Volume 16 Number 2 (2024) July-December 2024

Page: 893-902

E-ISSN: 2656-9779 P-ISSN: 1907-6355

DOI: 10.37680/qalamuna.v16i2.4759



Merdeka Belajar in Islamic Religious Education Learning (Case Study of Implementing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum at SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru Tulungagung)

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Received: 30/01/2024 Revised: 12/07/2024 Accepted: 02/09/2024

Abstract

This research analyzes "Merdeka Belajar" in Islamic religious education learning in implementing "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar" at SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru Tulungagung. The research method used is a qualitative research approach. Data collection techniques are used to explore data by conducting interviews, observations, interviews, and documentation. The results of his research were that planning the "Kurikulum Merdeka" for Islamic Education Subjects at SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru Tulungangung was carried out using assessment planning in stages, including cognitive and non-cognitive diagnostic assessments, process assessments in the form of trigger questions and summative assessments. Implementation of the "Kurikulum Merdeka" for Islamic Education Subjects at SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru Tulungangung is done by implementing assessments before and after learning. In practice, if educators want to know students' cognitive abilities, educators present questions that are related to the learning material. Implementing the Merdeka Belajar curriculum starts with preliminary, core, and closing activities. Obstacles to implementing the "Kurikulum Merdeka" include limited material in student books, limited facilities and infrastructure, material in the Merdeka curriculum not yet fully mastered by teachers, implementation of an inclusive school system, limited technology capabilities that support the implementation of the "Kurikulum Merdeka."

Keywords

Merdeka Belajar; Learning; Islamic Religious Education

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1. INTRODUCTION

The world of education is a dynamic world that is always experiencing changes to improve the quality of education. (Kholiq Abdul, 2020). Technological developments and pandemics are some of the triggers for change in the world of education. The changes that occur in the world of education can be in the form of innovations related to education itself.

The COVID-19 outbreak has significantly impacted all sectors of life, including the world of education (Sadikin & Hamidah, 2020). Education in Indonesia experienced a shock when large groups of people were prohibited from gathering in one place without maintaining distance, so the school learning system, which was initially face-to-face, changed to a virtual face-to-face system or online learning (on the network) (Rona Mahmudah, 2020). Global conditions with rapid changes require



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policymakers to make breakthroughs in the world of education to overcome all educational problems, especially in the field of curriculum (Putra Fajar, 2020; Saputri et al., 2023; Siahaan, 2020).

The curriculum is the most important thing in education because it is the core of all educational processes. (Haryanti, 2014). The curriculum is an area that is directly related to educational outcomes. (Linda S. Behar, 2003; Ulfatin & Mukhadis, 2017). A curriculum contains objectives and competencies that must be achieved, so it is a guideline teachers use in their teaching process. (Ardiansyah et al., 2023).

Indonesia has experienced several curriculum changes since Indonesia's independence. Until now, it has experienced 12 curriculum changes. (Swandari & Jemani, 2023). Starting with the old order, new order, and reform era. Curriculum changes began with the 1947 curriculum, the 1964 curriculum, the 1968 curriculum, the 1973 curriculum, the 1975 curriculum, the 1984 curriculum, the 1994 curriculum, the 1997 curriculum, the 2004 curriculum, the 2006 curriculum, and most recently, the 2013 curriculum. The latest is the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. Besides being influenced by technological changes, curriculum changes are also influenced by political factors. Eliminating MANIPOL-USDEK in the 1964 curriculum, adding the PMP subject (Pancasila Moral Education in the 1975 curriculum, and adding the History of National Struggle (PSPB) subject were curriculum changes that were influenced by political factors (Awuor & Chemutai, 2015; Brandt, 1994).

Curriculum changes aim to perfect and adapt the previous curriculum to current developments and community needs. (Awuor & Chemutai, 2015; Brandt, 1994; Healy, 2011; Munsi & Guha, 2014). As mandated by the 1945 Constitution, article 31 of the fourth amendment to the 1945 Constitution, MPR Decree No. IV/MPR/1999 concerning GBHN 1999-2004," as well as the National Siksid Law.

