

The role of pai teachers in implementing the merdeka curriculum at islamic junior high school al abidin Surakarta

Muhammad Khalifah Al Madani ^{a.1*}, Imam Suhadi ^{b.2} Muh. Hasbi Khilal Zuhri ^{c.3}

^{a,b} Institut Islam Mamba'ul 'Ulum Surakarta, Indonesia

^c Al Iman University Hadramaut, Yemen

^{*1} danikhalifah@gmail.com ; ² imamsuhadi143@gmail.com ³ khilalzuhrimuhammadhasbi@gmail.com

*Correspondent Author

Received: 28 Juli 2024

Revised: 27 September 2024

Accepted: 25 Desember 2024

KEYWORDS

PAI Teacher,
Merdeka Curriculum,
Islamic Faith Education.

ABSTRACT

The Merdeka Curriculum provides teachers with the flexibility to create high-quality learning tailored to students' needs and learning environments. Its introduction aims to enable students to freely choose the best path for developing their potential through learning. This study focuses on understanding the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum for the Islamic Faith Education subject at Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin Surakarta. The research findings indicate that Islamic Religious Education Teachers at Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin Surakarta play a crucial role in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum for Islamic Faith Education. During the implementation process, teachers motivate students, adapt teaching materials to their needs, and provide classroom guidance. Teachers not only impart religious knowledge but also teach students to apply Islamic values in their daily lives.

This is an open-access article under the [CC-BY-SA](#) license.



Introduction

Good education is education that can bring transformative changes, enabling humans to know God better, have faith, and worship with knowledge to become pious individuals. Education is a crucial tool for the success of education itself. One of its key components is the teacher. Teaching is a profession and one of the most honorable jobs on earth.

Education is a conscious effort carried out by families, communities, and the government through guidance, teaching, and training activities, both in and outside of school, throughout life. This aims to prepare students to play their roles appropriately in various life environments in the future. Education encompasses programmed learning experiences in the form of formal and non-formal education and information obtained in and outside of school. It lasts a lifetime and aims to optimize individuals' abilities so they can play appropriate roles in life (Kuswanto, 2014).

A teacher serves as a role model and example for students. Every action and behavior of a teacher influences students' character and personality. A teacher's responsibilities include teaching beliefs in God, who alone deserves worship, and exhibiting good behavior in social interactions within the family and community. This is particularly relevant for teachers of Islamic Religious Education (PAI).

Nowadays, many students in Indonesia still neglect their responsibilities, such as not arriving at school on time or bringing prohibited items into school premises. Violations such as skipping classes or running away from school are common occurrences among students. Therefore, efforts to prevent and reduce such incidents are essential, one of which involves

motivating students by providing spiritual and mental encouragement, a role that PAI teachers can fulfill. PAI teachers educate students on moral values and religious awareness (Dhani, 2020).

Thus, teachers are the frontline heroes of educational success and play a pivotal role as the vanguard in implementing and executing the curriculum. Teachers are the spearhead of educational success, directly involved in developing, monitoring, and implementing the curriculum so that learning can proceed smoothly and achieve its intended objectives (Dhani, 2020).

One of the outcomes of education is producing individuals with superior competencies. Students possess diverse potentials and life goals, varying from one to another. The Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) has introduced a new curriculum policy, the "Merdeka Curriculum," with the hope that students will have the freedom to choose the best path to develop their potential through learning.

Teaching is a profession that requires specialized expertise and cannot be performed by just anyone outside the field of education (Sulastris et al., 2020). To enhance the quality of education, teachers must possess qualifications, dedication, and competence to perform their required duties effectively.

Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala states in the Qur'an about achieving true education, wisdom, and good teaching. In Surah An-Nahl, verse 125, Allah SWT declares:

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِهِمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ
عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۖ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

The meaning: *"Invite (humankind) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is rightly guided."* (Q.S. An-Nahl: 125)

Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin Surakarta is a private Islamic school with an international foundation that adopts the Merdeka Curriculum as its learning guideline. The Merdeka Curriculum is expected to facilitate students in studying and understanding lessons. It emphasizes interdisciplinary learning, strong spiritual and moral grounding, fundamental religious understanding, and fostering critical thinking skills. Additionally, it provides teachers the flexibility to create quality learning experiences tailored to students' needs and environments, enabling critical thinking and analysis of various perspectives in Islamic Faith Education.

In this process, the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum for Islamic Faith Education at Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin Surakarta in the 2023/2024 academic year is expected to ease students' understanding of lessons. Every student is unique, much like their fingerprints, with distinct characteristics shaped by both nature and nurture. These characteristics include cognitive development, talents, attitudes, backgrounds, family, religion, and more. Teachers, as leaders in the learning process, are required to embrace these differences. This aligns with essential teaching skills, particularly learning management skills, which include understanding students and developing their potential to realize their diverse abilities (Sanjaya, 2007).

However, teachers face challenges, one of which is frequent curriculum changes. Such changes often leave teachers in an adjustment phase, requiring them to start anew in mastering and implementing the curriculum for classroom teaching. This challenge can also affect students if teachers fail to maximize the Merdeka Curriculum's implementation.

Moreover, the Merdeka Curriculum requires teachers to be digitally literate. Learning today is no longer confined to books but often involves digital media such as computers, smartphones, projectors, and other digital tools. However, not all teachers are tech-savvy, particularly older teachers. Schools should conduct training programs to enhance teachers' digital skills, especially for those unfamiliar with technology.

In implementing the Merdeka Curriculum for Islamic Religious Education, various studies have examined its effectiveness in building students' competencies and character. However, most research focuses on policy or general implementation aspects, without paying specific attention to the role of PAI teachers as the primary actors in value-based Islamic education. Research exploring how PAI teachers integrate Islamic values into thematic and project-based learning methods within the Merdeka Curriculum remains limited.

Other studies often emphasize developing teaching materials or technology-based learning media, neglecting in-depth discussions on how teachers' pedagogical and spiritual competencies contribute to the curriculum's success. In Islamic education, learning success is not solely determined by the quality of materials and technology but also by the teacher's ability to serve as a role model and build emotional connections with students.

Therefore, this research aims to fill that gap by focusing on the role of PAI teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Faith Education, particularly in Grade VIII at Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin Surakarta. This study seeks to provide a more specific overview of the strategies employed, challenges faced, and opportunities to enhance the quality of Islamic education within the Merdeka Curriculum framework.

This research introduces new insights that distinguish it from previous studies, such as "The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in the Digital Era" by Cahaya, a student at Universitas Medan Area in 2022, and "The Effectiveness and Role of PAI Teachers in the Merdeka Curriculum at SMP Negeri 1 Gamping" by Hukma Fikria Adira and Much. Wasith Achadi, students at UIN Sunan Kalijaga, in 2023. These studies provide valuable contributions to understanding the Merdeka Curriculum's implementation but have different focuses and scopes compared to this research.

Cahaya's research focuses on the challenges faced by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in integrating digital technology into learning under the Merdeka Curriculum. The context revolves around utilizing technology to enhance students' learning experiences, emphasizing technological adaptation as an integral part of Islamic education. While relevant in the digital era, this study does not specifically address how Islamic values are internalized through thematic and project-based learning methods, which are key characteristics of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic-based schools.

Meanwhile, the research conducted by Hukma Fikria Adira and Much. Wasith Achadi highlights the effectiveness of PAI teachers' roles in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMP Negeri 1 Gamping (State Junior High School). Its primary focus is on evaluating students' competency achievements and the role of teachers in project-based learning within a general school environment. While providing a comprehensive overview of the dynamics of Islamic education in public schools, it overlooks the unique aspects faced by Islamic-based schools, such as integrating the national curriculum with distinct Islamic visions.

