction, core, and closing activities. In these phases, educators strive to make classes more interactive and fun. Rather than traditional lectures, methods such as quizzes and games are used to encourage learner participation and interest.

Preliminary activities involve checking learner readiness, motivation, and explanation of goals. Core activities include observation, questioning, and information gathering, focusing

on reading and understanding the Qur'an and Hadith. While in the closing activity, educators provide material reinforcement, plan follow-up, and close with prayers and greetings.

Teachers and students believe this approach has created a more comfortable and unencumbered learning atmosphere. Using engaging interactive methods and focusing on reading and understanding the Qur'an and Hadith creates a rich and immersive learning experience, per the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum.

In addition, there is an emphasis on not assigning homework to students, lest they be burdened. It suggests a more holistic and empathetic approach to teaching and learning. Students are engaged in discussion, reading, and interpreting religious texts in everyday life with the guidance of patient and supportive educators.

This process reflects a major step in a more student-centered education with a more active, interactive, and humanist approach. This implementation aligns with the Independent Curriculum's objectives, which emphasize the development of creativity, freedom of thought, and active participation of students in the learning process.

Learning Assessment

Educational assessment is an integral part of the learning process. It is not only a tool for assessing student achievement but also a reflection of the teaching methodology and quality of education delivered by educators. Our education system divides assessments into two main types: formative and summative. Both have their own goals and roles in supporting effective learning.

In formative functions, assessment serves as an instrument for providing feedback. The aim is to understand the areas where learners need guidance and further improvement. Meanwhile, summative assessment serves as an overall evaluation material to understand the extent of students' understanding and mastery of the material taught.

For example, in the context of religious education, particularly the subjects of the Qur'an Hadith, the assessment approach shows variation between educators. Mr. Tamrin.S.Pd.I., M.Pd.I, an educator in this subject, emphasizes on cognitive assessment of students through written methods. He also pays attention to how students can convey and express the material they know. In addition, there are skill assessments such as reading the Qur'an and Hadith.

Meanwhile, Ibu Sumarlina, S.PdI, used a more interactive approach to the assessment. He judges based on students' active class participation, written assignments, and discussions. One method is to give quizzes focusing on specific verses, motivating students to prepare by reading the material beforehand. It's not just about assessment but also encouraging students to be more active and involved in learning.

While different, these two approaches describe how assessment can be done in different ways, depending on the educator and the student's specific needs. However, what matters most is how these assessments are used to improve the quality of learning and ensure that every student gets a quality education.

Educator Constraints in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in the Subjects of the Qur'an Hadith

Implementing learning in the classroom requires devices under the curriculum to run well. In the Qur'an Hadith subject at MAN 1 Kendari for the 2022/2023 school year, there are unique challenges in implementing the "Merdeka Curriculum," a new innovation in education only applied in grade X.

Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Kendari, as a piloting madrasah in Southeast Sulawesi, is a bold step. It supports innovation in various educational institutions and demands educators to better understand students' individual needs. However, the challenge is quite real. Vice Principal for Curriculum Ratna R, ST, M.Pd, revealed that this new curriculum is not yet fully ready to be implemented, especially because the relevant learning tools are not yet complete and have not been completed. The emphasis on innovation and students' needs adds complexity to its application. The educator of the subject of Al-Qur'an Hadith, Sumarlina, S.Pd.I, also revealed obstacles in implementing this curriculum. He felt that implementing the independent curriculum was not optimal, and there was a lack of government attention to the facilities and facilities and infrastructure needed.

One of the specific obstacles is the lack of teaching tools prepared specifically for the Merdeka Curriculum. Teaching materials, such as textbooks, teaching modules, and educational videos, are not yet available, and educators have not received special training in compiling teaching modules according to the rules of this new curriculum. Especially for the subject of Al-Qur'an Hadith, additional obstacles are the absence of material for developing teaching modules and special training on how to make teaching modules. The absence of appropriate textbooks makes learning still use old books, hindering the Independent Curriculum's implementation process. Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in MAN 1 Kendari shows a bold step forward in educational innovation, but with obstacles that need to be overcome. Full commitment from all parties, including governments, is needed to ensure all necessary tools are available and educators are well-trained in these new and innovative teaching methods.

Discussion

Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum on the subjects of Al-Qur'an Hadith in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Kendari marks a significant change in the learning approach. Compared to the 2013 Curriculum, the Merdeka Curriculum provides flexibility in majors and focuses on developing students' skills and competencies. This transition process involves specialized training for educators, careful lesson planning, and a more interactive and humane approach to teaching, including methods such as quizzes and games. In addition, there is an emphasis on involving students in discussing, reading, and interpreting religious texts in everyday life. Assessment, both formative and summative, serves as a tool to understand and improve students' understanding and skills, with approaches varying between educators (Ahmad, 2021; Arikunto, 2014). This whole process reflects a major step in more student-

centred education and aligns with the goals of Curriculum Merdeka in developing creativity, freedom of thought, and active participation of learners in the learning process.

Implementing the Independent Curriculum at MAN 1 Kendari for the 2022/2023 school year, especially in the subjects of the Qur'an Hadith, faces various challenges. As a piloting madrasah in Southeast Sulawesi, this implementation marks a bold step in educational innovation. However, real obstacles such as lack of appropriate teaching tools, absence of specific materials, and lack of special training for educators make this process not optimal. Vice Principals and educators of Qur'anic Hadith subjects expressed the need for more commitment and attention from the government in providing the necessary facilities, facilities, and infrastructure, as well as training in compiling teaching modules so that the implementation of this new curriculum can run well (Razak, 2016).

