



Evaluation Implementation of The Merdeka Curriculum In Islamic Education Subjects at SDN 007 Sangatta Utara

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ABSTRAK

Pelaksanaan Kurikulum Merdeka di dunia pendidikan telah menjadi langkah strategis untuk memberikan kebebasan belajar yang lebih besar bagi siswa dan pendidik. Dalam konteks Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI), kurikulum ini diharapkan dapat mendorong pembelajaran yang lebih kontekstual dan relevan, serta membentuk karakter siswa sesuai dengan nilai-nilai Profil Kemahiran Siswa Pancasila. Namun, implementasinya di lapangan, terutama di tingkat sekolah dasar, masih menghadapi berbagai tantangan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka dalam pelajaran PAI di SDN 007 Sangatta Utara, serta mengidentifikasi hambatan yang dihadapi dalam implementasinya. Fokus utama meliputi pemahaman guru terhadap kurikulum, kesiapan fasilitas dan infrastruktur, dukungan institusional dari sekolah, serta kontribusi PAI dalam pembentukan karakter siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi langsung proses pembelajaran PAI di kelas, wawancara mendalam dengan guru PAI, kepala sekolah, dan siswa, serta studi terhadap alat pembelajaran dan laporan evaluasi yang tersedia. Penelitian ini dilakukan selama satu bulan di SDN 007 Sangatta Utara. Analisis data menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman, yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan/verifikasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka dalam pembelajaran PAI di SDN 007 Sangatta Utara memiliki dampak positif, terutama dalam memberikan kebebasan kepada guru untuk merancang pembelajaran yang sesuai dengan kebutuhan

dan potensi siswa. Siswa tampak lebih aktif dan reflektif dalam berpartisipasi dalam pembelajaran dan mulai menunjukkan sikap dan perilaku yang sesuai dengan nilai-nilai Profil Kemahiran Siswa Pancasila. Namun, beberapa tantangan teridentifikasi, termasuk pemahaman guru yang terbatas tentang Kurikulum Merdeka, terutama dalam menerjemahkan hasil belajar menjadi aktivitas praktis. Kurangnya pelatihan teknis berkelanjutan menyebabkan guru menghadapi kesulitan dalam merancang penilaian formatif dan proyek pembentukan karakter. Fasilitas pendukung pembelajaran masih belum memadai, seperti perangkat digital yang terbatas, ruang kelas tematik, dan media pembelajaran kontekstual. Evaluasi pembelajaran belum dimaksimalkan, terutama dalam hal metode pengajaran dan penilaian pemahaman siswa.

ABSTRACT

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the world of education has become a strategic step to provide greater learning freedom to students and educators. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), this curriculum is expected to encourage more contextual and relevant learning, as well as shaping students' characters in accordance with the values of the Pancasila Student Profile. However, its implementation in the field, especially at the elementary school level, still faces various challenges. This study aims to evaluate the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in PAI lessons at SDN 007 Sangatta Utara, as well as to identify the obstacles encountered in its implementation. The main focus includes teachers' understanding of the curriculum, the readiness of facilities and infrastructure, institutional support from the school, and the contribution of PAI to the character development of students. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data collection techniques were conducted through direct observation of the PAI learning process in the classroom, in-depth interviews with PAI teachers, the school principal, and students, as well as a study of learning tools and available evaluation reports. The study was conducted over a period of one month at SDN 007 Sangatta Utara. Data analysis used the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in PAI learning at SDN 007 Sangatta Utara has a positive impact, particularly in providing teachers with the freedom to design learning that suits the needs and potential of students. Students appeared more active and reflective in participating in learning and began to demonstrate attitudes and behaviors in line with the values of the Pancasila Student Profile. However, several challenges were identified, including limited teacher understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly in translating learning outcomes into practical activities. The lack of ongoing technical training caused teachers to face difficulties in designing formative assessments and character-building projects. Supporting learning facilities remain inadequate, such as limited digital devices, thematic classrooms, and contextual learning media. Learning evaluation has not been maximized, particularly in terms of teaching methods and assessing students' understanding.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is an activity that is carried out and always planned, and should be concluded with an evaluation. This evaluation aims to reflect on each program that has been implemented and determine whether it is in line with the plan or falls short of expectations. Evaluation also aims to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the programs that have been implemented so that in the future, mistakes can be minimized and components can be maximized to ensure that the programs run smoothly (Puspitasari and Muadin 2023; Pandiangan & Uma, 2025). Evaluation is a systematic process carried out to determine a value in accordance with established standards by comparing it to specific criteria. Evaluation results are very useful, especially in providing important information to assist in decision-making, determining policy directions, improving understanding of certain conditions or phenomena, and even as a means of problem-solving. Learning is an interactive process between educators with professional knowledge and students from various backgrounds, using media and other resources, to jointly achieve the established curriculum objectives. Learning evaluation is conducted to assess student achievement during the learning period, to determine the effectiveness of the teaching and learning activities (TLA) implemented, to present reports on the progress and abilities of learners, to determine their eligibility for graduation, and so on (Maulani et al. 2024).

