

AN ANALYSIS OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS' COMPETENCE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Ihsan Nur Fadli^{1*}

UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia

ihsannurfadli789@gmail.com

Ervina Rahmawati²

UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia

ervinarahmawati622@gmail.com

Nasywa Azzahra³

UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia

nasywaxazzahra099@gmail.com

Siti Aisyah⁴

UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia

icai61229@gmail.com

Afriantoni⁵

UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia

afriantoni_uin@radenfatah.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the competence of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in primary schools, with a specific focus on SD IT Nurul Iman Palembang. Employing a qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that IRE teachers possess a good conceptual understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum. However, they encounter several challenges, including difficulties in integrating religious content with interdisciplinary themes, the complexity of curriculum textbooks, and the practical application of teaching modules and scientific approaches. To address these issues, teachers employ collaborative strategies, adapt instructional methods, and engage in continuous reflection. These efforts are essential to ensure the effective implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and to foster students' competence in facing 21st-century challenges.

Keywords: *Islamic Religious Education, Teacher Competence, Merdeka Curriculum, Primary School, Curriculum Implementation*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kompetensi guru Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) dalam mengimplementasikan Kurikulum Merdeka di sekolah dasar, dengan fokus pada SD IT Nurul Iman Palembang. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus, melalui teknik pengumpulan data berupa observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru PAI memiliki pemahaman konseptual yang baik terhadap Kurikulum Merdeka. Namun, mereka menghadapi beberapa tantangan, seperti kesulitan dalam mengintegrasikan konten keagamaan dengan tema-tema lintas disiplin, kompleksitas buku ajar kurikulum, serta penerapan modul ajar dan pendekatan saintifik. Untuk mengatasi tantangan tersebut, guru menerapkan strategi kolaboratif, menyesuaikan metode pembelajaran, dan melakukan refleksi secara berkala. Upaya ini penting dalam memastikan implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka berjalan efektif dan mampu membentuk siswa yang kompeten dalam menghadapi tantangan abad ke-21.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Agama Islam, Kompetensi Guru, Kurikulum Merdeka, Sekolah Dasar, Implementasi Kurikulum

Introduction

The *Merdeka Curriculum* is one of the Indonesian government's efforts to reform the education system in order to produce graduates who are not only academically proficient but also equipped with essential life skills needed in the era of globalization. This curriculum is designed to address the shortcomings of previous curricula by emphasizing competency-based learning that balances the development of students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Such an approach is expected to prepare students to become critical, creative individuals capable of competing globally.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at the primary school level is crucial, as this stage forms the foundation of the formal education system. At this level, students begin to develop basic competencies that will serve as the groundwork for learning at higher levels. Therefore, teachers' proper understanding and application of the curriculum are essential to ensure that its objectives can be effectively achieved.

Fadillah (2014) states that "The Merdeka Curriculum aims to instill values that are reflected in attitudes, which can be compared to the skills gained by students through knowledge acquired in school." The Merdeka Curriculum is characterized by integrated learning, which is implemented through thematic-integrative learning approaches.

According to Mariamah and Ruwaidah (2019), there are three stages in the implementation process of the Merdeka Curriculum in learning activities: lesson planning, instructional implementation, and learning assessment or evaluation conducted by teachers. However, in practice, many challenges are faced by primary school teachers. One of the main obstacles is the varied understanding among teachers regarding the concepts and implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Although many teachers have participated in training sessions, translating theoretical knowledge into practical application often encounters difficulties. This can be attributed to various factors, including time constraints, limited resources, and insufficient support from schools.

Ahmad (2014) revealed that a study by the Indonesian Teachers' Union Federation (FSGI) showed that the Merdeka Curriculum training conducted in 17 districts/cities across 10 provinces encountered several issues. One major issue was that the training failed to immediately shift teachers' mindsets toward the new learning approach, with many teachers continuing to rely on conventional, lecture-based methods. In contrast, the Merdeka Curriculum demands a shift toward a scientific approach. This is in line with Retnawati's (2015) findings, which indicated that the training and dissemination of the Merdeka Curriculum had yet to provide comprehensive understanding among teachers. Therefore, Ahmad (2014) emphasized that changing teachers' mindsets to adopt the scientific approach in learning requires years of learning and habituation.

