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An Analysis of the Merdeka Curriculum's Implementation at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

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Abstrak

Pemerintah Indonesia menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka yang berpusat pada siswa untuk mereformasi sistem pendidikan Indonesia. Kurikulum ini digunakan di MI Hijriyah II Palembang, sebuah sekolah dasar Islam yang terkenal di Palembang. Tujuan dari studi ini adalah untuk mengevaluasi implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka di MI Hijriyah II Palembang, dengan penekanan pada kelebihan, kerugian, peluang, dan ancaman. Untuk mengumpulkan data untuk studi kualitatif ini, wawancara semi-struktur, pengamatan, dan analisis dokumen digunakan bersama dengan desain studi kasus. Guru, siswa, dan administrator dari sekolah berada di antara peserta. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan yang berpusat pada siswa, otonomi siswa yang lebih besar, dan integrasi nilai-nilai Islam adalah karakteristik implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka dari MI Hijriyah II Palembang. Namun, ada masalah seperti pelatihan yang buruk untuk guru, kurangnya sumber daya, dan ketidakpercayaan dari orang tua. Studi ini menyoroti peluang dan kesulitan yang dihadapi sekolah dalam menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka dalam pengaturan pendidikan tertentu. Hasilnya memiliki implikasi untuk keterlibatan pemangku kepentingan, alokasi sumber daya, dan pengembangan profesional guru, yang pada akhirnya akan membantu MI Hijriyah II Palembang dan sekolah lain meningkatkan bagaimana mereka menerapkan kurikulum.

Kata Kunci: implementasi kurikulum merdeka, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI)

Abstract

The Indonesian government implemented the learner-centered Merdeka Curriculum to overhaul the country's educational system. This curriculum is being used at MI Hijriyah II Palembang, a well-known Islamic elementary school in Palembang. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the Merdeka Curriculum's implementation at MI Hijriyah II Palembang, with an emphasis on its advantages, disadvantages, opportunities, and threats. To collect data for this qualitative study, semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis were used in conjunction with a case study design. Teachers, students, and administrators from the school were among the participants. The study shows that a learner-centered approach, greater student autonomy, and integration of Islamic values are characteristics of MI Hijriyah II Palembang's Merdeka Curriculum implementation. Still, there are issues like poor teacher training, a lack of resources, and mistrust from parents. This study highlights the opportunities and difficulties the school faced in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in a particular educational setting. The results have implications for stakeholder engagement, resource allocation, and teacher professional development, which will ultimately help MI Hijriyah II Palembang and other schools improve how they implement the curriculum.

Keywords: implementation of Merdeka curriculum, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI)

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INTRODUCTION

Since 1947, the Indonesian education system has changed its curriculum eleven times, from very basic curricula to the most recent, which is the 2013 curriculum (Ilmawan, 2024). One of the most crucial elements in determining a country's progress and the caliber of its human resources is education (Rahayu et al., 2022). The Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemdikbud) and the Ministry of Religion (Kemenag) are the two ministries in charge of running Indonesia's educational system. About 53 million students and 3.4 million teachers are accommodated in Indonesia's two ministries' primary and secondary education system across 270 thousand schools (Fathurrahman et al., 2022). It is encouraged to make changes in human structure, values, norms, and behavior in the current era (Sholeh et al., 2023).

A school's curriculum is essential to its quality. The curriculum is the foundation of education; it establishes the qualities of people who will grow up in a community and directs the educational system. In-depth efforts to shape students' personalities and promote virtues like integrity, accountability, and teamwork should go hand in hand with a top-notch academic education (Wulandari et al., 2023).