Learning evaluation has various important benefits in the context of education. The following are some of the main benefits of learning evaluation (Sholihan et al. 2024), namely measuring the achievement of learning objectives, evaluation helps assess the extent to which learning objectives have been achieved. Evaluation provides feedback to students, teachers, and other related parties. This feedback helps students understand their strengths and weaknesses and provides teachers with information to improve their teaching. Evaluation can be a motivational tool for students to continue striving to improve their performance. Constructive feedback can encourage students to study more diligently. Evaluation helps identify areas or topics of learning that may need improvement. Teachers can adjust their teaching strategies or change the curriculum to improve the quality of learning. The results of learning evaluations can be used to develop or update the curriculum. This ensures that the learning material remains relevant and appropriate to the needs of students. Evaluations help teachers evaluate the teaching methods they use. By knowing which methods are most effective, teachers can improve their teaching to achieve better results. The results of evaluations can be used as a basis for decision-making at the institutional or educational system level. This can assist relevant parties in designing educational policies and programs. Evaluation can help assess the level of student engagement in the learning process. This can help teachers identify strategies that can increase student interest and participation. Learning evaluation improves the accountability of teachers, students, and educational institutions. Data from learning evaluation can be used for research in the field of education, helping to understand trends and patterns of learning that can enrich knowledge in the world of education.

Curriculum evaluation is a structured study of the usefulness, appropriateness, effectiveness, and efficiency of the implemented curriculum. Meanwhile, curriculum evaluation can be defined as the steps of applying scientific methods to collect valid and reliable data, with the aim of making decisions related to the curriculum that is being implemented or has been completed (Arofah, 2016) Referring to Law Number 20 of 2003, Article 8, it is explained that the community has the right to participate in the planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation of education programs. Additionally, Article 57(2) states that evaluation is conducted on students, institutions, and educational programs in both formal and non-formal settings, covering all levels, units, and types of education (Hayuningsih, Rosita, and Al Amin 2024). Curriculum changes are a necessity and must be adapted to developments and

the needs of the times, not only to the needs of the current situation, but also to anticipate the development of user group needs. Curriculum changes are a necessity and must adapt to developments and the needs of the times, not only adjusting to the needs of the current situation but also anticipating the development of user group needs. Evaluating the implementation of the independent curriculum in schools is very important to analyze the objectives, benefits, impacts, successes, and obstacles, as well as the strategies that must be implemented to overcome the obstacles arising from the current implementation of the independent curriculum (Ariyanti and Hazin 2024).

The spirit of education lies in the curriculum and can never be separated. Kamiludin and Suryaman (2017:59) state that the curriculum is a set of educational programs that have been developed and implemented to achieve educational goals, which include components that are interrelated and support one another. Hidayani (2018:377) explains that the curriculum occupies a central position in all educational activities. In order to achieve educational objectives, the curriculum must be able to improve its quality, where the curriculum must be able to adapt to the situation of each school, taking into account the needs and developmental stages of students, national development needs, while remembering that national education is based on national culture and national education is based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution -Constitution of 1945. To continue improving the quality of education in Indonesia, the curriculum being implemented must evolve, adapt to educational institutions, regional potential, and require evaluation to assess the effectiveness of its implementation. Indarta et al. (2022) explain that curriculum improvement development will be considered effective if the results of such development align with demands and needs, relevance, flexibility, continuity, practicality, and effectiveness. Therefore, curriculum development should have a strong foundation and be principled to support the achievement of educational goals (Rahmadayanti and Hartoyo 2022).

