

## **Identifying Merdeka Curriculum: An Islamic Teacher's Perspective in MA Al-Ittihad**

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### **Abstract**

The curriculum 2013 has been over. The government asks the educator to move from the 2013 curriculum to the Merdeka curriculum. This study aimed to overview the Islamic teacher's perspective related to the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum on Islamic lessons. The research related to the topic was limited. This qualitative with narrative design study has collected data from four Islamic teachers in MA Al-Ittihad who taught Al Qur'an Hadist, Akidah Akhlak, Fiqh, and Islamic History. The technique for collecting data used observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The study revealed several themes, including the Merdeka curriculum and its implementation, challenges, and alternatives. Also, the Islamic teachers have illustrated the differences between the 2013 and Merdeka curricula in the learning process.

**Keywords:** Merdeka curriculum; Islamic teacher; Perspective; MA Al-Ittihad

### **Abstrak**

Kurikulum 2013 telah berakhir. Pemerintah meminta para pendidik beralih dari Kurikulum 2013 ke Kurikulum Merdeka. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pandangan guru agama Islam terkait penerapan kurikulum Merdeka pada pembelajaran agama Islam. Penelitian yang terkait dengan topik tersebut terbatas. Penelitian kualitatif dengan desain naratif ini mengumpulkan data dari empat orang guru agama Islam di MA Al-Ittihad yang mengajar mata pelajaran Al Qur'an Hadist, Akidah Akhlak, Fiqh, dan Sejarah Islam. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan observasi, wawancara semi terstruktur, dan dokumentasi. Kajian tersebut mengungkap beberapa tema, antara lain Kurikulum Merdeka beserta implementasinya, tantangan, dan alternatifnya. Selain itu, para guru agama Islam juga telah memberikan gambaran perbedaan Kurikulum 2013 dan Kurikulum Merdeka dalam proses pembelajaran.

**Kata Kunci:** Kurikulum Merdeka; guru Islam; Perspektif; MA Al-Ittihad

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Ministry of Education and Culture in Indonesia has proposed a great curriculum called Kurikulum Merdeka or freedom curriculum, which means there is a lot of freedom for both learners and educators to improve the quality of the education process and promote the skills without being disturbed by marks or quantitative result only. As an obligation, all educational levels must follow this formula to create a good learner and educator and synchronize the rules by the government in education. In addition, this curriculum assumed as a good solution for the huge educational ecosystem in Indonesia which has different grades, processes, challenges, uniqueness, etc.

Muhson has asserted that this curriculum opens a discourse analysis toward teachers, students, or even researchers to gain more implicit values contained by it (Muhson, 2022). This is related to the researchers even though the researchers have a different point of view which focuses on Islamic teachers' perspective toward curriculum.

Meanwhile, it seems necessary to describe what the Merdeka curriculum is. Merdeka curriculum well-known as kumer (kurikulum merdeka). Mr. Nadiem Makarim (the Minister of Education and Culture of Indonesia) has stated that freedom of curriculum is freedom of learning which means freedom of thought, then, freedom of thought is determined by the teacher (Irawati et al., 2022). For instance, the researcher asserted that the Merdeka curriculum (freedom curriculum) is a freedom for the students and the teacher to improve their skills without forcing each competency. This can be implemented as long as appropriate with the freedom curriculum rules. There is no enforcement from the teacher to push the students. This is because each student has different abilities in catching the lesson or subject when the learning process is running.

Moreover, the concept of free learning is assumed to be no longer an idea but rather a policy to be implemented. Freedom to learn independence is a word that is often interpreted and described as freedom in its truest sense (Fakhrudin, 2021). In

addition, Rizki has asserted that this can be an evaluation in implementing the Merdeka curriculum (Rizki & Fahkrunisa, 2022).

Further, as explained in any workshops or seminars. This curriculum has many phases that must be crossed by the teacher and the learner. It started from the A phase to the F phase, from elementary or primary level to high school. Baharullah et al. (2022) have asserted that this phase obligates the students to fulfill the skills without forcing them. Moreover, this curriculum also emphasizes project-based learning as a learning design to develop soft skills and student character to support the development of the Pancasila Student Profile character (Mardiana & Amalia, 2022).

Fakhrudin has asserted that Merdeka belajar has an independent learning concept. Talking about the independent learning concept, there is some relevance to constructivism learning theory (Octaberlina & Anggarini, 2020). This means the child instructs and builds the knowledge obtained from the interactions obtained from the observations and experiences of the objects that the child faces. In the process of constructivist learning (Alfaruki, 2022), children are more likely to have a focal point on the activity of each individual informing knowledge. Students are expected to be supported and motivated to learn according to what they want without any pressure or enforcement from any party.

