

Implementation of merdeka curriculum by Islamic religious education teachers at junior high school

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Abstract

This research aims to see firsthand how the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum is carried out by Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMPN 7 Bandung, as one of the driving schools as well as the first school at the junior high school level to implement Merdeka Curriculum. Using a qualitative approach and a case study method at SMPN 7 Bandung, which was explored through interviews with three Islamic Religious Education teachers there, the results of this study were then analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, so this study resulted So this study resulted in the conclusion that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum by Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMPN 7 Bandung is in accordance with the targets and objectives to be achieved, both by the Islamic Religious Education teachers themselves, by the school, and by the government that formulated the Merdeka Curriculum. This research has implications for the importance of planning the implementation of the Independent Curriculum by analyzing various indicators that influence it. From these implications, this research contributes significantly to finding the fact that careful planning in a curriculum implementation will help Islamic Religious Education teachers in carrying out learning better.

Keywords: Merdeka Curriculum, Implementation, Islamic Religious Education Teacher

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum and education are two things that cannot be separated. The reason is, as said by (Hidayani, 2017), the curriculum is central to all types of activities included in education. In Indonesia itself, the curriculum has undergone several changes since 1947, until the latest curriculum, namely the Merdeka Curriculum in 2022 (Saptohutomo, 2022).

Since its release as a policy product, the Merdeka Curriculum has become a prototype projected by the government (Kepmendikbudristek No. 56/M/2022) aimed at restoring the learning process. This projection was born in line with the issue of learning loss that occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic. Ultimately, this curriculum became an option for these evolving dynamics as a flexible curriculum with essential materials as its main focus, so that learning can occur more deeply and students can develop their character and competencies through the Pancasila Learner Profile Strengthening Project (Kemdikbud, 2023).

However, in its implementation, a number of essential problems are still found. This is as evidenced a research, which informs that math teachers in some province still find it difficult to prepare lesson plans. Their difficulty lies in understanding how to convert learning outcomes into learning objectives, so they cannot determine essential material in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum. Another difficulty also lies in the selection of learning models and assessments that teachers will use to teach, given the high heterogeneity of students in the class (Mukhibin & Nafidhoh, 2023).

The existence of problems in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is also confirmed by Azwar's research conducted in Bengkulu province. The results of his research show that the teachers there have problems at the learning implementation stage. learning implementation stage. The difficulty they feel lies in using technology as a tool for conducting assessments and processing various other data. Teachers there also found it difficult to create student character profiles in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum, which requires assessment to determine the achievement of student character development (Azwar, 2023).

Another study conducted by Setiaji and his friends also shows the same thing, namely that teachers in Central Java province still experience difficulties when implementing the Merdeka Curriculum into learning implementation. The difficulty of accessing information and determining the learning model that must be used is one of the obstacles they feel. In fact, after socializing these teachers, almost half a percent of them still feel that they do not fully understand the implementation of this curriculum (Setiaji et al., 2022).

This data proves that there are still problems that occur, especially those experienced by teachers who feel unprepared or do not fully understand the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. In fact, the problems that lead to the role of the teacher are very crucial. This is in line with the opinion of (Alsubaie, 2016), which emphasizes that the more proficient and clever a teacher is in understanding a curriculum, the better learning is likely to occur. Therefore, it is necessary to have a deep understanding for a teacher in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, including for teachers who teach Islamic Religious Education.

The issue of Merdeka Curriculum as the latest curriculum is also a hot topic for researchers to discuss. Especially in the last three years, many researchers have studied the application or implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. One of them is research at SMPN 1 Soko, Tuban Regency with the subject of the principal and Islamic Religious Education teachers at the school, focusing on how the Pancasila Student Profile is implemented through the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education subjects. From the process of observation, interviews, and examining existing documents, the study resulted in a discussion that the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum through Islamic Religious Education subjects at the school has generally been able to foster the six dimensions of the Pancasila Learner Profile (Hilali, 2023).

Unlike the previous research, the research at SMPN 2 Tarik focuses on how the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education lessons can increase student creativity as one of the dimensions in the Pancasila Student Profile. Sourced from 3 Islamic Religious Education teachers as respondent subjects, their research informed that Islamic Religious Education teachers there gave assignments to students to make 3D making as creative as possible while still referring to the theme according to the Islamic Religious Education material that had been taught. As a result, students at the school experienced development in terms of creative thinking through Islamic Religious Education learning using the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum (Marbella et al., 2023).