Curriculum development is an instrument for improving the quality of education. Proper educational policies will be evident through the implementation of the curriculum because “the curriculum is the heart of education” that determines the continuity of education (Munandar, 2017). According to Law No. 20 of 2003, “the curriculum is a set of learning plans related to objectives, content, teaching materials, and methods used as guidelines in conducting learning activities to achieve national educational goals” (Rahayu et al. 2022). Islamic Religious Education (IRE) is crucial in shaping moral values and character, providing individuals with the spiritual and ethical foundation needed to navigate contemporary society. It is important for young Muslims to have a comprehensive understanding of the diverse traditions within Islam and the broader religious landscape in the modern world (Faqihuddin & Romadhon, 2023; Sahin, 2018) (Faqihuddin 2024). In the implementation of the independent curriculum, it is not only applied to the learning of general subjects but also to the learning of religious subjects. Islamic Religious Education (IRE) is an important subject that Muslim students can study both formally and informally in elementary schools. In the development of Islamic education to produce students who are faithful and have noble character, it can influence the development of a country's civilization (Munawir, Arofah, and Sari 2024). Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a central role in the secondary school curriculum in Indonesia. In addition to teaching religious aspects, PAI also provides education on moral and ethical values that are essential in shaping students' character. The PAI curriculum plays a crucial role in guiding students towards good character, especially in facing the challenges of globalization supported by advances in technology and information (Kisno et al., 2023). PAI subjects in secondary schools are based on a solid legal foundation (Nurhayati et al. 2024).

The Merdeka Curriculum is a new curriculum issued by the Indonesian government that aims to develop a more independent and context-based curriculum for students throughout

Indonesia. The goal of the independent curriculum is to create a curriculum that better meets the needs of students and gives teachers the freedom to develop more interesting and relevant teaching materials. Merdeka Belajar is a policy initiated by Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim, who stated that Merdeka Belajar is a goal to provide space for the development of participants' potential through freedom of thought and autonomy given to educational elements (Muh Husyain Rifai et al. 2024). Merdeka Belajar is the slogan of the policy that Nadiem Makarim has promoted since taking office as Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. To date, there have been five episodes of Merdeka Belajar. The Merdeka Belajar policy grants freedom to each educational unit to innovate. This concept must be adapted to the conditions within the teaching-learning process, including cultural aspects, local wisdom, socio-economic factors, and infrastructure. Additionally, teacher training concepts will shift from seminar or workshop models to more practical training approaches. A curriculum that is easy to understand and more flexible is also one of the things needed to support the implementation of Merdeka Belajar. This curriculum can encourage teachers to choose high-quality learning materials or methods that are appropriate for the level of competence, interests, and talents of each student (Ana Widyastuti 2022).