This study offers a fresh perspective by exploring the role of PAI teachers in the context of Islamic schools, particularly at Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin Surakarta. Its focus on the subject of Islamic Faith Education in Grade VIII allows a deeper investigation into how teachers can integrate Islamic *aqidah* values with the thematic and project-based approach of the Merdeka Curriculum. Furthermore, this research highlights innovative strategies used by PAI teachers to address the challenges of digital-era learning without compromising the Islamic values that are the essence of religious education. Thus, this study aims to make a significant contribution to advancing Islamic education practices within the Merdeka Curriculum framework.

The general definition of a role is the dynamic aspect of a position or status. According to Kozier (as cited in Tindangen et al., 2020), a role is a set of behaviors expected by others from a person according to their position. Roles are influenced by social conditions, both internal and external, and are stable in nature. A role reflects the behavior expected from someone in a specific social situation. A teacher is someone who imparts knowledge to students. In societal views, a teacher is someone who educates in various places, not necessarily in formal educational institutions but also in mosques, prayer rooms, or even at home. Teachers occupy a respected position in society. Their authority earns them respect, making them trustworthy

figures. The community believes that teachers can educate their children to develop noble personalities. Teachers are the most crucial subjects in the continuity of education (Djafar Siddik, 2006).

Teachers are also required to be professional, possessing expertise, skills, and abilities as reflected in the philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara, the father of Indonesian education, through his motto: "Tut Wuri Handayani, Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo, Ing Madyo Mangun Karso." Thus, professional teachers must not only master the subject matter but also nurture students, serve as role models, and continuously motivate them to improve and advance. Professional teachers must actively read literature to expand their knowledge and should not hesitate to invest in books related to their field of expertise (Zakiyah Daradjat, 2006).

Education is a process of training and developing knowledge, skills, intellect, character, and more, particularly through formal schooling. Sagala (as cited in STKIP & Daya, 2019) states that education is not merely about preparing individuals to adapt to their environment but also about fostering harmony and preserving the environment. The success of education depends on various components, including teachers, students, management, and funding.

Education plays a critical role in improving the quality of human resources. Educational institutions are required to keep up with the rapid development of science and technology. Special attention is often directed toward the progress of education to improve its quality. Quality education that emphasizes teaching and discipline will result in highly skilled human resources (Maulansyah, 2023).

The definition of Islamic religious education, according to Abdul Majid and Dian Andayani (2004), is a conscious and planned effort to prepare students to recognize, understand, internalize, and believe in Islamic teachings while fostering respect for followers of other religions to achieve harmony and national unity. Islamic education is thus a deliberate activity to guide individuals in understanding and embracing Islamic teachings while respecting other faiths.

The term curriculum comes from the Greek words *curir* (runner) and *curere* (racecourse). It refers to a collection of subjects delivered by teachers to students (Syaodih Sukmadinata, 2017). The concept of Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) was introduced by the Indonesian government in 2019. This concept allows students the freedom to organize and manage their learning process. As noted by Pahlawan et al. (2022), Merdeka Belajar is a concept where students take responsibility for their learning, encouraging creativity, independence, and decision-making. It strengthens the fundamental human right to learn, treating students as active participants with autonomy in their education.

In the Merdeka Curriculum, students have the freedom to choose their preferred learning methods based on their needs and interests. This approach encourages active and independent learning, focusing on developing skills and knowledge relevant to the workplace, better preparing students for future challenges (Fitriana, 2020). Moreover, Merdeka Learning encourages critical and independent thinking, enabling students to explore their interests and talents while optimizing their potential (Yudhana, 2021).

The Merdeka Curriculum is a set of educational standards that all schools in Indonesia must follow. Its goal is to help students grow into productive, creative, and innovative adults. Teachers play a crucial role in motivating and enabling students to learn more easily and enthusiastically.

