



THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FREE LEARNING CURRICULUM IN THE AQIDAH AKHLAK (FAITH AND MORALITY) STUDY FIELD

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Abstract:

This research aims to analyze and document the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in the field of Aqidah Akhlaq studies at Madrasah Aliyah Zainul Hasan 2 Mojolegi Gading. The research method involves observation, interviews, and documentation analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum in forming students' religious and moral understanding. It is hoped that the results of this research can contribute to the development of religious curricula in similar institution.

Keywords: *Internal Quality Assurance System, Pesantren, Education*

INTRODUCTION

The development of education in Indonesia is inseparable from curriculum reforms, with periodic evaluations occurring in each period. Many believe that curriculum changes occur with changes in policy makers. As a country continually innovating in curriculum development, Indonesia has undergone more than ten changes since its independence. The history of curriculum development in Indonesian educational institutions began with the use of the 1947 curriculum, commonly known as "Rentjana Pelajaran Terurai." The 1947 curriculum supported the formation of national and societal awareness, influenced by the social and political order during the Dutch colonial period. Over time, the 1947 curriculum evolved into the 1952 curriculum, known as "Rentjana Pelajaran Terurai 1952," with slight changes in its implementation process.

Subsequent changes continued, including the emergence of the 1964 curriculum (Rentjana Pendidikan 1964), 1968 curriculum, 1975 curriculum, 1984 curriculum (an improved version of the 1975 curriculum), 1994 curriculum, 1999 curriculum supplement, 2004 curriculum (competency-based), 2006 curriculum (unit-based), and the 2013 curriculum with subsequent revisions. Each curriculum change in educational institutions is based on strong foundations, and these changes are influenced by the digital age.

Nadiem Makarim, the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, introduced changes to the 2013 curriculum, establishing the "Merdeka Belajar" (Independent Learning) curriculum as an enhancement of the 2013 curriculum. This was implemented to address concerns about Indonesia's education during the COVID-19 pandemic from 2019 to 2020.

According to Nadiem Makarim, "Merdeka Belajar" means that educational units, including schools, teachers, and students, have the freedom to innovate and act in the learning process. The concept encourages teachers to avoid being monotonous and move away from a teacher-centered approach.

The Ministry of Education and Culture, under Nadiem Makarim's leadership, emphasizes that the "Merdeka Belajar" concept aims to achieve freedom of thought,

providing significant hope for educational institutions to improve the quality of education. Key changes in the "Merdeka Belajar" policy include the replacement of the 2021 National Exam with AKM (Minimum Competency Assessment) and character surveys, the replacement of the 2020 National Standard School Exam with independent school assessments, simplification of the Lesson Implementation Plan (RPP) format, and a more flexible zoning system for new student admissions.

Guidelines for the implementation of the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum have been provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture through regulations, specifically Kepmendikbudristek No. 56 of 2022. This regulation covers guidelines and rules for implementing the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum in Early Childhood Education (PAUD), Elementary Schools (SD/equivalent), and Secondary Education (junior and senior high school).

Starting from 2022, Indonesia's education system uses the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum, which features diverse intracurricular learning. Madrasah Aliyah Zainul Hasan 2 implemented the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum in 2022, initially in the tenth grade at the beginning of the odd semester or the new academic year.

Moral development should begin early and focus on programmed habits. Over time, the dominant factor influencing morals is the societal environment. In the educational context, morals are reflected in the subject of "aqidah akhlak" (faith and morality). The subject explores values and norms in life, emphasizing practical improvements. "Aqidah akhlak" learning is not just repetition but leans towards generating ideas and preparing individual reflexes applicable in daily life.

"Aqidah akhlak" learning is part of Islamic religious education. The effectiveness of Islamic religious education, as mandated by the law, is measured by achieving its goals in forming individuals who are conscious of the One Almighty God.

Observations at Madrasah Aliyah Zainul Hasan 2 Mojolegi indicate the implementation of the new curriculum, "Merdeka Belajar," though it is relatively new. The school has applied it to the tenth grade, and despite some stiffness in teaching, limited training for the new curriculum, and the continued use of traditional teaching methods, the school is moving forward with its implementation.

Madrasah Aliyah Zainul Hasan 2, situated in a mountainous region with limited facilities, is interesting to study because, despite challenges faced by many schools in urban areas, it has embraced the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the implementation of the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum in the field of "aqidah akhlak" at Madrasah Aliyah Zainul Hasan 2 Mojolegi. The focus is on how the school can instill good morals in students through the "Aqidah Akhlak" subject, aligning with the broader goal of improving student behavior with the application of the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research utilizes an action research design with a qualitative approach. This approach is chosen to enable sustained and in-depth interventions in the development of time management skills among teachers (Ahmad, A., & Muslimah, 2021). The research subjects are Aqidah Akhlak (Faith and Morality) teachers at MA Zainul Hasan 2 Mojolegi Gading Probolinggo. The selection of teachers is done purposively, considering their level of teaching experience and the need for time management skill development (Harahap, 2020).