Based on a literature review entitled Evaluation of the Independent Curriculum Implementation Program in PAI Learning, evaluation is an important part of the educational process because it allows for the assessment of the effectiveness of the curriculum in achieving its educational objectives. The importance of evaluating curriculum implementation is as follows: First, ensuring suitability with needs. Evaluation helps identify the suitability between the curriculum and the needs of students, as well as the relevance of the curriculum to the current social and work context. Second, continuous improvement. By conducting evaluations, feedback is obtained for the process of improving and refining the curriculum, ensuring that the subject matter remains relevant and effective. Third, improving the quality of education. Evaluation encourages improvements in the quality of education by acting as a catalyst for change and innovation in learning and teaching practices. Fourth, stakeholder involvement. Evaluation incorporates the views of various stakeholders, including students, teachers, and parents, ensuring that the curriculum supports the needs of all parties. Fifth, accountability and transparency. The evaluation process demonstrates the accountability of educational institutions to the public for the implementation of the chosen curriculum. Sixth, competency-based learning. In the context of the independent curriculum, which focuses on competency-based learning, evaluation provides insight into the extent to which the curriculum supports the development of individual competencies for lifelong learning (Jumaeda et al. 2024). In another literature titled Evaluation of the Independent Curriculum at SMA MTA Surakarta, context evaluation aims to describe school activities in implementing the Independent Curriculum. Additionally, in this study, context evaluation details the alignment of educational program objectives with student needs. In the readiness to implement the Merdeka Curriculum, one of the indicators is that school principals and teachers understand the Merdeka Curriculum. School principals and teachers receive training on the Merdeka Curriculum through socialization sessions organized by pilot schools or other institutions. (Hayuningsih et al. 2024). Literature consistent with our title also concludes that the Merdeka Curriculum with the concept of independent learning in elementary schools provides “freedom” for education practitioners, especially teachers and school principals, in designing, developing, and implementing the curriculum based on the potential and needs of students and schools. Independent learning frees teachers to design learning that emphasizes essential material while considering characteristics so that learning outcomes are achieved in a more meaningful, enjoyable, and profound way. Project activities designed according to their phase and relevant to the environmental conditions

help students develop the character and competencies of the Pancasila Student Profile within themselves. When designing curriculum development in schools, school principals need to consider student characteristics, school potential, and regional potential. The following is a conclusion titled “Portrait of the Merdeka Curriculum: The Manifestation of Merdeka Belajar in Elementary Schools” (Rahmadayanti and Hartoyo 2022).

Based on the synthesis of the three literatures, scientific innovation was found in the holistic, contextual, and participatory approach to evaluating and implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The literature by Jumaeda et al. (2024) emphasizes evaluation as a strategic tool to ensure curriculum relevance, promote learning innovation, and enhance accountability and stakeholder engagement. Meanwhile, Hayuningsih, Rosita, and Al Amin (2024) present novelty through an emphasis on institutional readiness, particularly the role of school principals and teachers in understanding and implementing the curriculum through training support and institutional commitment. On the other hand, Rahmadayanti and Hartoyo (2022) highlight the autonomy of teachers and school principals in designing a curriculum that is adaptive to the characteristics of students and local potential through a merdeka belajar (independent learning) approach that emphasizes meaningful learning and character building in students. Collectively, the scientific innovations produced indicate that the evaluation and development of the Merdeka Curriculum do not only depend on the curriculum structure itself but also on the synergy between institutional readiness, the empowerment of educational actors, and the relevance of the local context that supports the strengthening of competency-based learning and the values of the Pancasila Student Profile.

Although the Merdeka Curriculum aims to give teachers freedom to teach according to students' needs, its implementation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects in elementary schools still faces various challenges. Issues that have arisen include whether teachers have truly understood and implemented the Merdeka Curriculum in PAI instruction, whether schools are adequately prepared in terms of facilities and support to implement this curriculum, and how PAI instruction can help shape students' character in line with the Pancasila Student Profile. Additionally, the absence of a comprehensive evaluation makes it unclear whether this curriculum is truly effective in improving the quality of PAI instruction. Therefore, it is important to conduct an evaluation to determine how well the Merdeka Curriculum has been implemented in PAI instruction at elementary schools.

2. METHOD

The type of research conducted is qualitative research. Qualitative research can be defined as a research method based on postpositivism/interpretive philosophy, used to study natural conditions of objects, (as opposed to experiments) where the researcher is the key instrument, data collection techniques are conducted through triangulation (combination), data analysis is inductive and qualitative, and the results of qualitative research emphasize meaning over generalization (Dr. Agus Salam 2023). The subjects of this study are the curriculum coordinator and PAI teachers at SDN 007 Sangatta Utara. The data collection technique used in this study is observation, as defined by Banister (in Ni'matuzahroh & Prasetyaningrum, 2016), meaning to observe and pay close attention. Banister explains that observation is the activity of carefully observing, recording phenomena that occur, and then identifying relationships between aspects of the observed phenomena (Hapsari Puspita Rini, Vidya Nindhita, and Arifuddin 2022). Interviews are a two-way communication process. Researchers and informants interact with each other, exchange messages, and simultaneously engage in the process of giving and receiving messages (verbal and nonverbal) (Kristina, 2024), and documentation, which can take the form of written documents, such as letters, reports, or notes (Wada et al., 2024).