Based on the overview above, the researcher has proposed some learning models or strategies that may be implemented in the frame of the Merdeka curriculum such as project-based learning (PjBL) (Yustina et al., 2020), problem-based learning (PBL) (Pratikno et al., 2022), discovery learning (Laila, 2022), self-directed learning or self-learning (SDL) (Azizatul, Riska Syafira, Fitriana and Setyo Admoko et al., 2023), contextual learning (Supriani et al., 2022), role-playing or simulation learning (Irawati et al., 2022), cooperative learning (Anggarini, 2022), collaborative learning (Kusumawardani et al., 2022), integrative learning (Anggarini et al., 2022), and focus group discussion (FGD) (Krishnapatria, 2021). Also, the researcher proposed that utilizing technology may be useful in the frame of the Merdeka curriculum. For example, blender learning, robotics, vlogging, virtual classes, and so on.

Unfortunately, there are differences in implementing the Merdeka curriculum in the institution under the guidance of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. As mentioned in the Indonesian law and KMA 347 (Annova & Fitriani, 2019), there are differences specifically in Islamic education (Islamic education or divided into several subjects such as Al Qur'an Hadist, Akidah Akhlak, Fiqh, Islamic History, and Arabic language) and the student profile (Pancasila and Rahmatan lil alamin)(Mufid, 2023).

Zainuri (2022) has asserted that different implementations of the Merdeka curriculum such as Islamic education in school and Islamic school (madrasah). In madrasah, several parts of Islamic education are learned by the students such as Al Qur'an Hadist, Akidah Akhlak, Fiqh, and Islamic History, also adding the Arabic language.

Further, this challenges the teachers and students to follow the right curriculum rules. Therefore, the researchers would like to identify the Merdeka Curriculum. This is an Islamic teacher's perspective in MA Al-Ittihad Poncokusumo, Malang to overview the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum specifically in Islamic education or Islamic subjects.

## **METHOD**

This is qualitative research (Creswell, 2014) with a narrative design (Creswell, 2013). It defines as a design of inquiry from the humanities in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives. In this case, the researcher will gain more information related to the identification of the Merdeka Curriculum from an Islamic teacher's perspective. Also, this information is then often retold or restored by the researcher into a narrative chronology. Often, in the end, the narrative combines views from the participant's life with those of the researcher's life in a collaborative narrative. This one is related to Rober t(Sherman & Webb, 2005) who asserted that in qualitative research the researchers are key and in narrative research, there is a way to put life into education.

This research was conducted in MA Al-Ittihad Poncokusumo, Malang, East Java, Indonesia implemented the Merdeka curriculum. The primary data are collected from four Islamic teachers in MA Al-Ittihad who taught Al Qur'an Hadist, Akidah Akhlak, Fiqh, and Islamic History. The details are stated as follows:

**Table 1.** Participant

<b>Name</b>	<b>Subject</b>
Idha Rofiqoh	Al Qur'an Hadist
M. Ainun Zamany	Akidah Akhlak
Abdullah Kamal	Fiqh
Ida Fitri Anggarini	Islamic History

Meanwhile, the technique for collecting data used observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation (Bogdan, 1982). The data analyzed starts from compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding (K Yin, 2011).

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Merdeka Curriculum and Its Implementation**

In this phase, the researcher will give an overview related to the research object and conclude it as one theme, the Merdeka curriculum, and its implementation. Madrasah Aliyah Al-Ittihad (Islamic Senior High School) is located in Poncokusumo, the east end of Malang Regency. This madrasah has an A grade from the government. The student reaches nine hundred. Meanwhile, the teacher and staff are around ninety. As a great institution that implemented the Merdeka curriculum, there are many achievements reached by both students and teachers as a result of implementing the Merdeka curriculum. The researcher has provided several achievements related to Islamic education, which are stated as follows:

**Table 2.** Achievements

<b>Name</b>	<b>Subject</b>
Winner of Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an (MTQ) and Musabaqah Syahrhil Qur'an(MSQ) in any competition.	Al Qur'an Hadist
Winner of the Islamic education olympiad Presented a paper at the international level related to the values of Akidah Akhlak in the daily life	Akidah Akhlak
Winner of the Islamic education olympiad Published paper related to Islamic Fiqh. Best practices: Fiqh Munakahat (A Short Movie with PjBL)	Fiqh
Winner of the Islamic education olympiad Best paper in integrating Islamic history and religious moderation. Published paper related to Islamic history	Islamic History
Winner of the Islamic education olympiad	

This is a piece of evidence that MA Al-Ittihad was fostering both students and teachers to provide the best Merdeka curriculum. Also, this is a several sampling from hundreds of achievements during the academic year 2023-2023.



