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Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Al-Qur'an Hadith Learning at Madrasah Aliyah

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Abstract

Indonesia's curriculum reform has established the Merdeka Curriculum. Every teacher must prioritize students' freedom, independence, and creativity in implementing it. The research aims to explore the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Al-Qur'an Hadith learning at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Langkat. The method used is qualitative research. Data collection techniques use observation, interview, and documentation methods. The study found that Al-Quran Hadith learning has used the Merdeka Curriculum learning materials. Teachers also adapt their teaching methods to student needs and interests, identifying strengths and weaknesses. One of the learning methods used in the learning process is project-based learning, which is used to improve critical thinking skills, foster student initiative in working, motivate, and develop group interpersonal relationships. It has an impact on improving student engagement and enthusiasm for learning. This study concluded that the Merdeka curriculum is fully implemented. That emphasizes flexible learning activities, project-based learning, and student-centered approaches and focuses on developing students' competencies.

Keywords: Al-Qur'an Hadith Learning, Independent Learning, Merdeka Curriculum.

Abstrak

Reformasi kurikulum Indonesia telah memapankan Kurikulum Merdeka. Setiap guru harus mengedepankan kebebasan, kemandirian, dan kreativitas siswa dalam melaksanakannya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pelaksanaan Kurikulum Merdeka dalam pembelajaran Al-Qur'an Hadis di Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Langkat. Metode yang digunakan adalah penelitian kualitatif. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan metode observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menemukan bahwa pembelajaran Al-Quran Hadis telah menggunakan materi pembelajaran Kurikulum Merdeka. Guru juga menyesuaikan metode pengajarannya dengan kebutuhan dan minat siswa, mengidentifikasi kekuatan dan kelemahannya. Salah satu metode pembelajaran yang digunakan dalam proses pembelajaran adalah pembelajaran berbasis proyek, yang digunakan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan berpikir kritis, menumbuhkan inisiatif siswa dalam bekerja, memotivasi, dan mengembangkan hubungan interpersonal kelompok. Hal ini berdampak pada peningkatan keterlibatan dan semangat belajar siswa. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Kurikulum Merdeka telah diterapkan secara penuh. Hal tersebut menekankan pada kegiatan pembelajaran yang fleksibel, pembelajaran berbasis proyek, dan pendekatan yang berpusat pada siswa serta fokus pada pengembangan kompetensi siswa.

Kata kunci: Kurikulum Merdeka, Merdeka Belajar, Pembelajaran Al-Qur'an Hadis.

Introduction

In improving the human resources of the Indonesian state, there is a need for the state to initiate genuine efforts to enhance the potential of various sectors, one of which is the education sector. The reality of education in Indonesia, until now, seems to be still looking for the proper identity to develop the quality of education in a better direction (Budiharso & Tarman, 2020; Dacholfany, 2015). Curriculum renewal occurs in education development in Indonesia (Abidin et al., 2023). Every period, there is an evaluation process for implementing the curriculum (Subando et al., 2021; Sugiri & Priatmoko, 2020). Many think that as policymakers change, the curriculum will also change (Rianty et al., 2023). Education is a planned effort in the process of guidance and learning for individuals to grow into dignified, responsible, creative, knowledgeable, healthy, and moral (noble character) to produce quality generations who can ensure the country becomes prosperous (Nuriawati & Achadi, 2023). The success of education can judge the progress of a nation.

The success of schooling lies in the curriculum used because it functions as planning, implementing, and evaluating learning. It must also consider the learning needs of students (Ho & Lim, 2021; Sukirman & Amelia, 2023). Therefore, the curriculum must continuously be assessed, dynamic and constantly developed or adapted according to students' context and needs to build competency in the present and future (Sulkipli et al., 2023). The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum concept that requires students to have independence. The independence in question is that each student can access knowledge obtained from formal and non-formal education. Each student has expertise in their respective fields, so students can find or choose any field they like. In the Merdeka Curriculum, students can develop their potential (Baharuddin, 2021; Wijaya et al., 2024).

Students are given the freedom to develop the talents they have. That supports student creativity and will manifest itself through teacher guidance. Demands for teachers to be able to create innovative learning concepts for students will also be realized. In the Merdeka Curriculum, teacher and student learning together will create a more active and productive learning concept for teachers and students (Nasution et al., 2023). Based on the description above, it can be concluded that the Merdeka Curriculum is an educational innovation during the COVID-19 pandemic disaster and continues to be developed in the world of education so that it becomes part of the implementation of schools or *madrasahs* throughout Indonesia to standardize the curriculum of education units.