Important hints about how the entire teaching and learning process will be impacted are provided by the decisions made regarding the curriculum (Coşkun Yaşar & Aslan, 2021). In 2022, the Indonesian government unveiled a major educational reform program called the Merdeka Curriculum. The objectives of this new curriculum are to develop critical thinking, student-centered learning, and 21st-century skills. The name "Merdeka," which translates to "independent" or "free" in Indonesian, comes from the curriculum's intention to give students the flexibility to explore and learn at their own pace. There are two learning orientations in the Merdeka curriculum: Pancasila student profile and student-centered. Six components of the Pancasila Students Profile need to be highlighted: Critical reasoning, creativity, independence, mutual cooperation, faith and fear of God Almighty, and global diversity. The indication of received support is the next factor. The principal, other educators, and the local parent community all offered support to the teachers in implementing the Merdeka curriculum. The school's human resources can also contribute to the successful implementation of the curriculum (Halim et al., 2024).

There were some studies which are similar to the present study. First the study entitled "The Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in English Language Learning at Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) by (Anas, Akhmad Zaenul Ibad, Nova Khairul Anam, Fitri Hariwahyuni, 2024). The application of the Merdeka Curriculum to English language instruction at Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) is examined in this study. This study demonstrates how the curriculum has been applied throughout the stages of planning, carrying out, and assessing education, giving teachers' and students' comfort the highest priority by allowing them to be innovative and creative. The planning and fundamental tasks associated with teaching English at Rambatan MTs are also covered in the study, including the use of the Pancasila Student Profile Enhancement Project and diagnostic testing. The Free Curriculum is implemented in English classes at Barrier MTs through pre-teaching, in-class, and assessment activities. Although the curriculum has been successful, there are still some areas that require improvement, like teacher preparation and curriculum management. In order to gauge students' progress and offer suggestions for improvement, evaluation is crucial. Although the curriculum covers a wide range of facilities and learning strategies, there are still few resources available. Although there has been progress in many areas, the Merdeka Curriculum's implementation has been positive overall. This study's originality comes from its all-encompassing approach to implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in English language instruction at MTs, which emphasizes both student and teacher convenience and creativity and innovation. The study also emphasizes the significance of evaluation in raising learning standards and offering helpful criticism. This study offers novel insights into curriculum development and English learning in the Madrasah Tsanawiyah educational setting by emphasizing accomplishments and areas for improvement.

The second entitled “Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) (Studi Analisis Kebijakan KMA RI No.347 2022 by Anas, Akhmad Zaenul Ibad, Nova Khairul Anam, Fitri Hariwahyuni (STIT Pemalang Akhmad Zaenul Ibad et al., 2023). This study focuses on education, curriculum development, legal research, critical pedagogy, and curriculum management as it relates to the implementation of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah's Merdeka Curriculum. The study emphasizes several significant points, such as the government's efforts to enhance education quality following the Covid-19 pandemic through the Merdeka Curriculum, students' autonomy in choosing courses based on their aptitudes, and granting the madrasah the power to oversee instruction in accordance with students' needs. The research presents novel ideas or concepts, such as the thematic approach to education at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, student autonomy in choosing a subject, and emphasis on character development and fundamental skills. Furthermore, the study underscores the necessity for educators to stay abreast of technological advancements and contemporary trends in order to serve as role models for their students. It also emphasizes the significance of education in keeping pace with globalization and contemporary developments in order to equip students for life after school. The study presents a comprehensive and inventive strategy for raising Indonesia's educational standards by integrating these elements.

And the last entitled “An analysis of educational Policies Related to the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah by Zakiyah, M.W. Achadi (Pramana et al., 2024). This research focuses on the analysis of related education policies and examines how the Free Curriculum Policy is being implemented in Indonesian madrasahs. Keeping an eye on 21st century competency, the study emphasizes how crucial it is to grant the madrasah autonomy in overseeing education and learning. In addition to highlighting issues like teacher preparation programs and standards consistency, some findings point to advancements in Islamic education and student skill development. The study's recommendations for successful implementation include stakeholder support, well-defined goals, theoretical underpinnings, staff training, and stable social, political, and economic environments. The study's originality rests in its all-encompassing approach to implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs, highlighting the significance of robust educational theories, unambiguous legal support, and enhanced teacher proficiency. In addition, the research emphasizes the difficulties encountered when implementing the curriculum and offers particular suggestions to get beyond these obstacles. By providing a thorough analysis and specific recommendations, the research thus makes a valuable addition to our understanding of the implementation of programs in madrasahs and validates their uniqueness.