We conducted this observation to see the process and results of the evaluation of the independent curriculum in PAI subjects in elementary schools to find out whether the implementation of the program was in accordance with the initial plan and how to solve the problems faced by educators when using the independent curriculum in PAI subjects in elementary schools. The purpose of the interviews conducted by the researchers was to determine whether the current independent curriculum has demonstrated effectiveness, efficiency, and suitability in accordance with expectations. The documentation conducted by the researchers this time consisted of observations during PAI lessons, and how PAI teachers can conduct the necessary evaluations in the independent curriculum in PAI lessons. The data analysis technique in this study involved data collection, data reduction, and data presentation. After the questionnaire was developed, the next step was to administer it to the respondents. Once the questionnaire was received by the researcher and its validity and reliability were tested, the data deemed valid and reliable needed to be prepared in a format ready for analysis (Jogiyanto Hartono M 2018).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The evaluation of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in PAI subjects at SDN 007 will first explore the extent to which PAI teachers understand the philosophy, learning outcome structure, and approaches used in the Merdeka Curriculum. Researchers will ask how teachers interpret their role as learning facilitators, how the planning process for teaching modules is conducted, and to what extent teachers feel supported or challenged by the flexibility offered. Additionally, it will be explored whether PAI teachers have participated in training or workshops related to the Merdeka Curriculum, and to what extent such training has impacted classroom instruction. Based on the interview results, as a PAI teacher, I welcome the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum because it provides flexibility for teachers to adapt the material to the needs of students. However, I admit that my initial understanding of the structure of the Merdeka Curriculum, especially regarding learning outcomes and the development of teaching modules, is still limited. I only truly understood the direction of this curriculum after attending several technical guidance sessions organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the education office. In practice, I still often refer to modules from the Merdeka Mengajar Platform while adapting them to the local context and relevant Islamic values. The aspects that need to be evaluated include the curriculum content, whether the teaching materials are relevant to the students' needs, and the teaching methods used in classroom learning activities. This aligns with the theory that a curriculum is a structured plan or system designed with educational objectives in mind. As a component, the curriculum includes learning objectives, teaching materials, teaching methods, and assessment tools used to measure how far learning has been achieved. Simply put, the curriculum is a guideline that directs how the educational process takes place in schools or educational institutions, from what students should learn to how it should be taught. The curriculum also reflects the values, norms, and culture that are intended to be instilled in the learning process to produce quality students in line with the demands of the times (Muhamad Fadil Miftahudin et al., 2024).

In terms of facilities, we face several challenges. Our school does not yet have a digital library or stable internet access, making it difficult to access various online learning resources. The Merdeka Curriculum textbooks for Islamic Education subjects are also not yet fully available, so we still use a combination of old textbooks and additional materials that I created myself. Facilities such as projectors and visual aids are also limited, so project-based or multimedia learning has not been fully implemented in the classroom (Islamic Education Teacher). Without adequate facilities and infrastructure to support the learning process, the

implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum cannot run optimally. To ensure that learning reflects the characteristics of Pancasila students, educators need to master this curriculum with a deep understanding. The learning process must be centered on the needs of students and utilize various potential natural resources (Ar-rohmah et al., 2025). In this case, educators are required to innovate and create infrastructure and facilities that are easily accessible to teachers and students in the immediate environment (Dewi et al., n.d.).

As Deputy Head of Curriculum, I see that most teachers, including PAI teachers, have begun to adapt to the changes brought about by the Merdeka Curriculum, although not yet optimally. We have tried to facilitate teachers with internal training and develop a more adaptive supervision schedule so that teachers can share good practices with each other. However, facilities remain one of the biggest obstacles. Schools are still constrained by budget limitations in terms of equipping learning facilities and technological devices, particularly those supporting the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project. This aligns with the fact that the success of curriculum implementation heavily depends on how well teachers can adapt to the changes in the learning system, which is now more flexible, contextual, and student-centered. In this context, adaptation is understood as the process of adjusting teachers' attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors to curriculum changes. This adaptation process is analyzed based on four stages proposed by Kalervo Oberg, namely honeymoon, culture shock, recovery, and adjustment (Simanjuntak, 2025). Teachers here can adapt to students' needs, which aligns with the theory (Sholihan et al., 2024).