Data collection involves an initial questionnaire to identify the level of implementation of the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum in Aqidah Akhlak learning. Classroom observations are conducted to observe the Aqidah Akhlak learning process, following a lesson plan aligned with the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum. Interviews with teachers are conducted to delve deeper into the implementation of the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum in Aqidah Akhlak learning.

The research is designed to provide information about the implementation of the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum in Aqidah Akhlak learning at MA Zainul Hasan 2 Mojolegi

Gading Probolinggo. Data analysis in this research, using qualitative data, will be analyzed with an inductive approach, identifying patterns and key findings related to the development of time management skills. Data analysis also involves triangulating results from various data sources to ensure the validity of findings (Rukajat, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The planning or preparation for teaching is essentially short-term planning to estimate or project what will be done. Thus, lesson preparation is an effort to anticipate the actions to be taken in the learning activity. Based on the results of research observations, data on the preparation or planning of the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum in Aqidah Akhlak learning at MA Zainul Hasan 2 Mojolegi were obtained. The preparation involves creating Teaching Modules, understanding Learning Outcomes (LO), formulating Learning Objectives (LO), and developing the Learning Objectives Flow (LOF) and Assessment. With this planning, it is expected that the implementation of the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum in Aqidah Akhlak learning will proceed smoothly.

Teachers conduct planning before starting the teaching process by creating a Lesson Plan, as mentioned by the Aqidah Akhlak teacher. Based on interviews with the Aqidah Akhlak teacher, he expressed, "Before starting the lesson, as usual, I prepare a lesson plan, namely the Teaching Module. By understanding the basic competencies or learning outcomes. In providing instruction, it must be considered what needs to be given with real and easily digestible examples that can be immediately applied by students. Because an example will make students understand and believe in the material presented, especially if the example is accompanied by events in the students' environment."

Similarly, Mr. Sholehuddin stated, "In preparing for aqidah akhlak learning, of course, I prepare a lesson plan, formulate learning objectives, develop the learning objectives flow, determine teaching methods, and choose models suitable for the material to be taught. The Teaching Module is, in my opinion, a crucial initial step in the learning process because with the existence of the Teaching Module, classroom learning activities will also be organized and structured. The Teaching Module contains learning objectives, learning steps, and learning assessments."

The implementation of the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum at MA Zainul Hasan 2 Mojolegi began in 2022, precisely at the start of the new academic year. "Merdeka Belajar" learning received positive responses from both teachers and students because learners feel the freedom to be creative with their own thoughts. This freedom motivates them to learn, resulting in meaningful learning. Teachers also have the freedom to arrange teaching strategies or methods and choose models that suit the characteristics and conditions of students without external pressure.

"Merdeka Belajar," initiated by Mr. Nadiem Makarim since 2019, is designed to address issues in Indonesian education and uplift the education sector from stagnation. One significant issue has been the tendency for educational activities in a school to revolve around the desires of the teacher, whereas teachers should uncover the potential of each student. When teachers continue to learn about the diversity of their students, especially those with different backgrounds, interesting, effective, and efficient learning will materialize.

Merdeka Belajar Curriculum Planning in Aqidah Akhlak Learning at MA Zainul Hasan, Curriculum, essentially a plan guiding the educational process, is influenced by educational planners' viewpoints. The "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum aims to create a joyful learning atmosphere at school, pleasing both students and teachers. After the implementation of the "Merdeka Belajar" policy, various changes are expected, especially in the learning system. The current in-class learning will transform to be as comfortable as possible, facilitating interaction between students and teachers.

Based on the research conducted at MA Zainul Hasan 2 Mojolegi regarding Lesson Planning, it has become an absolute obligation to be prepared at the beginning of the academic year. According to interviews with students, they acknowledge that the aqidah akhlak teacher always brings the Teaching Module. If the teacher forgets, a

student is instructed to fetch it from the teacher's desk. According to interviews with the aqidah akhlak teacher at MA Zainul Hasan 2, after the implementation of the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum, the Teaching Module is created based on the needs of students. At the beginning of the academic year, teachers approach students to detect those with different backgrounds or special needs, providing special treatment during the learning process. Students say that teachers create Teaching Modules based on their needs because, at the beginning of aqidah akhlak learning, teachers usually observe by asking questions about family backgrounds and education.