The explanation of the Merdeka Curriculum above aligns with what was conveyed by Anggraini et al. (2022). The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum featuring diverse intraclass learning, allowing the content to be optimized so that students have sufficient time to deepen concepts and strengthen competencies. Teachers have the flexibility to choose from various teaching tools, enabling the learning process to be tailored to the students' needs and interests. Projects designed to reinforce the achievement of the Pancasila Student Profile are developed based on specific themes set by the government. These projects are not directed toward achieving specific learning targets and are thus not tied to the content of any particular subject.

The Merdeka Curriculum is crucial because various national and international studies indicate that Indonesia has long experienced a learning crisis. These studies reveal that many

Indonesian children cannot comprehend simple readings or apply basic mathematical concepts. They also highlight significant educational disparities across regions and social groups in Indonesia. To address this crisis and various challenges, systemic changes are needed, one of which is through the curriculum. The curriculum determines the material taught in classrooms, as well as the pace and teaching methods teachers use to meet students' needs.

The learning of Islamic Faith Education, commonly referred to as Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) in schools, is a subject that teaches students about proper worship, commendable morals, and legal matters in living life as servants of Allah SWT. In line with Saputra (2022), Islamic religious education is a systematically planned effort to prepare students to recognize, understand, internalize, believe, practice, and demonstrate noble character in accordance with Islamic teachings. Thus, PAI as a school subject aims to teach students about fiqh, aqidah akhlaq, the Qur'an and Hadith, and the history of Islamic culture through a structured guidance process to be applied in their lives.

PAI learning can therefore be defined as an effort to enable students to learn, be motivated, and become continuously interested in studying Islamic curriculum content that caters to their holistic needs. This leads to relatively permanent behavioral changes in cognitive (intellectual intelligence), affective (emotional/attitudinal intelligence), and psychomotor (skills) domains. Learning resources and teaching materials for PAI play a crucial role in achieving a healthy learning process. As stated by Abdul Majid (in Saputra, 2022), teaching materials encompass all forms of materials used to assist teachers or instructors in conducting teaching and learning activities, including written and non-written materials.

Based on the explanations of Islamic religious education above, the writer interprets the objectives of PAI learning as aiming to foster and enhance faith through imparting and cultivating knowledge, internalization, practice, and experiences of Islamic teachings. This enables students to become Muslims who continuously develop in faith, piety, nationalism, and readiness to pursue higher education.

Based on the background and theoretical framework discussed, this study is focused on addressing the following key questions: First, How do Islamic Religious Education teachers play their role in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum for the Islamic Faith Education subject in Grade VIII at Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin Surakarta? Second, What are the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum for the Islamic Faith Education subject? Third, What solutions can address the challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum for the Islamic Faith Education subject?

Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum for the Islamic Faith Education subject among Grade VIII students at Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin Surakarta in the 2023/2024 academic year. Qualitative research is descriptive and analytical by nature. Descriptive qualitative research involves describing and detailing events, phenomena, and social situations under investigation. Analytical aspects include interpreting, making meaning of, and comparing the collected data (Waruwu, 2023). The qualitative approach was chosen as it is suitable for understanding complex and contextual phenomena (Nartin et al., 2024).

Data collection for this study was conducted using three primary techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation (Djaelani, 2013). The interview method was utilized to collect data from research subjects, including the coordinator of Islamic Faith Education teachers, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and students, regarding the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the Islamic Faith Education subject at Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin Surakarta. The aim of the interviews was to explore the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum for the Islamic Faith Education subject, the challenges encountered during the learning process, and strategies used to overcome those challenges.

Observation involved collecting data through observation and recording relevant information. According to Hasibuan et al. (2023), observation is a technique for collecting data by observing and making notes about the conditions or behavior of the research subjects. The researcher opted for non-participant observation, meaning the researcher observed the actions and roles of teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum without directly participating in or contributing to the activities. For example, the researcher observed classroom interactions between teachers and students without engaging in the teaching process.