The curriculum that will be and is currently being implemented is the Merdeka Belajar curriculum, designed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology in 2021/2022. The "Merdeka Belajar" policy was initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture, Adib Makarim, which aims to realize freedom of thought. The idea of Merdeka Belajar is hoped to strengthen the national education system and create dynamic and enjoyable education that aligns with current developments. This curriculum emerged amidst the demands of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and the COVID-19 pandemic. So that the education system can adapt to all conditions and developments of the times (Daniel et al., 2023). According to (Asfiati, 2020) "Merdeka Belajar" policy is education that leads to ideal education that can balance and adapt to all circumstances, both in normal times and in emergencies, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, where education must be by health protocols. Education that can innovate both in the learning process and systems, such as learning methods, learning media, teaching methods, online and virtual learning teaching competencies, and beautiful learning strategies.

Merdeka Belajar focuses on developing a character that is in line with Indonesian culture. (Fitriyah & Wardani, 2022). In implementing the Merdeka curriculum, it is hoped that students can form and run a project. (Aly, 2015; Budiyanto et al., 2020; Ma'arif et al., 2020). Through implementing projects, students can develop their talents and skills. One of the projects in their curriculum is strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile (P5). The stages are carried out in two steps, namely conceptual and contextual. On the other hand, implementing P5 activities can increase self-confidence and students' potential for work, as well as help them discover students' potential in certain fields. In its application, the teacher's role is as a facilitator, and the learning process is more active because students can discuss the project agendas they will create with their peers. There are six indicators in P5: noble character, critical reasoning, independence, creativity, innovation, teamwork, and diversity. (Pratiwi et al., 2023).

This policy provides a breath of fresh air in the world of education. With the policy of freedom of thought, educational institutions can develop, explore, and improve the quality of education in their respective institutions. Among the major changes from the 2013 curriculum to the independent learning curriculum are the implementation of the "Ujian Sekolah Berstandar Nasional (USBN), which will be returned to each school institution, Changes to the implementation of the national examination to a Minimum Competency Assessment and Character Survey, Learning implementation plans are made

simpler, so that teachers are no longer busy with administrative matters, and the last is a more flexible policy in the new student admission regulations. (Yamin & Syahrir, 2020).

An effort made by education to instill good morals/behavior and abandon bad moral habits in students to get closer to Allah so that happiness in this world and the hereafter can be achieved based on Islamic teachings neatly packaged in Islamic religious education (Muhaimin, 2013). In teaching Islam effectively and efficiently, teachers must be able to try and do their best so that students can easily accept and practice their learning. (Divan & Adam, 2023; Gunawan & Palupi, 2012).

SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru is an A-accredited school with around 1000 students from grades seven, eight, and nine. The school, located on the outskirts of Tulungagung City, precisely on Jalan Raya Ngantru, is one of the driving schools selected as a school that implements the curriculum of freedom to learn in their studies. Based on the principal's statement, the independent learning curriculum has been applied at SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru since the curriculum was launched, to be precise in 2020/2021. However, it still needs to be explained in order to understand it. To overcome this problem, the teachers were included as driving teachers, as the old school principal commanded. The training is carried out online and offline to broaden teachers' knowledge at SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru.

The curriculum used at SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru is "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Mandiri Berubah," where the curriculum gives each educational unit the freedom to use the learning tools that have been determined by the PIAUD, first, fourth, seventh, and tenth-grade education units in implementing "Kurikulum Merdeka" for learning at educational institutions. Initially, they wanted to use the implementation of "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar," which was independent of learning, but seeing its development, in the future, they would also move to implement an independent learning curriculum; in the end, they decided to implement "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Mandiri Berubah." So, implementing Islamic religious education at SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru Tulungangung also adapts to "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Mandiri Berubah."