Still in the same year, a similar research at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Sidoarjo involving 20 students and school principals focused on how the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is implemented through Islamic Religious Education lessons to build one of the dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile, namely critical thinking. Through observations and interviews conducted, this study suggests that teachers in the school implement various innovative

strategies and methods, one of which is by using the Canva application. Students are given time and space to critique a given material by asking, and responding to the question itself, then making a project with the Canva application earlier. As a result, students' critical thinking skills improved compared to when teachers were still using the 2013 Curriculum (Nadhiroh & Anshori, 2023).

The majority of previous research emphasizes how the Merdeka Curriculum is implemented in various subjects. However, research that focuses on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum by Islamic Religious Education teachers in junior high schools in Bandung City in building global diversity as one of the dimensions in the Pancasila Student Profile is still lacking information. With two important reasons, namely first, global diversity can make students have mutual respect for each other, especially those with different cultures. It also allows students to continue to develop while maintaining their own culture without denigrating other cultures (Kemendikbud, 2022). Secondly, changes and new developments in a curriculum must be seen and observed continuously to ensure the suitability of these changes with the materials and methods provided to students (Miller & Seller, 1985). Therefore, it is important to conduct this research so that the results can complement the lack of information from previous studies.

METHOD

The purpose of this research is to analyze the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education learning at the junior high school level. Therefore, the appropriate approach used in this research is a type of qualitative approach. This research uses a field research using the case study method. The research site chosen to examine the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education subjects with a focus on the dimensions of global diversity is SMPN 7 Bandung. The school was chosen as a research site because the school is one of the first driving schools in Bandung City, and the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has been carried out at all levels, which means that it is continuous with the topic of this research itself. The participants of this study are Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMPN 7 Bandung who have gone directly to the field and experienced teaching Islamic Religious Education using the Merdeka Curriculum.

In accordance with the characteristics of field research, the research steps in this study follow the stages of field research. The key instrument in this research is the researcher herself. Therefore, to ensure the validity of the instrument, the researcher deepened and strengthened the research focus by reading a lot of literature both related to content and research methodology. Then in accordance with the characteristics of field research, the data collection technique used was an interview with three Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMPN 7 Bandung.

The questions that became research instruments in the interview concerned three things. The first question is about how the actions taken by the Islamic Religious Education teacher in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMPN 7 Bandung to build global diversity. Second, who is involved in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, apart from the Islamic Religious Education teachers themselves. Third, how global diversity is built and implemented in the Merdeka Curriculum. After the data is obtained, it is then analyzed with narrative analysis through three stages, namely reducing data, presenting data, and drawing conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Actions Taken by Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum carried out by Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMPN 7 Bandung aims to develop students' interests and talents, improve achievements in religious fields, and foster a sense of tolerance between students. To achieve these goals, various efforts are needed with the right methods and media. At SMPN 7 Bandung, Islamic Religious Education teachers routinely conduct training related to Merdeka Curriculum both before and during its implementation. In fact, one of the three Islamic Religious Education teachers at this school was selected as a representative of Islamic Religious Education teachers to attend training for three months. The national-level training was given to Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMPN 7 Bandung as a driving school, so that Islamic Religious Education teachers there could understand more about the preparation of teaching materials, materials, and so on. In addition to Islamic Religious

Education teachers, 9 other subject teachers also had the same opportunity to participate in the Merdeka Curriculum training. Of course, from each of these subjects, only one teacher was selected to participate in the national training.

Although only one Islamic Religious Education teacher received special training for three months, other Islamic Religious Education teachers also attended training, such as IHT (In House Training) which was held for three days, with a common focus on the Merdeka Curriculum. In addition to the IHT training, there was also socialization from the Education Office which also aimed to introduce teachers more deeply to the Merdeka Curriculum as a new curriculum at that time.

In addition to participating in the Merdeka Curriculum training, the efforts of Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMPN 7 Bandung in implementing the Kurtilas replacement curriculum also include differentiated learning. By implementing this differentiated learning, the Islamic Religious Education learning that occurs refers to the needs of each student. So, learning is no longer fixated on one or two students who already understand the material, but rather adapted to the needs of different students. That way, students will better understand this Islamic Religious Education learning material according to their own time, which may be different from other students. With the existence of differentiated learning in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, it can improve various positive things in students, such as an increase in learning outcomes (Parlindungan Sitorus, Surbakti, & Gulo, 2023), interest in learning (P Sitorus, Sitingjak, & Lafau, 2023), students' critical thinking and reasoning skills (Noviyanti, Yuniarti, & Lestari, 2023).

In its implementation, the method that is more often used today is a learning method that emphasizes the student center or centers on students as the main subject of the teaching and learning process itself. The active learning method carried out here aims to involve all students in every learning process. So that both active and inactive students, when in class inevitably he must be involved, not left just silent and follow other students. This is confirmed by the statement of one of the teachers as follows.