Documentation was another technique used in this study. According to Sugiyono (in Susanti, 2015), documentation is a method used to obtain data and information in the form of books, archives, written documents, figures, and images, as well as reports and descriptions that can support the research. Documentation was employed to gather and review data, such as photos, audio recordings, and written records from the school. This technique provided information about the school profile, vision and mission of Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin Surakarta, school organizational structure, curriculum, number of classes, and facilities available at Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin Surakarta.

The validity of the data in this study was ensured using data triangulation methods, which involved cross-checking the consistency of findings from documents, observations, and interviews. According to Sugiyono (2017), triangulation is defined as a data collection technique that combines various existing methods. When triangulation is employed, the researcher collects data while simultaneously testing its credibility using multiple techniques and data sources.

Result

Based on the observations and research conducted, the researcher collected data in the form of interviews, observations, and documentation. These findings are presented in alignment with existing theories to explain the role of teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum for the Islamic Faith Education subject at Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin Surakarta. The data presentation is as follows:

A. The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum for the Islamic Faith Education Subject in Grade VIII at Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin Surakarta

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum for the Islamic Faith Education subject at Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin Surakarta is a significant step toward improving educational quality in schools. This curriculum provides students with more time to deepen concepts and strengthen their competencies. However, before implementing the curriculum, it is essential to standardize teachers' understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Key aspects teachers need to understand about the Merdeka Curriculum include flexibility in teaching, project-based learning (PBL), student-centered learning, differentiated instruction, authentic assessments, character development, social-emotional competencies, and a focus on essential competencies and 21st-century skills. With a thorough understanding of these concepts, teachers are expected to implement the curriculum effectively, creating adaptive and student-oriented learning environments.

Through the preparations outlined by Ustadz Banna Handiyanto, S.Pd, Islamic Religious Education teachers are expected to design meaningful and relevant learning experiences that align with the Merdeka Curriculum's goals of fostering active, contextual, and character-based learning. Teachers strive to provide the best for students, ensuring that they can engage with the learning process effectively.

In addition to applying the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Faith Education, Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin Surakarta adopts several foundational principles to support contextual, interactive, and project-based learning.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin Surakarta, especially in Islamic Faith Education, aims to teach theoretical religious knowledge while enabling students to apply Islamic teachings in their daily lives. The principles applied are detailed as follows:

1. *Project-Based Learning*. Students are guided to undertake projects related to Islamic values, such as practicing congregational prayers or participating in social activities that teach empathy and honesty. This approach helps students better understand religious concepts through practical application.
2. *Differentiated Instruction*. At Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin Surakarta, Islamic Religious Education teachers adopt different approaches for students with varying foundational understandings of religious concepts, ensuring that the learning process is inclusive.
3. *Integration of Islamic Character Values*. In Islamic Faith Education, values such as simplicity, honesty, and responsibility are integrated into every lesson, both within the classroom and extracurricular activities.
4. *Active Student Engagement*. Students are involved in discussions about real-life moral issues around them, encouraging them to connect these situations with Islamic teachings.
5. *Use of Teaching Modules and Authentic Assessments*. The Merdeka Curriculum incorporates teaching modules and authentic assessments to measure students' actual understanding. This includes observations during worship practices, discussions, and projects.

B. Challenges Faced by Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum for the Islamic Faith Education Subject

Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin Surakarta is a responsive school that adapts quickly to changes in the education landscape. With every curriculum change, Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin Surakarta remains competitive with other leading schools in Surakarta. Therefore, implementing the Merdeka Curriculum for the Islamic Faith Education subject is not seen as a significant burden, thanks to the strong human resources among its teachers.