The Merdeka Curriculum has been widely applied in various schools or *madrasahs* in Indonesia. As a component of the most recent advancements in education, numerous challenges are associated with implementing the Merdeka Curriculum (Wasehudin et al., 2023), particularly in Madrasah Aliyah. These challenges consist of human resources and facilities (Bahri et al., 2024), teacher's digital skills (Melisa et al., 2023), and interests (Mulyani et al., 2023). Apart from these challenges, there are also innovative efforts in implementing it, such as integrating fiqh material with *kitab kuning* (Afandi & Sayyi, 2023) and utilizing the learning model to accommodate the needs of Merdeka Curriculum (M et al., 2024).

This study differs from the earlier research by offering a more specific exploration in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum with other contexts of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Langkat focusing on the Al-Qur'an Hadith subject. The selection of this madrasah refers to the decree from the Directorate General of Islamic Education of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia concerning the madrasah's implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum for the 2022/2023 academic year, where this madrasah was chosen as one of pilot project implementing the Merdeka Curriculum for the Aliyah level in the Langkat Regency area. Another consideration is that this madrasah is one of the favorite madrasahs; the principal and teachers have attended Merdeka Curriculum training; and have adequate infrastructure.

Consequently, this research enriches academic insight for researchers and readers, particularly in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah on the Al-Qur'an Hadith subject. So that it can be a reference or source of knowledge and knowledge development to improve science and enrich references to studies on implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. It will also be a reference to researchers afterward on the development of the education curriculum in Indonesia in general. For teachers, it can provide new steps and colors in teaching and learning activities to encourage students to be more independent in thinking, free in working, and in educating.

Methods

This research was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 2 Langkat. The approach used in this case is qualitative with a descriptive qualitative method. Based on Sugiyono, this method is more suitable for qualitative use because this research explains phenomena or events in the particular social environment under study (Sugiyono, 2021). The

data sources needed in this study are informants, teachers of the Al-Qur'an Hadith subject, vice principals of academic affairs and curriculum, and students.

Data collection techniques in this study were participant observation, unstructured interviews, and documentation. The data analysis techniques used are the condensation of data by choosing the main things and discarding useless things, presenting data in the form of a short review to make it easier for researchers to interpret what happened and design the subsequent work, and verification of data by concluding to prove the correctness of the information obtained (Miles et al., 2014).

There are two types of validity for this study: internal validity and external validity. Internal validity relates to the level of accuracy of the research with the results obtained, and external validity relates to the accuracy of whether the study results can be generalized or applied to the population where the sample was obtained. Data validity in qualitative research includes four stages: credibility, transferability, and confirmability test (Sugiyono, 2021).

Results and Discussion

Madrasah Aliyah View on the Merdeka Curriculum Concept

Etymologically, the curriculum comes from Greek (*curir*), runner, and curare, a place to gallop. So, the term curriculum comes from the world of sports in Ancient Roman times in Greece, which means the distance that must be in Ancient Roman times in Greece, which means the distance that runners must travel from the start line to the finish. It can be understood that the distance that must be traveled here means the curriculum with the content and subject matter used as the period students must take to obtain a diploma (Selamet, 2023).

A curriculum is a plan prepared to smooth the teaching and learning process under the guidance and responsibility of schools or educational institutions and teaching staff. Furthermore, some curriculum theorists argue that the curriculum includes not only all planned activities but events that occur under the supervision of the school. So, in addition to formal curriculum activities often called co-curricular or extra-curricular activities (Permana, 2023).

Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum with diverse intracurricular learning where the content will be more optimal so that students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies. Teachers can choose various teaching devices to tailor learning to students' needs and interests. Curriculum development or innovation requires a strong

foundation and is based on the results of deep thinking. Suppose curriculum development is not based on a solid foundation. In that case, it can have fatal consequences for the education system because this will be directly correlated with the failure of the human development process (Putra et al., 2022).