2. METHODS

The approach used in this study is qualitative. A qualitative approach is a research process carried out fairly and naturally by objective conditions in the field without any manipulation. (Arifin, 2012). The researcher describes and explains the conditions and behaviors of students at SMPN 1 Ngantru Tulungagung related to the implementation of "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Mandiri Berubah" at SMPN 1 Ngantru Tulungagung, which consists of planning, implementation, evaluation and especially the supporting and inhibiting factors in implementing of "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Mandiri Berubah."

The researcher used data collection techniques in the form of 1) Interview. The researcher divided this interview into three parts: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. An interview is a data collection technique involving one or several people concerned. (Sugiyono, 2015). 2) Observation is a data collection method that uses observations of research objects, which can be carried out directly or indirectly. 3) Documents are records of events that have passed in the form of writing, images, or monumental works by someone.

Qualitative data analysis techniques reveal the meaning of research data by collecting data according to certain classifications: 1) Data reduction means summarizing, selecting the main things, focusing on the important things, and looking for themes and patterns. And throw away the unnecessary. 2) Data presentation is carried out by presenting a collection of structured information that allows concluding. 3) Conclusion or verification is the final stage in the data analysis process (Fitri & Haryanti, 2020).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Planning for the "Merdeka Belajar" Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education Learning at SMPN 1 Ngantru Tulungagung is carried out using assessment planning.

Planning of "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar" for Islamic Religious Education Students at SMPN 1 Ngantru Tulungagung has three stages, which are divided into initial stage assessment, process stage assessment, and final stage assessment. The initial stage of assessment uses a formative assessment, namely a diagnostic assessment, in which there are two forms of assessment: cognitive diagnostic assessment and non-cognitive diagnostic assessment. (Kakade et al., 2016). This assessment aims to identify or discover the competencies, strengths, and weaknesses of students' learning models so that learning can be designed according to the student's competencies and conditions. (Banjongprasert, 2017). This is to the explanation from the head of the curriculum that "before entering learning, the institution assesses the students. The assessment is divided into two forms, namely cognitive and non-cognitive. The assessment is made in the form of a written test and interview." Likewise, the teacher explained that "the initial assessment is usually carried out in two ways, namely cognitive diagnostic and non-cognitive diagnostic. For cognitive diagnostics, use a written test. Meanwhile, non-cognitive diagnostics involve observing student behavior during the learning process."

This is in line with (Lagur et al., 2018) The opinion states that cognitive diagnostic assessment can be carried out by presenting written and verbal questions. After going through this stage, the results obtained will be used as a benchmark for teachers to group students based on ability so that learning models or methods can be determined. (Fitriani & Saranani, 2019; Tampubolon et al., 2022; Usanto, 2022). And can form remedial classes that accommodate students with below-average abilities. Likewise according to (Ardiansyah et al., 2023) This states that there are two stages in preparing a non-cognitive diagnostic assessment, namely preparing the selected assessment instrument and making a list of questions, which can be a type of questionnaire to assess students' non-cognitive abilities.

The SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru Tulungagung assessment stage uses a trigger system in the form of questions related to the material being taught. These questions are spontaneous verbal questions that arise during the learning process, but the teacher must be able to adapt to the circumstances or conditions of the learning. This system aims to determine whether students understand the material provided, which will be the teacher's benchmark for whether the material can be continued or repeated. This is in line with (Swandari & Jemani, 2023) The opinion states that it is related to an independent learning curriculum that considers students' cognitive abilities and uniqueness, one of which is the concept of minimum competency assessment, where students can demonstrate numerical literacy and think critically and logically in understanding learning. Ideally, teachers can carry out this assessment regularly during each lesson.

The final assessment stage used by SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru is a summative assessment that aims to determine students' learning outcomes in one or more learning objectives in a certain period. This is in line with (Maisyaroh, I., Abdullah, M., & Hadi, 2023) Statement that it is an activity to carry out an assessment that will produce grades to decide student performance. This assessment can be carried out after learning ends, such as at the end of one scope of material in the form of a daily test and at the end of the semester in the form of a final semester exam. This assessment is a test and can be used to create a portfolio or product or carry out a project.