Based on interviews with the curriculum coordinator regarding parental involvement, we observed that participation still needs to be improved. Some parents are actively involved in religious activities and PAI projects, such as social service or zakat collection, but most others remain passive. Most communication with parents is conducted through WhatsApp groups and parent-teacher meetings, but not all parents can attend or respond actively. We also recognize the need for education for parents so that they better understand their important role in supporting their children's PAI learning at home. In line with the statement that parents play a very important role in providing guidance and support to ensure the success of children's education, particularly in religious education (Hidayat & Khotimah, 2019). Parental involvement in PAI learning has a significant impact on the educational process at school. As the first educators at home, parents play a very significant role in shaping children's attitudes and understanding of religion. In the context of religious education at elementary school, parental support for the material taught in class is crucial to reinforce the religious values introduced by the PAI teacher (Harahap, 2024). In addition, parents have a huge responsibility for their children's growth, so that children can fulfill their responsibilities and defend themselves from the evil of others. Parents also have a responsibility to encourage their children to get the best education (Mustaqim, 2023).

In general, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Education subjects does present challenges, but it also opens up opportunities to strengthen students' character in a more contextual and meaningful way. Concrete support from relevant parties, including the government and school committees, is needed to enhance teachers' understanding, improve learning resources, and encourage more active parental involvement. As educators, we are committed to continuing to learn and innovate to achieve educational goals aligned with religious values and the spirit of independent learning. Learning evaluation plays a very important role in education because it provides various benefits that support the effectiveness of the learning process. Evaluation is used to measure the achievement of learning objectives, provide feedback to students and teachers, and motivate students to continue improving their performance. Additionally, evaluation helps identify weaknesses in learning so that teachers can adjust teaching strategies or improve the curriculum. Evaluation results also play a role in

developing relevant curricula, assessing the effectiveness of teaching methods, and serving as a basis for decision-making at the educational institution level. Evaluation also allows teachers to see the level of student engagement, increase the accountability of all parties involved, and provide important data for educational research that can enrich understanding of the overall teaching and learning process.

Interviews with PAI teachers revealed that evaluation is a process to check the extent to which students understand or can master the material that has been taught, so that evaluation is basically like a test or assessment conducted by teachers to see whether students understand or not. This is in line with the theory that explains that to conduct an assessment, we must first perform a measurement (large, small, long, or short), so that the criteria become more quantitative (how much). Determining whether the mango we choose is good or bad is a qualitative decision (what value). Measuring and assessing is what is called evaluation. Based on the above description, educational evaluation can be defined as an action or process to determine the value of everything in the world of education or everything related to the world of education (Ibadullah Malawi and Endang Sri Maruti n.d.).

One of the main obstacles found is the limited understanding of teachers regarding the substance of the Merdeka Curriculum, especially in PAI subjects. Many teachers have not fully understood how to translate learning outcomes into contextual and meaningful learning for students. One teacher stated, "I am still confused about how to relate the values of the Pancasila Student Profile to the subject matter of akidah or fiqh. The concept seems good, but we need concrete examples" (from an interview with a PAI teacher). In addition, the most common obstacle faced by teachers is the limited facilities and infrastructure available at schools. This condition poses a challenge in supporting the learning process. This is in line with the theory that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum may face several obstacles that need to be overcome. The following are some obstacles that may arise in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, along with their solutions: First, lack of understanding and awareness: Lack of understanding and awareness about the Merdeka Curriculum can be overcome by increasing information and training for all stakeholders, including schools, teachers, and parents. Intensive socialization about the concepts, objectives, and benefits of the Merdeka Curriculum can help reduce resistance and strengthen understanding of this policy. Second, limited resources: Limited resources can be overcome by increasing the budget allocation for education and providing adequate resources, such as textbooks, technological tools, and training for teachers. The government can also seek partners and sponsors who can help provide additional resources (Ariyanti and Hazin 2024).