The concept of the Merdeka Curriculum is naturally applied evenly in Indonesian educational institutions today. In addition to affecting the development of students, this concept will also make it easier for teachers to implement innovative learning processes. The burden borne by teachers so far can be solved through the Merdeka Curriculum. In addition, it will also be a solution in responding to educational challenges in the era of digitalization like today. For this reason, we, as academics, must be at the forefront of driving the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian education today (Indarta et al., 2022).

Projects to strengthen the achievement of the Pancasila student profile are developed based on specific issues implemented by the government. The project does not aim to achieve particular learning objectives, so it is unrelated to the subject's content (Habibah & Nurhidin, 2023). The purpose of the Merdeka Curriculum is so that educational units can manage learning time and teach school subjects so that it is easier for students to achieve learning gradually. The Madrasah Aliyah level includes Stage E (Sari & Gumindari, 2022).

MAN 2 Langkat is Madrasah Aliyah under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, appointed by the regional office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of North Sumatra as one of the Merdeka Curriculum pilots for the Langkat regency. The application of the curriculum is specifically for grades X, XI, and XII. Several methods are used in the Merdeka Curriculum's learning process, including a project-based learning method. Guidelines have been given for implementation, namely KMA Number 347 of 2022, concerning guidelines for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs. The above was reinforced by Mrs. Lenna R. Pohan, Head of MAN 2 Langkat, regarding the Merdeka Curriculum:

"The concept of Merdeka learning is a concept that gives freedom to students to innovate, be creative in developing themselves according to their talents so that they can create a product from the results of their imagination and many people can enjoy that product, also giving freedom to teachers to be creative in creating learning models according to character students, but the freedom in question is not absolute freedom but freedom bound by academic rules and student rules. In essence, applying Merdeka learning provides opportunities for all parties to develop the potential in schools".

Based on the researcher's interview with the head of MAN 2, it can be concluded that it is an outstanding concept because it can explore the potential, talent, and creativity of students and also spur teachers as a driving force in meaningful learning to be creative in

creating learning that can make students independent. According to him, the freedom in question is not absolute freedom that can cause concern for many figures/circles, but freedom that still relies on school academic rules and student discipline. Ethical, religious, and cultural values are still observed.

Vice principals of academic affairs and curriculum's view as a pioneer in the field of curriculum when implementing the the Merdeka Curriculum expressed his opinion. "As the vice principal of academic affairs and curriculum, as for my efforts in implementing freedom of learning, I initially had small discussions with the principal as a stakeholder, then continued to discuss with stakeholders outside the school, such as the local government and committee administrators. Furthermore, socializing the concept of Merdeka learning to the school internal and community ".

Based on the results of an interview with the vice principals of academic affairs and curriculum, implementing freedom of learning in schools began with discussions with the principal as a stakeholder after he understood about freedom of learning and received support, followed by small discussions with stakeholders outside the school such as the local government and committee administrators as a tongue between the school and the parents of students. The Merdeka learning concept will be socialized after receiving support and encouragement from school stakeholders. The first is socialization to the internal party of the school, namely both to teachers and education staff and, more specifically, to students. The second is socialization to the general public through the school website and other social media.

Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the Al-Qur'an Hadith Subject

The results of the researcher's observation obtained data that the curriculum in MAN 2 Langkat has fully used the Merdeka Curriculum. The school institution also explained that it has been 2 years since the school implemented the curriculum, which means that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is still running in the phases of grades X, XI, and XII and is very focused on that level. So, in this situation, the researchers focused and limited the research to X, XI, and XII classes that had been running for four semesters. The researchers also explored further data about the learning process in the classroom on the Al-Qur'an Hadith subject according to the policy of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum (IKM).

Related to that, the madrasah principal explained: "For those here, freedom of learning focuses on our students, and monomer unites students; in essence, it is freedom of learning. Teachers like me always talked in the past, but now they are not children involved in it. Everything is like no teacher, so we side with the child; starting from leading, everything is like no teacher, so we side with the child. Automatically, the teacher will give lessons first, so children can think more critically about this IKM than before because children know more about their respective tasks."

Compared to Curriculum 13, the assessment is carried out at the end so that it does not measure students' ability first. However, the Merdeka Curriculum will be very focused, with the assessment at the beginning to show the types of understanding from students. The purpose of achieving the lessons of the Al-Qur'an Hadith is not just the formal fulfillment of lessons but how students can actualize them in everyday life. According to a teacher of the Al-Qur'an Hadith, project-based learning is a learner-centered learning model that provides a meaningful learning experience for students. Students learning experiences and concepts are built based on the products produced. The project is focused on raising issues in the surrounding environment to increase further students' sensitivity to the environment and critical and analytical thinking skills, as well as to positively impact the value of learning from the experience gained during their time as students.