“The Merdeka curriculum is student-centered based on Ki Hajar Dewantara's understanding. So it frees students to be able to express their understanding through their interests and talents. So it is not required that the student must be able, but he can according to when and where he can. So the teacher can only encourage them to bring out their interests and talents, then the students themselves will go their own way” (Teacher 3).

The freedom to choose and develop students' interests and talents is in line with the potential for increased achievement, one of which is certainly in the field of religion. With these developed interests and talents, the potential for students to get achievements in Islamic Religious Education subjects will also increase. This is in accordance with Bono's theory that every human being has their own way of developing their abilities (Bono, 2015). This is also corroborated by 3 studies in 3 different years, namely (Fadillah, 2016), (Islamiah, 2019), and (Novitasari et al., 2021). The three studies both reveal that there is a significant influence between student interest and learning achievement.

In practice, some Islamic Religious Education materials at SMPN 7 Bandung implement the Merdeka Curriculum using audio-visual media that allows students to see firsthand how the material is depicted in the real world. They also emphasize direct practice media for material related to prayer or other material that requires direct visualization, because it is felt that students must know for real. The practice is usually carried out in the school mosque, which is large enough to be used as learning material for students. However, the practice is sometimes also done in the form of a video, then students can upload it to personal social media such as Youtube or TikTok to be assessed later by the relevant teacher. The use of practical methods in learning Islamic Religious Education can not only make students better understand the material (Azizah, 2023), but also be able to increase the motivation of students' understanding of an Islamic Religious Education material (Puspita, 2022).

In addition, another action taken by Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMPN 7 Bandung in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is to always instill and provide motivation regarding the importance of tolerance among others. This is done as part of forming an attitude of global diversity in students. With a fairly diverse student condition, namely out of 950 students in the school, around 30-40 students are non-Muslim students from various religions and various regions, the actions of this Islamic Religious Education teacher are important, in line with (Nismaya, 2018) research which states that this can increase tolerance as part of the implementation of global diversity in the Merdeka Curriculum.

Human Resources Involved in the Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education Subjects

The principal as the highest authority in this school is one of the important factors in

determining the success of implementing a curriculum, including the Merdeka Curriculum. Here he serves as a supervisor or person who oversees the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The principal also has an important role in making decisions, including the decision at SMPN 7 Bandung to become a driving school as well as the first school to implement the Merdeka Curriculum in Bandung City. In addition, in implementing one of the dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile, namely global diversity, the principal plays a role in accepting the decision to hold a tolerance pledge as an implementation project. The role and managerial ability of the school principal to organize everything about the curriculum, from planning, implementation, to evaluation is important and very useful in the success of a curriculum implementation (Munthe, 2020).

Teachers of other subjects are also involved in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. They often discuss with each other to discuss various matters related to the implementation of this Merdeka Curriculum. The discussion took place not only with teachers at SMPN 7 Bandung, but also with teachers from other schools. This is as said by one of the teachers interviewed below.

“Apart from the teachers here too, I also have many friends in other schools who have used this Merdeka Curriculum, so I also ask a lot of questions related to the Merdeka Curriculum and discuss students' problems in learning” (Teacher 2).

Islamic Education teachers at SMPN 7 Bandung are also active in the community consisting of teachers and education staff from various schools. Kombel or Learning Community (Komunitas Belajar) is one of the characteristics of the Merdeka Curriculum. The purpose of Kombel itself is to accommodate teachers and other education staff in learning and understanding more deeply about the Merdeka Curriculum by actively discussing at least once a week. The existence of Kombel in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum became one of the variables in the success of such implementation (Rochayati et al., 2023), also becoming one form of strengthening the Human Resources in implementing the Merdeka curriculum in understanding the curricula effectively and strategically (Noviyanti et al., 2023).

In addition to Kombel, there is the FKUB or Forum of Religious Communities (Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama), which plays a role in the project of confession of tolerance as the implementation of the global diversity. The community was invited to the

event to present the religious leaders representing every religion in Indonesia, as a form of tolerance itself. In the affirmation of tolerance, the various religious leaders of this FKUB played a role in representing every religion that exists in Indonesia as a form of toleration. By involving FKUB Bandung in the project that became one of the forms of implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, it is in line with the objectives and strategy of FKUB itself, namely, to attend various meetings or associations related to religious tolerance (Miharja & Mulyana, 2019), in order to create a trilogy of religious associations, i.e. associations between religious communities, internal associations of the religious community, as well as associations with the government (Muslich et al., 2023).