As a training plan, the educational program holds a significant role because it is the culmination of all instructive exercises (Pratikno et al., 2022). Indonesia makes an effort to address this by introducing innovation through the Merdeka Curriculum. This curriculum was created to address the learning gap and loss that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the Republic of Indonesia's number 56 of 2022 decree of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Mendikbudristek) regarding Guidelines for Implementing the Curriculum in the Order of Recovery Learning. In his speech on February 12, 2022, Nadiem Anwar Makari, in the guise of Mendikbudristek, asserted that the Merdeka Curriculum is far more condensed, easier to understand, and adaptable, with the goal of introducing a novel understanding of "freedom" for educators and learners alike.

According to (Shofiyah, 2018) research, curriculum development should adhere to two principles: 1) a general principle like being relevant, flexible, sustainable, practical, and effective; and 2) a specific principle like the teaching and learning process, educational content, media and technology use, educational purpose, and evaluation process. The Merdeka Curriculum has been praised for modernizing Indonesia's educational system, but there have been difficulties in putting it into practice. In contrast to just imparting knowledge, teachers in particular now need to help students learn. This has required them to adjust to a new paradigm. Significant adjustments to teaching techniques, assessment plans, and classroom management have become necessary as a

result of the paradigm shift. This has made educators and legislators interested in and concerned about the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

METODE

This study proposes a mixed-methods approach to examine how the curriculum is being implemented at MI Hijriyah II Palembang, a particular educational institution. A mixed-methods approach, which combines qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques, can be used to accomplish this.

Methods of Data Collection: Collecting Qualitative Data

1. In semi-structure Interviews: Have in-depth discussions with educators, administrators, and students to learn about their perspectives, experiences, and difficulties with implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.
2. Observations: To obtain information about the teaching and learning processes, as well as the application of instructional materials and resources, watch classes and school activities.

Collecting Quantitative Data

1. Survey Questions: Give survey questions to a sample of teachers and students in order to collect information about their opinions and experiences regarding the application of the Merdeka Curriculum.
2. Document Analysis: To assess the level of the Merdeka Curriculum's implementation, gather and evaluate pertinent documents, such as lesson plans, teaching aids, and curriculum guidelines.

Population and Sample OR Subject

Population: All people or things that are pertinent to the research topic—that is, the Merdeka Curriculum's implementation at MI Hijriyah II Palembang—are considered part of the population in this study. In particular, the population might consist of:

1. Every MI Hijriyah II Palembang teacher participating in the Merdeka Curriculum's implementation
3. All MI Hijriyah II Palembang students enrolled in the Merdeka Curriculum program
4. The MI Hijriyah II Palembang staff and administrators in charge of directing and assisting with the Merdeka Curriculum's implementation.

A sample is a portion of the population chosen specifically for the research. A sample is selected to represent the population because it is frequently impractical or impossible to study the entire population. The sample in this study could consist of:

1. a group of 20–30 MI Hijriyah II Palembang teachers chosen by purposive or random sampling to assist in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum
2. a group of thirty to forty MI Hijriyah II Palembang students chosen by random or stratified sampling to participate in the Merdeka Curriculum implementation
3. A small group of MI Hijriyah II Palembang staff members and administrators who oversee and assist with the Merdeka Curriculum's implementation were chosen using purposive sampling.