Furthermore, the heavy administrative workload is also a common concern among teachers. The Merdeka Curriculum requires educators to conduct authentic assessments and produce detailed reports on students' progress. This process demands significant time and energy, which may divert teachers' focus from the learning process itself. Consequently, the effectiveness of learning may be compromised, and the curriculum's goal to holistically develop students' competencies may not be fully achieved.

Another challenge lies in the limited facilities and infrastructure available in many primary schools. The Merdeka Curriculum encourages the use of various learning media and technologies to support a more interactive and engaging teaching-learning process. However, many schools, particularly those in remote areas, still struggle to provide adequate resources. This situation hinders the effective and comprehensive implementation of the curriculum.

Therefore, analyzing teachers' understanding of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in primary schools is crucial. Such analysis helps identify the extent of teachers' comprehension and readiness to implement the curriculum, uncover the obstacles they face, and find appropriate solutions. In doing so, improvements and quality enhancement in education can be carried out more effectively and strategically, allowing the Merdeka Curriculum to fulfill its aim of producing competent graduates ready to face global challenges.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study method. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' comprehension of the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*. The research was conducted at SD IT Nurul Iman Palembang in April 2025. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. The data sources in this study consisted of both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through direct observation of classroom learning activities and interviews with the principal and teachers. Secondary data were gathered from supporting documents such as the school profile and the Teaching Module Plan documents used as teaching guidelines.

The data analysis techniques in this study involved data collection, data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification. The data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Once collected, the data were reduced to select those relevant to the research objectives. Subsequently, the data were displayed to systematically and clearly organize the information. The final step involved drawing conclusions and verifying the findings.

Findings and Discussion

Teachers' Understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum

Based on interviews with teachers at SD IT Nurul Iman Palembang, it was found that teachers possess a solid foundational understanding of the goals and core concepts of the *Merdeka Curriculum*. They recognize that the curriculum is designed to foster students' critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration through an integrative and project-based learning approach. Teachers are also aware that the curriculum encourages students to become active participants in the learning

process, moving away from passive, teacher-centered models. Thematic and integrative approaches are frequently utilized in their classroom instruction.

Furthermore, teachers understand the key components of student assessment as outlined in the *Merdeka Curriculum*, including:

1. KI-1: Assessment of students' religious attitudes
2. KI-2: Assessment of students' social behavior
3. KI-3: Assessment of students' knowledge
4. KI-4: Assessment of students' skills

Teachers at SD IT Nurul Iman Palembang prepare for instruction by developing *Teaching Modules* (Modul Ajar), which serve as comprehensive planning documents outlining instructional activities for each session, semester, or longer periods. These modules guide lesson planning and classroom delivery, ensuring alignment with the principles of the curriculum.

Challenges in Curriculum Implementation

Despite their understanding, teachers face significant challenges in implementing the *Merdeka Curriculum*. A key difficulty lies in integrating content across subjects. For instance, teachers struggle to establish meaningful connections between subjects such as Civics (PPKn) and Arts and Culture (SBdP). The structure of the integrated textbooks, which combine multiple subjects into a single volume, adds to the confusion, making it difficult for teachers to distinguish between subject-specific content.

Additional challenges include:

1. Understanding the components of the Teaching Module
2. Formulating specific and measurable learning indicators
3. Integrating learning objectives from multiple subjects
4. Synthesizing content across different disciplines
5. Applying diverse instructional models and methods as prescribed in the Teaching Module
6. Implementing a scientific approach in classroom instruction

These issues are in line with Retnawati's (2015) findings, which revealed that teachers often find the assessment system in the *Merdeka Curriculum* to be overly complex, especially in evaluating students' attitudes. Poor planning and execution of assessments can lead to incomplete learning data, which in turn hampers accurate student report generation. Wijayanti (2014) emphasized that the curriculum's assessment principles—continuous and comprehensive evaluation—are essential to

promote student autonomy, collaboration, and self-assessment skills. Therefore, the ability to conduct valid and reliable assessments is a critical competence for teachers.

