

REVISED INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION SUBJECTS

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Abstract

The Revised Merdeka Curriculum is an improvement on the national curriculum that emphasizes flexibility, learner-centered learning, and strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), this curriculum provides more space for teachers to develop holistic, contextual learning that is oriented towards strengthening Islamic character. This article aims to describe the concepts and characteristics of the Revised Independent Curriculum in PAI learning, analyze the readiness of teachers and supporting facilities for its implementation, and identify various obstacles and possible solutions. The study shows that although conceptually this curriculum encourages innovation through differentiated learning, authentic assessment, and project-based learning, its implementation has not been optimal due to teachers' limited understanding, inadequate infrastructure, and varying levels of student readiness. These findings are in line with previous research, as reported by Sari (2023) in the Journal of Teacher Education, which emphasizes that teacher readiness is a key factor in the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Through continuous training, strengthening school facilities, collaboration among teachers, and managerial policy support, the implementation of the Revised Merdeka Curriculum in PAI learning can be more effective and have an impact on the quality of learning that is meaningful, modern, and relevant to the needs of today's students.

Keywords: Revised Merdeka Curriculum, Islamic Religious Education (PAI), Differentiated Learning

INTRODUCTION

The Revised Merdeka Curriculum is an improvement on the Merdeka Curriculum, which was developed to give educational units and teachers greater freedom in designing learning that is focused on students. This revised curriculum emphasizes simplifying learning outcomes, strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile, flexibility in learning, and a more proportional integration of formative and summative assessments (Nurlatifah, 2024).

In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the Revised Merdeka Curriculum provides more space for meaningful, contextual learning that is oriented towards strengthening the Islamic character of students. Teachers are expected to be able to develop learning that not only focuses on

the transfer of knowledge, but also on habit formation, role modeling, and the internalization of akhlakul karimah values.

However, the implementation of the Revised Independent Curriculum in PAI subjects is not without challenges. Teachers are required to understand changes in learning outcomes, design relevant teaching tools, and apply methods and assessments that are appropriate to the characteristics of students and the school context. Differences in facilities, teacher competence, and school administrative readiness are factors that also influence the successful implementation of the curriculum (Eli Fitrotul Arofah, 2021).

Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a study on how the Revised Merdeka Curriculum is implemented in PAI learning, including supporting factors, obstacles, and optimization efforts that can be made by teachers and schools. This study is important to provide a realistic picture and recommendations for improving the quality of PAI learning in schools.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach that aims to analyze the implementation of the Revised Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning through a review of various literature sources and policy documents. Data was collected using a literature study that included books, official regulations from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, as well as journal articles related to teacher readiness, differentiated learning, and authentic assessment. The data obtained was analyzed through a process of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, resulting in a comprehensive picture of the concepts, implementation readiness, obstacles, and solutions in the application of the Revised Merdeka Curriculum (Sugiono, 2018). Data validity was strengthened using source triangulation to ensure consistency and accuracy of information between references.

RESULTS

The Concept of the Revised Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (PAI)

The Revised Merdeka Curriculum is a refinement of Indonesia's competency-based curriculum that seeks to provide broader autonomy for teachers and educational institutions in designing learning processes that are more flexible, meaningful, and responsive to students' needs. At its core, the curriculum promotes a shift from content-heavy instruction toward a learning model that emphasizes Capaian Pembelajaran (Learning Outcomes), character formation, and the development of higher-order thinking skills. In Islamic Religious Education (PAI), this renewed framework highlights the importance of integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions to create holistic learning experiences capable of nurturing students' spiritual and moral identity. Unlike previous curricular models that were rigid and standardized, the Revised Merdeka Curriculum allows teachers to construct Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (Learning Trajectories) based on contextual needs, enabling schools to adopt materials, strategies, and assessments that reflect their students' individual readiness, learning styles, and sociocultural background (Ma'rifataini, 2017).

Furthermore, the curriculum emphasizes the Profil Pelajar Pancasila, which aligns closely with Islamic values such as faith, moral conduct, cooperation, and critical reasoning. This alignment

offers a strong conceptual foundation for PAI teachers to design lessons that connect Islamic teachings to contemporary issues, thereby making learning more relevant and applicable to students' daily lives. The curriculum also promotes differentiated instruction, encouraging teachers to address diverse learner profiles through varied learning modalities, assessments, and instructional pathways. In addition, the emphasis on formative assessment supports continuous monitoring of students' spiritual and behavioral development, moving beyond traditional evaluative practices that rely solely on written tests or memorization.