However, several challenges still arise for teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum specifically in the Islamic Faith Education subject. Ustadz Banna outlined some of the main obstacles commonly faced by teachers as follows:

1. *Adapting Project-Based Learning to Religious Content*. Islamic Faith Education focuses on theoretical concepts rooted in religious teachings. Applying project-based learning that is contextual and relevant can be challenging, especially in connecting religious values with engaging and meaningful real-world activities for students.
2. *Differences in Students' Religious Understanding*. Students come from diverse backgrounds with varying levels of religious understanding. Some may already be familiar with certain worship practices, while others require intensive guidance. Addressing these differences requires varied methods and additional time in lesson planning.

3. *Complexity of Authentic Assessments.* Assessments in Islamic Faith Education encompass not only cognitive aspects but also affective and behavioral aspects. Observing changes in behavior, understanding of values, and attitudes requires more intensive and continuous observation, which can be challenging, especially with large student numbers.
4. *Limited Facilities for Religious Projects.* Project-based learning in Islamic Faith Education requires supporting facilities, such as libraries with adequate religious literature or dedicated spaces for worship practices. If such facilities are limited, teachers may face difficulties in designing adequate activities.
5. *Readiness of Students and Parents for New Methods.* Not all students and parents are ready for the new learning methods emphasizing activities and process-based assessments rather than rote memorization. Some may believe that Islamic Faith Education should continue to focus on memorization and theory, leading to resistance to the new approach.
6. *Lack of Specialized Training for Islamic Religious Education Teachers.* Not all Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers receive intensive training on implementing Merdeka Curriculum methods. Limited understanding can hinder teachers' creativity in developing innovative teaching materials and methods.

According to Mrs. Rina Wijayanti, S.Pd, the Vice Principal for Curriculum at Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin Surakarta, while there are challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Faith Education, the school conducts evaluations and strives to find solutions to address these obstacles.

C. Solutions to Overcome Challenges in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum for the Islamic Faith Education Subject

Addressing challenges and finding solutions play a crucial role in understanding the obstacles faced by teachers and the school. As noted earlier, the Vice Principal for Curriculum at Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin conducts evaluations at the beginning of each semester and motivates teachers.

These evaluations aim to identify solutions to the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The following methods have been applied by teachers at Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin:

1. Formative Assessments: Daily observations, assignments, quizzes, discussions, and Q&A sessions.
2. Authentic Assessments: Project-based learning, skill and behavior assessments, or moral evaluations.
3. Reflection and Feedback
4. Summative Assessments: End-of-unit or semester tests, project presentations.
5. Character Development Assessment

In addition to regular evaluations, teachers also implement strategies to support the successful application of the Merdeka Curriculum at Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin:

1. *Developing Projects Linked to Islamic Values.* Teachers create projects that connect Islamic values to everyday life, such as charity initiatives, cleanliness campaigns, or discussions on social issues from an Islamic perspective.

2. *Using Differentiated Strategies.* Small study groups or varied teaching methods are employed to accommodate different levels of religious understanding among students.
3. *Specialized Training for Teachers.* Training programs are designed to help Islamic Religious Education teachers develop and implement authentic assessments more effectively in observing changes in students' attitudes and understanding of values.
4. *Parental Involvement.* Parents are engaged in socialization and discussions about the importance of practical values in religious education. This fosters their understanding and support for the new approach.
5. *Optimization of School Resources.* Schools collaborate with communities or related organizations to provide more comprehensive facilities or utilize the school environment for practical activities.

Through these efforts by teachers and the school, the Islamic Faith Education subject at Islamic Junior High School Al Abidin can be implemented in line with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum: fostering flexible, contextual learning focused on developing students' character.

Discussion

Based on the observations conducted by the researcher, it was found that the teacher's role in implementing the Independent Curriculum begins with motivating students, adapting teaching materials to meet their needs, and providing in-class supervision. The detailed explanation is as follows:

Teachers provide support in implementing learning aligned with the Independent Curriculum. In this context, teachers play an active role in assisting and facilitating the learning process based on the principles and guidelines of the Independent Curriculum. This curriculum emphasizes autonomy and freedom in learning, expecting teachers to offer appropriate support through guidance, learning resources, and innovative teaching methods to make learning more effective and enjoyable for students.