Implementing "Kurikulum Merdeka" at SMPN 1 Ngantru Tulungagung is still relatively new; institutions are given the freedom to choose the model for implementing the "Kurikulum Merdeka." In its presentation, SMPN 1 Ngantru Tulungagung chose "Kurikulum Merdeka Mandiri Belajar," the technical implementation of which is implementing "Kurikulum Merdeka" using teaching tools that have been provided in the Phase D education unit, Classes 1, 4, 7 and 10. This is in accordance with the concept of implementing "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar" put forward by Maharani where there are three options in Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka (IKM), namely "mandiri belajar, mandiri berubah, dan

mandiri berbagai". (Maharani et al., 2023).

Evaluation or assessment, in addition to the initial or diagnostic assessment, also includes a formative assessment carried out after each lesson. Summative assessments are carried out after completing several chapters, which can be in the middle of the semester or at the end. This evaluation process is similar to Curriculum 13.

Implementation of "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar" in Islamic Religious Education Learning at SMPN 1 Ngantru Tulungagung

Implementation of "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar" in Islamic Religious Education Learning at SMPN 1 Ngantru Tulungagung, carried out at the beginning of learning, this assessment is carried out to determine students' abilities before participating in learning. Cognitive assessment. Students work on questions related to Islamic religious education. The results of this test are to look for learning models, learning methods, learning media, and teaching materials suitable for students in grades 7 and 8. Students practice reading the Qur'an and practice memorizing readings and prayer movements.

This is in line with the opinion of (Lagur et al., 2018) Who stated that the assessment stage to determine cognitive abilities can be carried out by working on questions both orally and in written tests. Meanwhile, to determine students' non-cognitive abilities, educators present questionnaires related to students' psychology, emotions, and environment. (Sajidan et al., 2018). The questionnaire can be in the form of questions, psychological tests, or counseling guidance. In non-cognitive diagnostic assessments, students are free to answer questionnaires according to their respective conditions and abilities because there are no right or wrong answers.

The implementation of "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar" is carried out in a preliminary stage, which can be said to be the initial activity of the learning process. (Muslikh, 2020). SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru Tulungangung begins learning activities by praying together. This prayer activity can be initiated or led by the teacher or one of the students. After that, it continues with the P5 project. If, on that day, the class gets a P5 schedule, this P5 activity is carried out two weeks in one semester. (Ihsan, 2022). If the class does not have a P5 schedule, the next activity is to provide students with a learning stimulus or motivation.

This learning motivation can take the form of light conversations that can focus students' attention on the teacher so that later, the process of delivering the material can run optimally. (Jamal, 2014). Then, the teacher continued the activity by reviewing the material from the previous meeting to grow students' memories. (Pratiwi et al., 2023). Afterward, the teacher can relate to or introduce the material studied that day. Before entering the material delivery, the teacher can provide feedback to students, such as "Has anyone learned the material we will study today?". Teachers can also ask students what method they want to learn. Students have the right to reject the methods we have designed. Teachers allow them to choose learning methods and media by making class agreements. (Muliana et al., 2023). This makes it easier for teachers to deliver learning material.

By involving students in preliminary activities to create learning agreements and design their own goals, students will gain meaningful experience from this process. Understanding why developers require a particular skill or study a material fosters commitment. Commitment can only be achieved by oneself when setting targets, not by teachers or other adults. With that, the preliminary stage of SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru Tulungangung has 6-7 stages expected to deliver students to learning based on "Merdeka Belajar."

Core Activity: In this core activity, the teacher can explain the objectives of today's learning; it is even better to know what achievements students will get when they complete today's material. Then, there are several steps in delivering the material, which can be started with simple questions related to the material. For example, if discussing the chapter on prayer, the teacher can ask an opening question such as "What is prayer?". Then, the teacher can start learning with the strategies or methods that have

been determined together. For inclusive students, learning methods or strategies can be carried out the same as students, but they receive more assistance from accompanying teachers or subject teachers to run optimally. (Basyit, 2019).