Overall, the Revised Merdeka Curriculum redefines the role of PAI by positioning it not merely as a subject for transferring religious knowledge but as a transformative discipline that fosters character, empathy, and social responsibility. Through its flexible structure, contextual learning outcomes, and student-centered orientation, the curriculum provides a comprehensive conceptual foundation for developing Islamic Religious Education that is holistic, future-oriented, and capable of producing learners who embody noble character in accordance with Islamic values and national educational goals.

Characteristics of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Learning in the Revised Merdeka Curriculum

The Revised Merdeka Curriculum introduces several distinctive characteristics that redefine how Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is taught in Indonesian schools. One of its key features is its student-centered learning orientation, which shifts the teacher's role from a primary source of knowledge to a facilitator who guides students in exploring religious concepts meaningfully. This aligns with the curriculum's commitment to fostering independent, active, and reflective learners who can connect Islamic teachings with real-life situations. In this framework, learning is no longer limited to traditional lectures and memorization but encourages interactive strategies such as discussions, inquiry-based activities, contextual analysis of Qur'anic verses, and collaborative problem-solving around moral and social issues (Zainuri & Kanada, 2023).

Another prominent characteristic is the use of differentiated instruction, which recognizes the diversity of students' abilities, interests, and learning styles. PAI teachers are encouraged to design varied learning activities such as practical worship demonstrations, storytelling, multimedia-based learning, project work, and reflective journals to ensure that all students can engage meaningfully with the content. This approach helps create a more inclusive classroom environment and allows students to develop religious understanding at their own pace. Differentiation also supports the development of spiritual competencies through multiple pathways, enabling learners to internalize Islamic values more deeply.

The curriculum also promotes Project-Based Learning (PjBL) as a central strategy to strengthen the application of Islamic values in daily life. Through projects such as social charity programs, school-based religious campaigns, creative digital dakwah content, or community service activities, students gain opportunities to practice moral virtues, empathy, collaboration, and leadership. Such experiential learning strengthens not only students' cognitive understanding of Islamic teachings but also their emotional and behavioral engagement, making learning more holistic and transformative (Falah, 2022).

A further characteristic is the emphasis on authentic assessment, which evaluates students' competencies through real-life performance rather than solely through traditional written

examinations. In PAI, authentic assessments may include the evaluation of worship practices, observation of moral behavior, portfolios of religious reflections, project outcomes, and peer or self-assessments. This approach allows teachers to capture a more comprehensive picture of students' spiritual growth, religious literacy, and character development, which are core objectives of PAI.

Finally, the integration of the Pancasila Student Profile serves as a guiding principle in designing learning experiences that reflect both Islamic values and national identity. Dimensions such as faith and piety, cooperation, critical reasoning, creativity, and global awareness resonate strongly with the objectives of Islamic education. By embedding these values into daily learning, the curriculum promotes a balanced development of religious knowledge, moral character, and civic responsibility. Together, these characteristics ensure that PAI learning under the Revised Merdeka Curriculum is dynamic, relevant, and capable of preparing students to navigate modern challenges while maintaining strong Islamic moral foundations.

Teacher Readiness and Educational Infrastructure in Implementing the Revised Merdeka Curriculum for Islamic Religious Education (PAI)

The successful implementation of the Revised Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is highly dependent on the readiness of teachers and the availability of adequate educational infrastructure. Teacher readiness encompasses their understanding of the curriculum's philosophy, mastery of Capaian Pembelajaran (Learning Outcomes), ability to design Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (Learning Trajectories), and competence in applying student-centered, differentiated, and project-based learning approaches. Many teachers have participated in training and workshops provided by the government and school institutions, which aim to strengthen their pedagogical competence and digital literacy. However, the extent of readiness often varies significantly across regions, particularly between urban and rural schools, due to differences in access to professional development opportunities and technological support (A, 2020).

Educational infrastructure also plays a critical role in determining the quality of curriculum implementation. The Revised Merdeka Curriculum requires supportive facilities such as multimedia tools, internet access, flexible learning spaces, and updated instructional media to facilitate differentiated instruction and interactive learning. In many schools, especially those in remote areas, the lack of digital equipment, limited library resources, and inadequate learning environments pose substantial challenges. As a result, PAI teachers often need to employ creative strategies to adapt instructional materials using simple, low-cost media or by maximizing the use of local resources such as school mosques, community activities, or printed learning modules.

Moreover, the collaboration between school leadership and teachers significantly influences the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. Strong managerial support including structured supervision, provision of teaching materials, and continuous mentoring helps create a positive climate for curriculum adoption. Some schools have successfully built collaborative cultures through teacher working groups, peer mentoring, and joint lesson planning, which enhance teachers' confidence and ability to innovate in the classroom. Nonetheless, inconsistent administrative support and limited budget allocation remain obstacles in many institutions, affecting both teacher motivation and the quality of learning.