The research results on implementing the Independent Curriculum at MAN 1 Kendari show the dynamics and complexity of implementing educational innovation. While promising flexibility and focus on developing students' skills, realization in the field uncovered obstacles that hindered the process, including a lack of appropriate teaching tools and specialized training for educators. These reflections highlight the need for careful planning, adequate resources, and full support from all relevant parties, including governments, in implementing significant changes in the education system. It is a valuable lesson that innovation, even if well-intentioned, requires an integrated and collaborative strategy to be realized effectively.

The implications of the research results related to implementing the Independent Curriculum in MAN 1 Kendari highlight several crucial areas that require attention and intervention. First, research shows educators need special training in compiling teaching modules that fit the new curriculum, affirming the need to develop more structured training programs (Nugraha, 2020). Second, findings regarding the lack of specific teaching tools and materials underscore the importance of investing in educational resources. It reflects the government's and other stakeholders' important role in providing the necessary support (Sawan et al., 2021). Third, a focus on a more student-centered approach might serve as a model for other institutions in developing student creativity and active participation (Sandria et al., 2022). Fourth, this study implies the need for a continuous evaluation and assessment mechanism to understand and improve the implementation process (Ahmad, 2021). Lastly, these results provide valuable guidance for future implementation, offering realistic insights into how to successfully implement significant changes in education and address challenges that may arise.

Conclusion

Implementing the Independent Curriculum in MAN 1 Kendari on the subjects of the Qur'an Hadith offers an interesting view of the potential and challenges in implementing significant educational innovations. Although the vision is oriented towards developing students' skills, creativity, and active participation, realization shows that substantial challenges must be

overcome. The lack of teaching tools, specific materials, and specialized training for educators underscores the importance of careful planning, investment of resources, and collaborative support from all stakeholders.

The results of this study not only highlight these challenges but also provide valuable guidance for future implementation. Governments, stakeholders, and educational institutions can draw lessons from this experience to ensure that educational innovation efforts are driven by goodwill and supported by integrated strategies, adequate resources, and shared commitments.

In this context, the Merdeka Curriculum in MAN 1 Kendari is not only an educational experiment but also a symbol of the dynamics and complexity of change in our education system. This effort represents a bold step forward and a warning about the importance of approaching innovation with deep awareness and responsibility. The success or failure of this implementation will provide a valuable reflection on education development in Indonesia and can be the foundation for broader and sustainable change in providing quality, inclusive, and adaptive education to future needs.

References

- Ahmad, N. (2021). *Pengantar Evaluasi pembelajaran*. Shakura.
- Arikunto, S. (2014). *Evaluasi program pendidikan: Pedoman teoritis praktisi pendidikan* (Jakarta). Bumi Aksara. //senayan.iain-palangkaraya.ac.id/index.php?p=show_detail&id=8777&keywords=
- Bahri, S. (2017). PENGEMBANGAN KURIKULUM DASAR DAN TUJUANNYA. *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura*, 11(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.22373/jiif.v11i1.61>
- Cresswell, J. W. (2010). *Pendekatan Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, dan Mixed*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- Fatimah, F., & Winarti, E. (2022). Integrasi Imtak dan Iptek: Landasan dan Faktor Kunci Sukses Penerapannya dalam Pendidikan Islam. *Tarbiyatuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Ilmiah*, 7(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.55187/tarjpi.v7i2.5050>
- Firman, F. (2018). *Analisis Data dalam Penelitian Kualitatif*.
- Haris, H. (2012). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif untuk Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial*. Penerbit Salemba Humanika.
- Ningrum, A. S. (2022). Pengembangan Perangkat Pembelajaran Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar (Metode Belajar). *Prosiding Pendidikan Dasar*, 1(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.34007/ppd.v1i1.186>
- Nugraha, F. (2020). *Pendidikan dan Pelatihan: Konsep dan Implementasi dalam Pengembangan Sumberdaya Manusia*. Litbangdiklat Press.
- Razak, W. T. S. dan I. A. (2016). *Strategi Pembelajaran dalam Implementasi Kurikulum Berbasis Soft Skill*. Deepublish.
- Saifuddin, A. (2015). EKSISTENSI KURIKULUM PESANTREN DAN KEBIJAKAN PENDIDIKAN. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam (Journal of Islamic Education Studies)*, 3(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.15642/jpai.2015.3.1.207-234>

- Sandria, A., Asy'ari, H., & Fatimah, F. S. (2022). Pembentukan Karakter Religius Melalui Pembelajaran Berpusat pada Siswa Madrasah Aliyah Negeri. *At-Tadzkir: Islamic Education Journal*, 1(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.59373/attadzkir.v1i1.9>
- Sari, E., & Noor, A. F. (2022). KEBIJAKAN PEMBELAJARAN YANG MERDEKA: DUKUNGAN DAN KRITIK. *Educativo: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 1(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.56248/educativo.v1i1.7>
- Sawan, F., Suryadi, D., Pd, D. N., M., & M.Pd, P. D. D. N. K. (2021). *Knowledge sharing: Strategi penguatan perilaku berbagi pengetahuan guru dalam perspektif servant leadership*. Nas Media Pustaka.
- Triwiyanto, T. (2015). *Manajemen Kurikulum dan Pembelajaran*.

---This page has been intentionally left blank---