The components of matter have indeed been determined from the center. However, the related picture of material development in MAN 2 Langkat is still extensive. Indeed, it is not in detail related to thematic hadith or thematic exegesis, but it is only the delivery of theory in general. For example, the understanding of the Al-Qur'an, the evidence of the miracles of the Al-Qur'an, the points of the contents of the Al-Qur'an, the knowledge of hadith, the division of hadith, various hadiths, and others. In addition, some projects must be done, meaning that they are not limited to knowledge in class but do learning activities outside. The example in semester 1 discusses the hadith. Students look for hadiths that are *sahih* whose quality of hadith has been proven, then observe issues or problems that exist in society through mass and print media (newspapers) and go into the field directly. The goal is to train mentally to add students' insight and experience. Likewise, in the second semester, which discusses the Al-Qur'an.

The material applied in the Merdeka Curriculum is still the same as the 2013 curriculum. Nothing has changed about the material because this is only a form of formality. This Merdeka Curriculum strives for students to develop the knowledge learned following

their talents or potential. So this is where the teacher's attention is on getting to know each student's character, interests, and talents to be given attention related to the needs, shortcomings, and difficulties faced in following the lesson (Lince, 2022).

Based on the Merdeka Curriculum assessment standards in the regulation of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology number 21 of 2022 concerning assessment standards for education in early childhood, the basic education level, and the secondary education level, it goes into formative assessment where to assess the achievement of learning outcomes of students as a basis for determining grade increase and graduation from the education unit (Sadat et al., 2022).

In MAN 2 Langkat, the Merdeka Curriculum evaluation component is developed at the beginning (pretest) from chapter to chapter of discussion. In contrast, the 2013 Curriculum conducts an evaluation at the end (posttest) after completion of the material. If now, at the beginning of the assessment, which is diagnosed in the Al-Qur'an Hadith lesson, it is like testing students first to read the Al-Qur'an. From here, the teacher can see whether the student's ability is suitable, if a lot is wrong, and whether it can be all.

However, by assessing at the beginning, the teacher can guess what kind of lesson the lesson is given after the new reading lesson is evaluated so students can be grouped and which ones need to be considered to improve their knowledge and understanding of the Al-Quran and continued with hadith lessons, then re-evaluated. According to a teacher of the Al-Qur'an Hadith, the assessment at the beginning is beneficial in seeing the effectiveness of students. In addition, before starting the lesson, they will be tested with various questions about the Al-Qur'an Hadith lesson. The goal is that they are trained in His thinking power so they can be encouraged to learn more and develop their knowledge from the knowledge obtained. The rest will be equipped by the teacher about vagueness and incomprehension.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the Merdeka Curriculum in the piloting madrasah Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Langkat has been fully implemented. The material presented has used the Merdeka Curriculum. The teachers also already understand what is applied to each lesson, leading to the Merdeka Curriculum. Especially the Al-Qur'an Hadith because the material presented is the same as the 2013 Curriculum. It still applies this Merdeka Curriculum to students so that they are accustomed to receiving material intake without having to be extra to find out for themselves. Sometimes, more students feel less prepared.

MAN 2 Langkat is one of the MA-level schools in the Langkat district that implements the Merdeka Curriculum. The curriculum is still relatively new for the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Teachers must also adjust what will later become needs or shortcomings to be maximized. It is a little tricky for both teachers and students. But back again, this curriculum wants to provide a new color for the world of education that gives teachers and students the freedom to gain effectiveness in learning and teaching.

Since the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the last two years at MAN 2 Langkat, there has been an increase in the enthusiasm of students in following the lessons of the Al-Qur'an Hadith subject, including the work on each project, even though, in this case, teachers must be able to adjust learning to the abilities of students.

Learning of the Al-Qur'an Hadith

The existence of material on the basics of the science of the Al-Qur'an Hadith at the grade X level with the competence of dominant cognitive processes at the analyzing level (C4) can help students in facing doubts about religion, which provides many abstract teachings, so it is hoped that the primary material of the science of the Al-Qur'an Hadith can encourage the growth of students' awareness of the truth and the importance of obeying Allah's commands, religious commandments derived from the Al-Qur'an Hadith (Fitriyani & Saifullah, 2020).