Based on interviews with PAI teachers, they stated that the Merdeka Curriculum is very helpful in developing students' potential. This curriculum gives teachers and students the freedom to tailor the learning process to their individual needs and interests. For example, students who are interested in art can focus more on developing their talents through extracurricular dance activities provided by the school. The above explanation is in line with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum issued by the Indonesian government, namely to create a more independent and context-based curriculum that can be applied in accordance with the conditions and needs of students throughout Indonesia (Muh Husyain Rifai et al. 2024). One of the benefits often observed by curriculum coordinators is that students can discover and develop their interests. Teachers give students the freedom to express themselves and think independently. On the other hand, teachers and parents remain actively involved in guiding and providing direction in line with students' interests and potential, which aligns with the theory that a flexible and easy-to-understand curriculum is a key factor in supporting the implementation of Merdeka Belajar. This curriculum encourages teachers to select high-quality

teaching materials or learning methods while adapting them to each student's competency level, interests, and talents (Ana Widyastuti 2022).

The PAI teacher at SDN 007 stated that the Merdeka Curriculum is very suitable for implementation. He also emphasized the importance of support from the local government, which he considered to be extraordinary in providing support. Without the active involvement of the Education Office, the implementation of learning would not run optimally, especially due to the limitations of learning tools and media in this public school. The government is present to support the learning process so that it is in line with the expected goals. The above statement is in line with the statement that one of the functions of learning evaluation is to facilitate educational research. Data from learning evaluations can be used to understand learning trends and patterns, thereby enriching knowledge in the world of education (Sholihan et al., 2024). The results of interviews with PAI teachers show that the main purpose of evaluation is to find relevance for students, as the Merdeka Curriculum is very broad in terms of learning. This is in line with what Maulani et al. stated, namely that one of the main objectives is to determine the extent to which learning objectives have been achieved. Evaluation also helps teachers understand students' strengths and weaknesses, so that they can direct the learning process towards greater effectiveness (Maulani et al., 2024).

So far, teachers at SDN 007 have revealed that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has been able to meet the needs of students in learning activities. This curriculum is designed to be more responsive to student needs and gives teachers the freedom to develop learning materials that are more interesting and contextually relevant (results of interviews with the curriculum coordinator). This theory aligns with the Merdeka Belajar Policy, proposed by Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim, which aims to create space for the development of students' potential through greater freedom of thought and autonomy for all components of education (Muh Husyain Rifai et al. 2024). An example implemented by teachers at SDN 007 is that teachers bring a new perspective to teaching, not confined to traditional learning methods, creating a diverse and innovative learning environment to make learning engaging and not boring (based on an interview with the curriculum coordinator). This aligns with the statement that the essence of the Merdeka Curriculum is the freedom for teachers to develop the curriculum and learning, thereby opening up space and accommodating teachers' creativity to innovate productively. Whereas previously teachers only taught material specified in the national curriculum developed by the government, in this new curriculum that is no longer the case; teachers are given the freedom to choose other material as long as it achieves the specified learning outcomes and is in line with the characteristics and development of the students (E. Mulyasa 2023).

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Education at SDN 007 has generally had a positive impact, particularly in giving teachers and students the freedom to tailor learning to the needs, interests, and potential of students. Evaluation is an important part of this process because it can measure the achievement of learning objectives, provide feedback, and help teachers improve their teaching strategies and materials. Based on the interview results, aspects that need to be evaluated include the relevance of the material, teaching methods, and students' level of understanding. However, there are several obstacles in its implementation, such as teachers' low understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum concept, lack of technical training, and limited facilities and infrastructure. Teachers' awareness of the importance of evaluation also needs to be improved so that learning can run optimally. Nevertheless, this curriculum remains capable of fostering innovation in learning and providing opportunities for students to develop their potential to the fullest. Support from the government,

active involvement of parents, and continuous guidance are crucial factors in ensuring the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum moving forward.

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