Teaching materials are adjusted to the needs of the students to achieve learning objectives. The materials or teaching aids used in the learning process must align with the needs and characteristics of the students. This approach ensures that every student can understand and absorb the lessons effectively, achieving the predetermined learning goals. In other words, teachers must consider the students' backgrounds, interests, and abilities when selecting or designing appropriate teaching materials.

In-class supervision (supervised coaching) is conducted in a comfortable manner to support future improvements. The supervision or guidance process carried out in the classroom should create a comfortable and supportive atmosphere. The goal is to provide constructive feedback to either teachers or students, enabling them to make improvements and progress in the future. With a comfortable approach, students and teachers are expected to feel more open and motivated to learn and grow.

Conclusion

The Role of Teachers in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in the Islamic Faith Education Subject. Teachers play a crucial role in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. In the process, teachers provide motivation to students, adapt teaching materials to meet students' needs, and offer in-class guidance. Teachers do not merely teach religious knowledge but also encourage students to apply Islamic values in their daily lives.

Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers face several challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, including adapting project-based learning to religious content, addressing differences in students' levels of religious

understanding, managing more complex authentic assessments, limited facilities for religious projects at school, readiness of students and parents for the new methods, and the lack of specialized training for Islamic Religious Education teachers.

Efforts to Address the Challenges. To overcome these challenges, the Vice Principal for Curriculum regularly conducts evaluations and provides motivation to teachers. This collaborative effort aims to find solutions together. Additionally, teachers employ various strategies, such as developing projects that connect Islamic values with everyday life, using differentiated strategies through small study groups, and providing specialized training for Islamic Religious Education teachers.

References

- Abdul Majid dan Dian Andayani (2014), Pendidikan Agama Islam Berbasis Kompetensi (Konsep dan Implementasi Kurikulum 2004) (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya), h. 130.
- Anggraini, D. L., Yulianti, M., Faizah, S. N., Belawati, A. P., Guru, P., & Ibtidaiyah, M. (2022). Peran guru dalam mengembangkan kurikulum merdeka. 1(3).
- Daradjat, Z. (2006). Ilmu Pendidikan Islam, Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.
- Dhani, R. R. (2020). Peran guru dalam pengembangan kurikulum. Jurnal Serunai Administrasi Pendidikan, 9(1), 45-50.
- Djaelani, A. R. (2013). Teknik pengumpulan data dalam penelitian kualitatif. Majalah Ilmiah Pawiyatan, 20(1), 82-92.
- Djafar Siddik. (2006). Konsep Dasar Ilmu Pendidikan Islam, (Bandung: Cita Pustaka Media, 2006), h. 39 1. [Http://Repository.Radenintan.Ac.Id/1976/4/Bab_II.Pdf](http://Repository.Radenintan.Ac.Id/1976/4/Bab_II.Pdf), 11-46.
- Fitriana, L. (2020). Pendidikan Merdeka: Transformasi Sistem Pendidikan Nasional. . Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Scholastic, 2(1), 55-66.
- Hasibuan, A., dkk. (2023). Metode observasi dalam penelitian: Teknik dan aplikasi dalam penelitian pendidikan (hal. 8-15).
- Husna Nashihin, Yenny Aulia Rachman, Betania Kartika, Nurmasinta Fadhilah, T. H. (2023). Pendidikan TPQ Kontra Radikalisme berhaluan Aswaja (M. D. Yahya (ed.)). Academia Publication. [https://idr.uin-antasari.ac.id/22876/2/Pendidikan TPQ Kontra Radikalisme Berhaluan Aswaja -1-.pdf](https://idr.uin-antasari.ac.id/22876/2/Pendidikan%20TPQ%20Kontra%20Radikalisme%20Berhaluan%20Aswaja-1-.pdf)
- Husna Nashihin, & Yenny Aulia Rachman. (2024). Education strategy of counter-radicalism with aswaja orientation in quranic education centers in indonesia. At Turops: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam, 6(1), 445-450. <https://doi.org/10.51468/jpi.v6i1.707>
- Kuswanto, E. (2014). Peranan Guru PAI dalam Pendidikan Akhlak di Sekolah. Mudarrisa: jurnal kajian pendidikan islam, 6(2), 194-220.
- Muthoifin, Erawati, D., Nashihin, H., Mahmudulhassan, Setiawan, B. A., Rofi, S., & Hafidz. (2024). An Interfaith Perspective on Multicultural Education for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Journal of Lifestyle and SDGs Review, 4(3), e01720. <https://doi.org/10.47172/2965-730X.SDGsReview.v4.n03.pe01720>
- Maulansyah, R. D., Febrianty, D., & Asbari, M. (2023). Peran Guru dalam Peningkatan Mutu Pendidikan : Penting dan Genting ! 02(05), 31-35.
- Nartin, S. E., Faturrahman, S. E., Ak, M., Deni, H. A., MM, C., Santoso, Y. H., & Eliyah, S. K. (2024). Metode penelitian kualitatif. Cendikia Mulia Mandiri.
- Pahlawan, U., Tambusai, T., & Wahyuni, S. (2022). Jurnal Pendidikan dan Konseling, 4
- Sanjaya, W. (2007). Strategi Pembelajaran Berorientasi Standar Proses Pendidikan. Jakarta: Kencana.
- Saputra, A. (2022). Strategi Evaluasi Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam Pada SMP. Genta Mulia: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan, 13(2), 73-83.
- Stkip, D., & Daya, B. (2019). HUBUNGAN KOMPETENSI GURU DENGAN KINERJA GURU Rabukit Damanik. 8(2).
- Sugiyono. (2017). Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D yang diterbitkan oleh Alfabeta, Bandung,