Obstacles in Teaching Module Development

According to *Permendikbud* (2016), the Teaching Module in the Merdeka Curriculum must include structured components such as instructional planning, media and learning resources, assessment tools, and learning scenarios. Teachers are expected to develop these modules systematically and adapt them to interactive, student-centered teaching. However, many teachers find it difficult to articulate the scientific processes clearly and to design suitable instruments for learning assessment.

This issue is supported by Kustijono and Wiwin (2014), who found that teachers struggled to create valid assessment instruments and rubrics, and to conduct assessments that aligned with national standards. Alimuddin (2014) also noted that such challenges often stem from misconceptions about assessment regulations outlined in *Permendikbud*. In addition, unfamiliarity with scientific and contextual learning models further complicates implementation, especially when transitioning from conventional methods.

Time Management and Drawing Conclusions in Teaching

Teachers also reported difficulties in managing time effectively, particularly during the “concluding” phase of lessons. According to teacher testimonies, this activity is often rushed or skipped due to time constraints. The inability to summarize learning effectively diminishes opportunities for reflection and consolidation of knowledge. Teachers also expressed challenges in selecting appropriate strategies for conclusion activities. This highlights the need for more thoughtful time allocation in Teaching Modules and realistic planning that aligns with actual classroom dynamics.

Strategies for Overcoming Implementation Challenges

To overcome these challenges, teachers at SD IT Nurul Iman Palembang employ various strategies:

1. Peer Collaboration: Teachers regularly engage in collegial discussions to share experiences and effective practices.
2. Instructional Adaptation: Teachers modify instructional approaches by using more creative and interactive learning media.
3. Self-reflection and Evaluation: Continuous reflection is used to improve instructional quality and problem-solving.

This aligns with Zunani and Zahara (2021), who described how a teacher at MIS At-Taqwa Sambas frequently utilized a variety of media—visual and audiovisual—tailored to specific learning objectives. Adequate school facilities enabled the effective integration of these media, underscoring the teacher's role as an educator, facilitator, and mediator capable of leveraging technology to enrich learning experiences.

The Role of Teaching Methods and Learning Resources

As Nata (2015) explains, teaching methods are structured steps for delivering ideas that enhance cognitive and psychomotor domains. Teachers must follow the guidelines established in the Teaching Module and utilize appropriate learning resources. According to Mulyasa (2014), learning resources are key to the success of the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers are encouraged to supplement textbook materials with additional resources that suit students' cognitive development levels.

Authentic Assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum

Majid (2014) emphasized that assessment within the Merdeka Curriculum encompasses three domains: knowledge, attitude, and skills. Authentic assessment involves several techniques: (1) direct measurement of student skills tied to long-term educational goals, (2) performance tasks that require complex engagement, and (3) analysis of the processes students use to demonstrate their learning. Raymond (2012) supported this by defining authentic assessment as real-world evaluation that captures student knowledge, attitudes, and skills in meaningful contexts.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SD IT Nurul Iman Palembang reflects both promise and challenge. While teachers demonstrate a commendable understanding of curriculum principles, persistent obstacles in integration, assessment, module design, and time management indicate the need for targeted support. Regular mentoring, contextual training, and improved infrastructure could significantly enhance curriculum enactment. Ultimately, such improvements will help realize the curriculum's vision of producing globally competitive, independent, and competent learners.

Conclusion

The implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* at SD IT Nurul Iman Palembang demonstrates that teachers possess a solid understanding of its core goals and concepts, namely, fostering students' critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration through integrative and project-based learning approaches. However, several significant challenges hinder its optimal application. These include difficulties in

integrating interdisciplinary subject matter, the complexity of curriculum textbooks, limited comprehension of components within the *Teaching Module (Modul Ajar)*, and the application of scientific approaches in classroom instruction.