Educators at SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru Tulungangung often use a jigsaw and practical learning methods. Of these two methods, the focus of learning is student-centered, where the teacher only provides triggers in the form of questions and materials that students must understand. Later, students must be able to solve the material and really understand it so that it can be explained to other groups. Because this jigsaw method uses a group system, the material studied only focuses on one sub-chapter of material. So, if students want to understand the material from the entire chapter, the group must work together to understand and explain the material they have received. Later, they exchange information with each other.

Closing Activities: SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru Tulungangung has three steps in closing learning activities, starting with providing reflection or feedback to students regarding the material that has been delivered. The teacher can also give freedom to other students if the students can explain the questions that arise. Here, teachers and students reflect together on the learning that has occurred today. The teacher can see to what extent students understand and achieve the learning outcomes from this process. Next, the teacher can implement the material studied with daily activities that still correlate with the material. (Godfrey, 2016; Sarkati, 2023). After that, the teacher can give assignments to students if necessary. In this closing activity, the teacher can improvise activities if needed. (Bera et al., 2017; Ma'arif & Arifin, 2021; Qutni, 2018). Such as giving more challenging assignments or giving choices of learning models for the next meeting. Teachers can also add a documentation session if today's learning involves students in groups who produce an interesting project. The most important thing is giving appreciation to students for being able to work together during learning to achieve the learning objectives.

Difficulties in the implementation of "Kurikulum Merdeka"

A new policy and regulation will, of course, have obstacles and constraints when implemented. SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru Tulungangung also faces the same thing in implementing independent learning; of course, there are obstacles and constraints. The problems that arise also come from external or internal or from the educational community itself. Teachers, as an integral part of education and an important component in learning, also have problems that must be resolved.

Based on the results of observations and interviews with three informants, several factors become obstacles and solutions for teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru Tulungangung to implement "Merdeka Belajar" as follows: 1) Limited material in student books, one of which is books for student learning. 2) Limited facilities and infrastructure: a common obstacle is that there is no distribution of supporting facilities that support the learning process, or you could say that not all schools have adequate facilities and infrastructure, especially SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru Tulungangung. 3) Not all PAI teachers want to fully implement the "Kurikulum Merdeka." Some PAI teachers are still not used to the pattern of implementing the "Kurikulum Merdeka." Some still use the previous curriculum method because they assume all curriculum applications are identical. 4) The teacher has not fully mastered the material in the independent curriculum. 5) Implementation of an inclusive school system: SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru Tulungangung is one of the schools implementing an inclusive school system where the school accepts all students without distinguishing between their abilities (evenly distributed). 6) Limited technological capabilities that support the implementation of "Kurikulum Merdeka."

Technology-based learning media is important in implementing the "Kurikulum Merdeka." (Astuti & Haryanti, 2021). So, it is hoped that educators will use this media to support the learning process. (Setyaningsih et al., 2019). If educators cannot use this media, the learning results will be less than optimal. (Diana et al., 2020). At SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru itself, several teachers have not been able to master this media, such as not being able to operate a computer. Hence, teachers are still stuck to handbooks. The solution to this problem is to increase individual abilities by self-teaching and following

training related to technology-based media development.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and research discussion, it can be concluded that planning for the "Kurikulum Merdeka" for Islamic Education Subjects at SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru Tulungangung was carried out with assessment planning in stages, including cognitive and non-cognitive diagnostic assessments, process assessments in the form of trigger questions and summative assessments. Implementation of "Kurikulum Merdeka" for Islamic Education Subjects at SMP Negeri 1 Ngantru Tulungangung is done by implementing assessments before and after learning. In practice, if educators want to know students' cognitive abilities, educators present questions that are related to the learning material. Implementation of "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar" starts with preliminary activities, core activities, and closing activities. Obstacles to implementing "Kurikulum Merdeka" include limited material in student books, limited facilities and infrastructure, material in the independent curriculum not yet fully mastered by teachers, implementation of an inclusive school system, limited technology capabilities that support the implementation of the "Kurikulum Merdeka."

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