Overall, the readiness of teachers and the adequacy of educational infrastructure are crucial determinants of how well the Revised Merdeka Curriculum can be executed in PAI classrooms. While

progress has been made through training and resource provision, overcoming the existing disparities requires sustained investment, consistent professional development, and a collaborative school culture that empowers teachers to implement the curriculum with creativity, confidence, and contextual sensitivity.

Challenges and Solutions in Implementing the Revised Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (PAI)

The implementation of the Revised Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) presents a variety of challenges that arise from differences in teacher competencies, school resources, student characteristics, and socio-cultural contexts. One of the primary challenges is the limited understanding among teachers regarding the curriculum's structure, especially the interpretation of Capaian Pembelajaran (Learning Outcomes), the development of Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (Learning Trajectories), and the application of differentiated learning strategies. Although training programs have been widely implemented, many teachers still struggle to shift from traditional lecture-based methods toward more flexible, student-centered approaches (Husain, 2022). Ongoing professional development and collaborative mentoring are therefore essential to bridge this pedagogical gap.

Another significant challenge concerns insufficient educational infrastructure, particularly in underserved or rural schools where access to technological tools, multimedia resources, and learning facilities remains limited. The curriculum encourages the use of digital media, project-based learning, and flexible classroom arrangements, yet these expectations often exceed the capacity of schools with minimal ICT support. To overcome this limitation, teachers frequently adapt by utilizing low-cost learning materials, local environments, and community-based resources. Schools can further strengthen implementation by fostering partnerships with local institutions, optimizing available budgets, and gradually upgrading technological facilities.

Student-related challenges also play an important role. The Revised Merdeka Curriculum requires teachers to address diverse learning needs through differentiated instruction, but variations in students' abilities, motivation, and learning styles often complicate the process. Many students are accustomed to passive, memorization-based learning and may require time to adapt to inquiry-based and project-oriented tasks. Effective solutions include conducting diagnostic assessments at the beginning of each learning phase, providing multiple activity options, offering scaffolded instruction, and implementing peer tutoring strategies to support students with lower proficiency.

Additionally, challenges arise from inconsistent evaluation practices, as teachers often experience difficulty in designing and applying authentic assessments that align with the curriculum's goals. Authentic assessments in PAI involve evaluating worship practices, moral behavior, portfolios, and project outcomes components that require clear rubrics, systematic observation, and reflective tools. Strengthening teachers' assessment literacy through targeted training and access to model instruments can improve evaluation quality and consistency (Elisa, 2018).

Lastly, socio-cultural factors contribute to implementation barriers, particularly when parents or communities hold traditional views regarding religious education that conflict with the curriculum's innovative and participatory approach. Some still expect PAI to focus primarily on

memorization and doctrinal transmission rather than critical thinking, creativity, or character formation. Enhancing communication between schools and parents through regular outreach, workshops, and community involvement programs can help build trust and alignment toward shared educational goals (Arsyad, n.d.).

In summary, while the Revised Merdeka Curriculum offers substantial opportunities to modernize and enrich PAI learning, its success depends on addressing these multi-dimensional challenges through sustained professional support, improved infrastructure, inclusive learning strategies, strengthened assessment practices, and active collaboration with the broader community.

CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of the Revised Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) represents a significant shift toward a more flexible, student-centered, and competency-based learning framework. The curriculum emphasizes the integration of Learning Outcomes (Capaian Pembelajaran), differentiated instruction, project-based learning, and authentic assessment, all of which aim to cultivate holistic religious understanding and strengthen students' moral and spiritual character. The conceptual redesign provides teachers with greater autonomy to adapt learning experiences to students' needs and local contexts, enabling more meaningful, contextual, and engaging PAI instruction.

However, the success of this curriculum depends largely on teacher readiness, the availability of adequate educational infrastructure, and strong institutional support. Variations in teacher competence, limited access to technological resources, diverse student learning profiles, and traditional community expectations continue to pose challenges in practical implementation. Addressing these issues requires continuous professional development, creative use of available resources, strengthened school leadership, and effective communication with parents and communities.

Overall, the Revised Merdeka Curriculum offers a promising model for transforming Islamic Religious Education into a dynamic, relevant, and character-driven discipline. With sustained collaboration among teachers, schools, policymakers, and stakeholders, the curriculum has the potential to enhance the quality of PAI learning and foster a generation of students who embody strong moral values, critical thinking skills, and the holistic competencies envisioned in the Pancasila Student Profile.

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