To address these issues, teachers at SD IT Nurul Iman Palembang have employed several strategies, such as collaborating with colleagues to share effective practices, adapting instructional methods by utilizing more creative and interactive media, and engaging in regular self-reflection and evaluation. These strategies are expected to enhance the effectiveness of curriculum implementation.

By continuously improving teacher competence and instructional practices, the Merdeka Curriculum can be more effectively realized, ultimately achieving its goal of producing competent, independent learners who are well-prepared to face the challenges of the global era.

References

- Astri, A., Harjono, A., Jaelani, A. K., & Karma, I. N. (2021). Analisis kesulitan guru dalam penerapan kurikulum Merdeka di Sekolah Dasar. *Renjana Pendidikan Dasar*, 1(3), 175-182.
- Astuti, S. E. P., Aslan, A., & Parni, P. (2023). Optimalisasi Peran Guru Dalam Proses Pembelajaran Kurikulum Merdeka Di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Swasta. *SITTAH: Journal of Primary Education*, 4(1), 73-84.
- Fadlillah, M. (2014). Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka dalam Pembelajaran SD/MI, SMP/MTs, & SMA/MA. Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media.
- Fifani, N. A., Safrizal, S., & Fadriati, F. (2023). Analisis Kesulitan Guru Dalam Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka Di SD Kota Batusangkar. *Pendas Mahakam: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Sekolah Dasar*, 8(1), 19-27.
- Heryahya, A., Herawati, E. S. B., Susandi, A. D., & Zulaiha, F. (2022). Analisis kesiapan guru sekolah dasar dalam implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka. *Journal of Education and Instruction (JOEAI)*, 5(2), 548-562.
- Hosnan, M. (2014). Pendekatan Saintifik dan Kontekstual dalam Pembelajaran Abad 21. Bogor: Ghalia Indonesia.
- Lestari, I. P., & Suartama, I. K. (2018). Persepsi Guru terhadap Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka di Sekolah Dasar. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar Indonesia*, 3(2), 1-7.
- Mulyasa, E. (2014). Pengembangan dan Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Palobo, M., & Tembang, Y. (2019). Analisis kesulitan guru dalam implementasi kurikulum Merdeka di Kota Merauke. *Sebatik*, 23(2), 307-316.
- Pohan, S. A., & Dafit, F. (2021). Pelaksanaan pembelajaran kurikulum Merdeka di sekolah dasar. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 5(3), 1191-1197.
- Pratiwi, E. Y. R., Asmarani, R., Sundana, L., Rochmania, D. D., Susilo, C. Z., &

- Dwinata, A. (2023). Analisis Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar terhadap Pemahaman P5 bagi Siswa Sekolah Dasar. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 7(2), 1313-1322.
- Putri, R. D. P., & Suyadi, S. (2021). Problematika Pembelajaran Daring dalam Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka Tingkat Sekolah Dasar. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 5(5), 3912-3919.
- Riyadi, L., & Sukmayadi, Y. (2023). Persepsi Guru Sekolah Dasar pada Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka dan Kurikulum Merdeka dalam Mata Pelajaran Seni Budaya. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 7(3), 1410-1419.
- Rusmiati, M. N., Ashifa, R., & Herlambang, Y. T. (2023). Analisis Problematika Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka di Sekolah Dasar. *Naturalistic: Jurnal Kajian Dan Penelitian Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran*, 7(2), 1490-1499.
- Sumarsih, I., Marliyani, T., Hadiyansah, Y., Hernawan, A. H., & Prihantini, P. (2022). Analisis implementasi kurikulum merdeka di sekolah penggerak sekolah dasar. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 6(5), 8248-8258.
- Suparno, S., & Krissanti, E. W. (2017). Analisis Pemahaman Guru Sekolah Dasar terhadap Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar*, 2(1), 1-9.
- Wijayanti, P. S., & Widodo, H. (2019). Analisis Pemahaman Guru Sekolah Dasar terhadap Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar*, 11(1), 1-8.