The aqidah akhlak teacher at MA Zainul Hasan 2 explains the process. Before delving into the material, he explains the basic competencies to be learned and then conveys the objectives of those competencies. This is usually written on the board and sometimes explained orally, providing detailed explanations of the learning objectives. By explaining the learning objectives, the learning process becomes well-directed. Students also prepare all the materials and facilities needed for learning to ensure that the learning process runs smoothly.

The analysis aligns with the theory stating that successful learning is determined by well-prepared planning made by teachers. Teachers cannot teach optimally without adequate preparation developed in lesson planning.

In conclusion, the analysis indicates that the planning of the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum at MA Zainul Hasan 2 Mojolegi is going well. Teaching Modules are created based on students' needs and Pancasila profiles, incorporating Learning Outcomes (LO), Learning Objectives (LO), and Learning Objectives Flow (LOF) into lesson planning, in accordance with the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation No. 14 of 2019.

Implementation of the "Merdeka Belajar" Curriculum in Aqidah Akhlak Learning at MA Zainul Hasan, The implementation of the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum in Aqidah Akhlak learning at MA Zainul Hasan 2 creates an enjoyable learning atmosphere. In the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum, teachers are expected to create an engaging and pleasant learning environment that attracts students to be enthusiastic about learning. Teachers are expected to provide motivation and encourage students, ensuring they remain enthusiastic in achieving learning objectives. Students should feel supported by teachers, believing that all their needs are considered throughout the learning process, leading to a sense of joy.

The implementation of Aqidah Akhlak learning at MA Zainul Hasan 2 Mojolegi, following the application of the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum, involves creating an enjoyable learning situation, starting with teacher-student interactions. Enjoyable learning implementation ensures that both students and teachers do not feel bored, as there is communication between students and educators. The learning process is not only focused on teachers; students actively participate by asking questions, answering, speaking in public, not just listening to explanations from teachers and students in physical education, a subject they enjoy.

In such a learning environment, students will engage in critical thinking and character formation. During the implementation of "Merdeka Belajar," it is crucial to observe if there are difficulties or other obstacles in the process. According to the interview with the school principal, he stated that the interaction between teachers and students during the Aqidah Akhlak learning process goes well. Additionally, students express joy in learning Aqidah Akhlak, recognizing the importance of studying Aqidah Akhlak for Muslims. In an interview, a student stated that Aqidah Akhlak is his favorite subject because the teacher always incorporates creativity into teaching.

When students start to feel bored or less motivated, the Aqidah Akhlak teacher can reignite their enthusiasm by creating a learning situation that redirects their attention. This is often done by forming discussion groups, addressing a particular issue or case for discussion, and obliging all students to argue. The Aqidah Akhlak teacher occasionally asks students to present the material to be learned in turns, ensuring that it's not always the teacher who explains.

Enjoyable learning implementation prevents students and teachers from feeling

bored, fostering communication between students and educators. The learning process is not solely focused on teachers; students actively participate by asking questions, answering, speaking in public, not just listening to explanations from teachers and students during physical education, a subject they enjoy. In such a learning environment, students engage in critical thinking and character formation.

In conclusion, the analysis aligns with the theory expressed by Bahri and Aswan Zain, stating that learning implementation is an educational value activity. The educational value colors the interaction between teachers and students. This valuable interaction is due to learning implementation directed towards achieving specific goals formulated before the learning process begins.

Therefore, the analysis states that the implementation of the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum at MA Zainul Hasan 2 Mojolegi is going well. Teachers determine learning activities and teaching tools according to learning objectives and the characteristics of students. The learning process is flexible in line with the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation No. 14 of 2019.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the discussion between researchers' findings and theoretical studies of the thesis entitled "Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum in the Study of Aqidah Akhlak at MA Zainul Hasan 2 Mojolegi Gading Probolinggo", it can be concluded as follows:

The planning of independent learning curriculum for the study of aqidah akhlak at Miftahul Jannah Wangkal Gading Probolinggo begins with the preparation of a Teaching Module based on the needs of students and includes Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objectives (TP), and Learning Objective Flow (ATP) in lesson planning.

The implementation of independent learning curriculum for the study of aqidah akhlak at Miftahul Jannah Wangkal Gading Probolinggo is carried out in the following order: 1) Students are given motivation and guidance to observe, read, and rewrite. Students are given a presentation or reading related to the learning material. 2) The teacher provides an opportunity to identify things that are not yet understood, starting from factual questions to hypothetical questions. Where these questions must be in accordance with the learning material. 3) Students are given the opportunity to discuss, collect information, present again, and exchange information in accordance with the learning material. 4) The teacher and students draw conclusions about the material that has been learned. One example is where in the discussion of dakwah, each student is asked to take turns giving a lecture in front of the class to convey what they know about the use of social media in Islam.

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