Tolerance Pledge Project to Build Global Diversity as Part of Independent Curriculum Implementation

One form of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum carried out by SMPN 7 Bandung in order to build global diversity as one of the dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile is by making a project called “tolerance pledge”. This tolerance pledge activity or project is one of the big projects that is participated by all junior high schools in Bandung City. The project that was initiated by SMPN 7 Bandung involved all teachers, not only Islamic Religious Education teachers. However, because this project is a project from the dimension of global diversity, this project is still related to tolerance as one of the Islamic Religious Education materials taught at school. Therefore, the Islamic Religious Education teachers here acted as mentors of the students, even one of the Islamic Religious Education teachers was assigned as the secretary of this activity.

The organizers of this activity were all from SMPN 7 Bandung, because they were the ones who initiated or organized this activity. This activity was specifically chosen by grade 8 who had the idea to carry the theme of global diversity in their project. The initiative or idea to hold a tolerance pledge activity as part of the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile project on the global diversity dimension is intended to foster a high sense of tolerance among every student both at SMPN 7 Bandung and from other junior high schools in Bandung City. After discussions with the principal and various other parties, as a result this activity went well at the Bandung City Hall and was even attended directly by the Head of the Bandung City Education Office. The purpose of this project is further explained by one of the Islamic Religious Education teachers as follows.

“This tolerance pledge activity or project was held with the aim that students have a sense of tolerance for others, as well as providing awareness and understanding to students that differences exist to be appreciated, not to become a place to hate each other. The content of this project is in accordance with the name of the activity, namely junior high school students throughout Bandung City pledge that they are different but still one, in accordance with the concept of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika. Then, they prayed according to their respective religions and beliefs, led by students from various junior high schools representing each religion. So, this project did not only involve SMPN 7 Bandung residents as the initiator and organizer of the event, but also students from other schools in Bandung” (Teacher 1).

Technically, before the implementation of the project on the day of the event, the teachers and the entire committee from SMPN 7 Bandung collected data on the religious background of students from all junior high schools in Bandung who would participate in this event. After that, representatives from various religions were chosen to lead prayers representing each religion during the pledge of tolerance. Such as the reading of prayers according to Islam which was led directly by students from SMPN 7 Bandung as the committee and who initiated the event, then there were students from SMP YAS Bandung who represented to lead prayers according to Christianity, and other students who attended representing their respective religions.

As the first major global diversity-themed project in Bandung, the pledge of tolerance was not only attended by the Head of the local Education Office, but also by religious leaders in Bandung, as well as several representatives from the FKUB. This activity not only aims to apply tolerance to students, but also provides students with an understanding related to Islamic Religious Education material, namely regarding relationships with fellow humans, and the application of good ethics in communication.

By conducting these projects, this can make students have the same view or perception of everyone, especially their friends who come from various ethnicities, religions, races, and cultures, without discriminating or ostracizing them, as part of global diversity itself (Nafiah, Saifulah, & Solikhudin, 2023). In cultivating this global diversity attitude, students are also taught to form a good identity and character (Arifin, Santoso, Masngud, Kudori, & Tugiman, 2023), and can understand that the differences that exist are what make the world more developed (Saing, Santoso, Jarmi, & Winarsih, 2023).

The project carried out by SMPN 7 Bandung, in addition to providing a good example as a driving school, is also in accordance with the values contained in Islamic Religious Education subjects, namely tolerance between fellow humans. This is because the dimension of global diversity itself includes respecting the culture or traditions of others, relating well to fellow humans regardless of background, and interpreting a difference in a good way, which is in line with the teachings of Islam itself (Hidayati, Yusuf, Nasir, & Kirom, 2023). Therefore, the tolerance pledge project carried out by SMPN 7 Bandung can not only increase students' creativity and ability to work together, more than that, this project can also provide students with a good understanding of tolerance in accordance with what has been taught by Islamic Religious Education teacher (Hatapayo, Santoso, & Wahyudin, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and data analysis that has been submitted, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum carried out by Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMPN 7 Bandung is in accordance with the previously set goals. The implementation carried out in achieving these goals is by conducting training on the Merdeka Curriculum, getting used to differentiated learning, and instilling an attitude of tolerance, one of which is by holding a tolerance pledge project, as the first project in Bandung City which was initiated directly by SMPN 7 Bandung with the presence of various religious leaders, and aims to form global diversity in every student, especially SMPN 7 Bandung students themselves. By involving various parties in its implementation, the previously set goals, including building global diversity at SMPN 7 Bandung, can be achieved well. With the limitations that exist in this study, it is recommended for the next research agenda to expand the topic of research discussion. Future researchers can conduct research by comparing two different schools, such as public schools with private schools, or private schools based on the Muhammadiyah religious organization with the Nahdlatul Ulama religious organization, or the Islamic Union religious organization related to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education subjects.

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