Learning activities in the Merdeka Curriculum for the material delivery are up to the teacher who teaches as long as the material is delivered within a period. Then, if it has not been delivered, it can be coordinated with the teacher at the top level again if there is material that has not been delivered and is still in phase. So, there is a collaboration between teachers in one phase of learning the Al-Qur'an Hadith, which is organized based on the Merdeka Curriculum (Aulia & Minan, 2021). The teacher implemented learning Al-Qur'an Hadith. Before implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in the classroom, teachers must prepare what needs to be ready because there are differences between the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and the previous curriculum, the 2013 Curriculum. The results of this observation can be strengthened by the statement of another teacher of the Al-Qur'an Hadith as follows:

"Before the learning process, I always say hello first. Greetings are an important part of Islam that involves social interaction between fellow Muslims. In learning the Al-Qur'an Hadith, greetings are essential in forming a good relationship between learners. In addition, greetings also reflect good morals and a friendly attitude that is

in line with the teachings of Islam. In class, I always teach students to greet their friends when entering and leaving the room. It aims to create a harmonious learning environment filled with a sense of brotherhood among them. I always invite students to understand the importance of prayer in daily life. In learning the Al-Qur'an Hadith, prayer is one aspect that needs to be emphasized. Through prayer, learners can strengthen their relationship with Allah and get His guidance in understanding and practicing what is learned about Islamic religious education".

From the observations and interviews above, it can be concluded that it is essential to say greetings before starting a lesson. By speaking and answering greetings, relationships or interactions between people can be well established. Likewise, reading prayers when starting learning is also essential before entering into core learning; the goal is to be given an understanding of knowledge by Allah SWT. Next, the teacher conducts attendance. The teacher checks the attendance of students by the way the students present are told to mention the students who are not present; then the teacher asks the reason for the attendance.

Taking a method is very influential in creating fun learning. A method may be suitable for one material. Still, other material is unsuitable, and if the teacher has used a method, students still do not feel comfortable because the response is lacking. The teacher must change his learning strategy, such as what the Al-Qur'an Hadith teachers used, based on the presentation of the interview results above so that project-based learning is carried out as expected.

The project-based learning method in the Merdeka Curriculum, precisely on the subject of the Al-Qur'an Hadith, invites students to think analytically by assessing the results of their friends' work, presented in text form and then pasted on the board by intending that other students take turns providing responses or assessments to other students' work. This method is a practical step to help students' learning activeness so that their abilities or potentials are more visible to the extent of development and understanding of the subject. In addition, students have new experiences that assess their needs agility. Assessing must be able to understand the material, namely reports of observations.

Although the concept applied still has something to do with the concept of the past curriculum, the point of difference is that students are given more flexibility to obtain the knowledge provided by the teacher. That means he finds out more about himself related to the lessons because the teacher only provides an overview or explanation in general. For example, class X focuses more on the meanings of hadith. The hadith in question is then linked to the reality or facts in the field or the community, both in the context of buying and selling, obtaining halal food, please help, tolerance, and so on. There are *sahih*, *dhaif*, and

mutawatir, where several hadiths are studied. The three hadiths are then used as discussion material in class to compare the validity of the hadith.

In this case, the Merdeka Curriculum provides a new pattern for managing education and learning. The curriculum no longer focuses on equipping students with mastering knowledge, but it is an effort to equip students with various competencies. The competencies referred to here are each individual's work abilities, including aspects of students' knowledge, attitudes, and life skills.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Langkat as a pilot project is fully implemented. In addition to the material presented using the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers often make activities that build the talents and activation of students. Teachers apply this to their respective subjects, leading to the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers of the Al-Qur'an Hadith subject, primarily because the material presented is the same, find that students are enthusiastic.

Sometimes, more learners are passionate about learning because the Merdeka Curriculum is still relatively new and has not been implemented in the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Teachers must also adjust what will later become needs or shortcomings to be maximized. However, both teachers and students still feel that there are shortcomings. However, the Merdeka Curriculum wants to provide a new color for the world of education that gives teachers and students the freedom to gain effectiveness in learning and teaching.

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