**Figure 1.** Student’s Achievement

As a result of interviews, according to an Islamic teacher here, the Merdeka curriculum defines as a curriculum that gives a big portion for the students and teachers to improve the quality of education in the class. Also, this curriculum emphasizes fostering the skills of the students specifically related to religious moderation in the frame of the Rahmatan lil alamin student’s profile (Susanto, 2021). This profile contains several values such as having the attitude and behavior of faith, fear of God Almighty Allah SWT, and having a noble character, global diversity, cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity.

This one is related to the Fakhrudin (2021) that the Merdeka curriculum (freedom curriculum) is a freedom for the students and the teacher to improve their skills without forcing each competency. This can be implemented as long as appropriate with the freedom curriculum rules. There is no enforcement from the teacher to push the students. This is because each student has different abilities in catching the lesson or subject when the learning process is running (Astuti et al., 2020)



**Figure 2.** The Values of Student’s Profile in the Merdeka Curriculum

Further, the teacher here implemented several learning models related to the Merdeka curriculum. One of them is project-based learning (PjBL) and role-playing. For example, in Fiqh material, Munakahat (marriage) is one of the chapters in Fiqh. The teacher asked the students if they most liked the learning situation. The chosen was role-playing. The students act to hold wedding parties in the school. This model contains several materials in Munakahat. As the support, the teacher pretends to be a visitor at the wedding party. Here is the picture.



**Figure 3.** Role-playing model, Fiqh Munakahat

As explained above, the researcher overviewed that Merdeka belajar according to an Islamic teacher’s perspective is a good situation within the learning process to foster and improve the student’s skills, talents, or interests. Based on observation, the implementation of the Merdeka belajar curriculum must implement various models to create a good learning situation. Also, the teacher mentioned the differential learning model as the main reason for choosing the right model. This is linked with Aziza’s (Azizatul, Riska Syafira, Fitriana, and Setyo Admoko et al., 2023) assertion that the Merdeka curriculum is a good choice for both students and teachers to improve their



skills especially in utilizing technology in industrial revolution 4.0.

### **The Challenges and Alternatives**

In this phase, the researcher will group the challenges and alternatives faced by Islamic teachers in MA Al-Ittihad during implementing the Merdeka curriculum.

#### **Challenges in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum**

1. Choosing the right model for the students
2. Lesson plan
3. Literature
4. Learning Media
5. Integrative learning in each subject

Meanwhile, here are the alternatives for Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum based on the interview and observation.

1. The teacher's role is to identify each student's ability
2. Joining the Merdeka curriculum workshop or seminar/webinar to gain more insight related to the Merdeka curriculum.
3. Have an extra effort and endeavored, also cooperation between students and teacher to create an agreement in the class.
4. Collaboration between the students, teachers, and stakeholders to share good and appropriate media as a supporting factor for the successful learning process.
5. Integrate the subject with the values that appeared surroundings.

Moreover, the researchers know that the teachers stated the differences between the 2013 and Merdeka curricula in the learning process. The teacher stated that this curriculum gives more activities to the students and the teachers to enhance their skills.

In addition, the researcher did not compare or link to other papers because it has different cases since every object has findings itself.

### **Islamic Teacher's Perspective**

Most of the Islamic teachers in MA Al-Ittihad agreed that the Merdeka curriculum has enhanced the student's skills (soft or hard skills). This curriculum supports the teacher to be more creative and innovative in providing a good learning situation specifically in Islamic education that is Al Qur'an Hadist, Akidah Akhlak, Fiqh, and Islamic History.

## **CONCLUSION**

It has illustrated that the Merdeka curriculum has a huge impact in supporting the various learning process. Islamic education is one of the parts of the Merdeka curriculum following the rule of the curriculum itself.

Islamic teachers have proposed that the Merdeka curriculum has enhanced the student's skills (soft or hard skills). Also, supports the teacher to be more creative and innovative in providing a good learning situation specifically in Islamic education that is Al Qur'an Hadist, Akidah Akhlak, Fiqh, and Islamic History. This gives more activities to the students and the teachers to enhance their skills. It is quite different from the 2013 curriculum.

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