- Sulastri, S., Fitria, H., & Martha, A. (2020). Kompetensi profesional guru dalam meningkatkan mutu pendidikan. *Journal of Education Research*, 1(3), 258-264.
- Susanti, S. D. (2015). Integrasi Nilai-Nilai Demokrasi Dalam Pembelajaran Ips Di Smp Negeri 13 Yogyakarta. *Biomass Chem Eng*, 49(23-6), 40-68.
- Syaodih Sukmadinata, Nana. (2017). Pengembangan Kurikulum Teori Dan Praktik. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya. [https://eprints.uny.ac.id/53740/4/TAS BAB III 13416241020.pdf](https://eprints.uny.ac.id/53740/4/TAS%20BAB%20III%2013416241020.pdf)
- Syaiful Anam, H. N. (2023). Metode Penelitian (Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, Eksperimen, dan R&D). PT GLOBAL EKSEKUTIF TEKNOLOGI. https://books.google.co.id/books?hl=id&lr=&id=w-bFEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&ots=vRP1bKcVRG&sig=dA4E7fb8uf45B7Uv87JkztTGviQ&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Ulfa, H., Kurniandini, S., & Ihsan, A. M. (2023). The Enforcement of Marriage Law (No 16 of 2019) Through The Ambassadors of Child Marriage Prevention in Tembarak District , Temanggung Regency I . Introduction. *Pena Justisia: Media Komunikasi Dan Kajian Hukum*, 22(1), 309-325.
- Tindangen, A., dkk. (2020). Psikologi sosial dalam konteks pendidikan (hal. 50-60).
- Waruwu, M. (2023). Pendekatan Penelitian Pendidikan: Metode Penelitian Kualitatif, Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif dan Metode Penelitian Kombinasi (Mixed Method). *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai* , 7(1), 2896-2910.
- Yudhana, A. (2021). Merdeka Belajar: Revolusi Pendidikan Abad 21. *Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia*, 10(1), 15- 22.