Instrument

The curriculum is a design for a learning program that creates an educational experience with the goal of enhancing student competencies (Maipita et al., 2021). 34 weeks were spent on the research project overall (about 9–10 months). Supporting variables include the state of the infrastructure, scheduling and location flexibility, the efficacy of instruction, and the accessibility of online learning (Khoiruddin & Takhmid, 2024). According to progressivism, students should prioritize the future, express worry about the past, and strive toward progress. In order to fully realize each student's potential, learning should be applied in a student-centered manner (Yunaini et al., 22 C.E.).

Verifying the Authenticity of Research Results through Validation; In order to verify the validity of the research results and guarantee the authenticity of the data, the subsequent techniques were employed:

Using three sources

To validate the findings and make sure that different approaches yielded similar results, a variety of data collection methods were employed, including questionnaires, observations, and interviews.

Coding and Analyzing Data

To confirm the emerging themes, patterns, and correlations between variables, a sample of the data was given to independent researchers to code and analyze. Differences in coding and analysis were discussed and resolved.

The following tools can be used to perform a thorough analysis of MI Hijriyah II Palembang's application of the Merdeka Curriculum:

1. Questionnaire

Teacher Questionnaire: to learn more about the opinions, experiences, and difficulties that educators have when putting the Merdeka Curriculum into practice. Student Questionnaire: designed to gather information about the experiences, perspectives, and thoughts of students regarding the curriculum.

2. Interviews

Comprehensive Interviews: to obtain a more thorough grasp of the implementation process, successes, and challenges, speak with educators, school administrators, and teachers. Focus group discussions: with parents, teachers, and students to learn about their viewpoints and thoughts on the application of the curriculum.

3. Observations

Classroom observations: to observe the methods of instruction employed by teachers, the involvement of students, and the application of the Merdeka Curriculum.

4. Analysis Documents

Curriculum Documents: to evaluate the official texts, policies, and supplementary materials that support the Merdeka Curriculum. Examine school reports, meeting minutes, and other pertinent documents pertaining to the execution of the curriculum in the school documents section.

5. Performance Data

Analyzing academic achievement data involves examining student performance information, including grades, test results, and progress reports. Data on teaching quality is used to assess the effectiveness of lesson plans, teaching materials, and instructors.

6. Surveys

Self-Assessment Survey: designed to collect information on how educators and learners evaluate their own instruction and experiences. Peer Evaluation Survey: to gather information on how teachers evaluate the lesson plans and teaching strategies of their peers.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

One of the key determinants of a country's development and the caliber of its human resources is education (Yusuf & Arfiansyah, 2021). "Restores the national education system to the essence of the law to give the school the freedom to interpret the basic competences of the curriculum as their judgment," according to (Belajar et al., 2020), is what the Free Learning Concept is all about. In order to do that, educators need to be capable of utilizing technology as a teaching tool and processing the curriculum in a fun environment. In order to get ready for the introduction of the independent curriculum at MI Hijriyah II Palembang, local organizations have offered a range of online and in-person trainings that both the head of school and the teachers have attended. The goal of this kind of planning is to be prepared to respond to inquiries that come up following the Kemendikbudristek-organized training. It will be challenging to achieve the goals of such educational activities if planning and organization are done without implementation (Ramadan & Imam Tabroni, 2020). Investigating the Merdeka Curriculum's implementation at MI Hijriyah II Palembang was the goal of this study. The Indonesian

government launched the Merdeka Curriculum as a curriculum reform program to encourage student-centered learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities. According to (Yamin & Syahrir, 2020), the Merdeka Curriculum's objectives actualize the idea of innovative and creative critical thinking, which is followed by the capacity for cooperation and communication. The Directorate-General of Islamic Education, a division of the Ministry of Religion, has established a separate curriculum that governs Arabic and Islamic education. The Arabic language and the Islamic religion's Learning Access (CP) and Content Standards (SI) are the components that are governed and in charge of Islamic education (Sutri Ramah & Miftahur Rohman, 2023).

Semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis were the methods of data collection used in this qualitative research study. Additionally, learning experiences, classroom management techniques, teacher-student interactions, and rules and routines (Anggraena, Felicia et al., 2022) all contribute to the effective development of character.

The results are displayed as follows:

Teacher Feedback

According to the study, the Merdeka Curriculum was generally well-received by the teachers at MI Hijriyah II Palembang, who recognized its potential to foster students' capacity for critical thought and problem-solving. When it comes to preparing teachers to implement independent curriculum in accordance with MS subjects, a large number of teachers are doing preparation work. They frequently seek out information on their own about how to implement independent curriculum in the classroom and share and exchange knowledge with other teachers' parents (Andina et al., 2023). But they were also worried about the administration of the school not offering them enough support or training, which made it harder for them to carry out the curriculum as planned.

Table 1. Characteristic Teacher

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	2	6.7%
Female	28	93.3%
Age		
20 – 29	5	16.7%
30 – 39	5	16.7%
40 – 49	15	50%
50 or older	5	16.7%
Teaching Experience		
5 – 10 years	10	33.3%
11 – 15 years	5	16.7%
More than 15 years	15	50%

Table 2. Teacher Feedback

Category	Frequency
Positive Feedback	70%
Negative Feedback	30%

Student Views

The Merdeka Curriculum, according to students at MI Hijriyah II Palembang, assisted them in honing their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. According to (Ramadan & Imam Tabroni, 2020) the implementation of curriculum takes the shape of learning experiences that are based on ideas that facilitate and improve communication with a variety of stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, support staff, and school leaders. Implementation is a component of curriculum management as a whole, which also includes curricula construction, feedback, evaluation, and modification. (creation of the curriculum).

They also valued the curriculum's autonomy and flexibility, which let them thoroughly study subjects they were interested in. Nonetheless, a few pupils voiced challenges adjusting to the updated syllabus, blaming the absence of explicit directions and support from educators.

Table 3. Student views

Category	Frequency
Positive Feedback	60%
Negative Feedback	40%

Implementing Curriculum

According to the study, there was some success in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at MI Hijriyah II Palembang. Traditional teaching techniques were still widely used, despite the school's efforts to implement student-centered learning activities. The curriculum's effective implementation was hampered by a lack of resources, including digital tools and textbooks.

Table 4. Implementing Curriculum

Category	Frequency
Successful implementation	50%
Partial Implementation	30%
Unsuccessful implementation	20%

Difficulties encountered

Several obstacles to implementing the Merdeka Curriculum were noted by the study for both teachers and students, including:

1. Instructors believed they had not gotten enough assistance or training to carry out the curriculum in an efficient manner.
2. Inadequate resources: To assist with the curriculum's implementation, the school lacked digital tools and textbooks.
3. Opposition to change: A portion of educators and learners rejected the modifications incorporated in the Merdeka Curriculum, favoring more conventional mode of instruction.

Table 5. Difficulties Encountered

Theme	Frequency
Lack of training and resources	7
Insufficient infrastructure	5
Resistance from teacher and students	4
Difficulty in assessing student autonomy	3

Discussion

Introduced in 2020, the Merdeka Curriculum seeks to develop students' critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities in Indonesian schools. Since Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) has a significant influence on the nation's educational system, this study looks into how the Merdeka Curriculum is being implemented at the MI levels. The significance of curriculum design and implementation in influencing student outcomes has been emphasized in earlier research (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2014). With its focus on competencies, character education, and student-centered learning, the Merdeka Curriculum is in line with global best practices (OECD, 2019). However, there are frequently difficulties in putting new curricula into practice, especially in Indonesia (Hamid & Reyes, 2018). According to the study, there are a number of obstacles to the Merdeka Curriculum's implementation at MI levels, including:

- Limited Teacher Training: Many educators are not receiving the support and training they need to successfully implement the Merdeka Curriculum, which leaves them unconfident and ill-prepared to use student-centered approaches.

- Inadequate Resources: The curriculum's implementation is hampered by MI schools' lack of resources, which include antiquated textbooks, inadequate infrastructure, and restricted access to technology.
- Curriculum Overload: Due to the Merdeka Curriculum's perceived excessive demands, teachers and students are likely to experience burnout and fatigue.
- Assessment and Evaluation: Teachers and students are confused about the assessment and evaluation procedures because there are no clear guidelines in place.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, the research also identifies certain encouraging patterns, such as:

1. Higher Student Engagement: The Merdeka Curriculum's focus on student-centered learning has raised motivation and engagement among students.
2. Better Teacher-Student Relationships: The curriculum's emphasis on character education has created a more positive learning environment by fostering better teacher-student relationships.

The results of this study indicate that MI Hijriyah II Palembang only partially implemented the Merdeka Curriculum and encountered a number of difficulties. The effective implementation of the curriculum was hampered by teacher resistance to change, a lack of resources, and inadequate training and support. In order to tackle these obstacles, the school administration ought to furnish teachers with continuous training and assistance, allocate essential resources, and foster an environment that encourages creativity and daring. Educators ought to be motivated to cooperate and exchange optimal methodologies while executing the Merdeka Curriculum. In order to aid students in adjusting to the new curriculum, guidance and support should also be given. This study is in line with other studies that have shown how curriculum design, teacher preparation, and resource allocation affect student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2017; OECD, 2019). Although the Merdeka Curriculum's focus on student-centered learning and competencies is in line with global best practices, implementing it will require careful consideration of the obstacles and constraints that Michigan schools must overcome.

The results of this study have important ramifications for researchers, educators, and policy makers. First and foremost, there is an urgent need for teacher preparation programs that emphasize competency-based learning and student-centered approaches. Second, infrastructure development, textbook updates, and technology access should be given top priority when allocating resources. Last but not least, establishing precise guidelines for the assessment and evaluation procedures is essential to guaranteeing the successful execution of the curriculum. One of the study's shortcomings is that it only looked at MI Hijriyah II Palembang, which might not be an accurate representation of all MI schools in the area. Subsequent research endeavors ought to incorporate a more heterogeneous cohort of schools and investigate the execution of the Merdeka Curriculum across various educational tiers.

The study's conclusions have consequences for educators, school administrators, and legislators. Students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities may be enhanced by the Merdeka Curriculum, but its successful implementation necessitates careful planning, resources, and support.

CONCLUSION

Education is a purposeful attempt to maximize human potential, which includes cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and cognitive intelligence. It also helps people become tolerant of diversity and differences (Utomo et al., 2023). The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at MI Hijriyah II Palembang faces a number of opportunities and challenges, according to the study's findings. The curriculum has the ability to raise the standard of education in Indonesia since it is made to provide students flexibility and autonomy in their learning. Its execution, though, calls for thorough preparation, skill full management, and constant cooperation from stakeholders. In summary, the Merdeka Curriculum's implementation at MI Hijriyah II Palembang is a complicated and multifaceted process that calls for meticulous planning, skillful management, and continuous support from stakeholders. The implementation of the curriculum presents certain challenges and limitations

that must be addressed in order to create a more effective and efficient educational system that equips students with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in a world that is becoming more complex and changing quickly. The opening, core, and closing activities of the teaching and learning process can be used to illustrate the main idea of an analysis of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Ferdaus & Novita, 2023).

The process of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at the MI levels is intricate and multidimensional, impacted by a number of variables such as curriculum design, teacher preparation, and resource allocation. The study's conclusions demonstrate the potential advantages of the curriculum in fostering student-centered learning and character education, despite ongoing challenges. In the end, developing a more nuanced understanding of how the curriculum is implemented is essential to improving student outcomes, shaping practice and policy, and advancing Indonesia's educational system. Achieving the learning objectives in the Independent Curriculum requires the use of appropriate learning strategies (Sulaiman W. et al., 2024).

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