

The Innovation Process Of The Merdeka Curriculum In Learning At The Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Bustanul 'Ulum Jayasakti Anak Tuha is a challenge in facing the increasingly diverse and complex educational needs in the current era. This curriculum offers greater flexibility in developing learning materials that are relevant to the local context and religious values. This study aims to explore and analyse the implementation process of Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Bustanul 'Ulum Jayasakti Anak Tuha, as well as to understand its impact on the quality of learning and the development of student competencies. A qualitative approach with a case study as the main design was used in this study. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with teachers, participatory observation, and document analysis related to curriculum implementation. The results showed that the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Bustanul 'Ulum Jayasakti Anak Tuha has successfully increased flexibility in curriculum development and enriched students' learning experiences. However, challenges faced include the readiness of human resources in adopting this new curriculum and the need for ongoing support from the school and government to maintain consistency in its implementation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Change is often associated with innovation, but not all changes can be classified as innovation. According to Rogers, innovation is an idea, practice, or object that is considered new by individuals or other adopting groups. In the process of innovation diffusion, there are two main components. First, innovation is an idea or concept that is considered new, often equated with a step of renewal that involves the recipient's decision to implement it or not. Second, an innovator is an individual or group that first creates an idea (Sutri Ramah & Miftahur Rohman, 2023). An innovator must possess deep knowledge and a wide network of relationships. The diffusion of innovation occurs gradually through three important elements: (1) the innovation-diffusion process itself, (2) the innovation as the entity being introduced, and (3) the rate of adoption of the innovation. The decision-making process related to innovation involves several stages, starting from individuals (or other decision-making units) acquiring initial knowledge about an innovation, then forming an attitude

towards that innovation, and finally making a decision to adopt or reject the innovation, followed by the implementation of the new idea, and ultimately confirming the decision that has been made (Nawawi et al., 2023).

The implementation of innovation diffusion The Merdeka Curriculum at the school level is the process of disseminating and adopting a new curriculum that replaces existing paradigms and learning approaches. This process involves various parties, including school principals, teachers, educational staff, students, parents, and the surrounding community. This innovation diffusion analysis includes an understanding of the factors influencing the adoption of the Merdeka Curriculum, the strategies implemented, the obstacles encountered, and the resulting impacts (Kurniawan et al., 2023). The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum option that can be implemented by educational units starting from the 2022/2023 academic year, continuing the direction of previous curriculum development. Kurikulum Merdeka is a program designed universally with a unique high-risk concept, allowing students sufficient time to adapt to a framework that can comprehensively strengthen skills (Ramah & Rohman, 2018).

In line with the above explanation, according to (Pixyoriza et al., 2023), in several educational institutions, the dissemination of the Merdeka Curriculum innovation has been smooth and has brought positive changes to teaching methods. However, some institutions face challenges in implementing this innovation, particularly related to the readiness and knowledge of educators as well as resource limitations. By understanding how the dissemination process of the Merdeka Curriculum innovation takes place in the school environment, this research provides valuable insights for policymakers and education practitioners to support the implementation of more effective and sustainable educational innovations. In line with the research conducted by Marisa (2021), the policy of independent learning aims to make the learning process more enjoyable and less boring. The self-directed learning curriculum is also expected to produce educational outputs with high moral standards. This curriculum aims to integrate technology, which is a current human need, with other aspects. Therefore, in the era of Society 5.0, the social problems faced by each individual will be addressed by combining the role of humans with technology, which serves as a tool in solving social issues. According to (Reni Nurhayati, 2023), the principle underlying the independent curriculum is the introduction of concepts or principles about the Pancasila student profile. The implementation of the independent curriculum in Indonesia involves students and teachers in applying project-based learning, with the aim of developing soft skills and character in accordance with the Pancasila student profile.

From the above exposition, there is an analysis gap in this research, namely: Schools that have adopted the Merdeka Curriculum have shifted from conventional teaching methods to more

interactive and student-centered approaches, such as project-based learning and intensive use of digital technology. The role of teachers has undergone significant changes, from merely being instructors to becoming facilitators and inspirators, despite facing challenges such as resistance to change and increased workload. Key factors influencing the adoption of the Merdeka Curriculum include the clarity of the expected benefits from the new curriculum, the availability of adequate resources, school leadership support, and relevant and ongoing training. Evaluation of the success of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum shows that success indicators such as increased student participation and academic achievement have been achieved, although there are still areas that require improvement. The process of diffusing the Merdeka Curriculum innovation involves various parties and takes into account the diverse factors that influence the adoption of the curriculum. Therefore, the analysis of this innovation diffusion is important to understand effective strategies, encountered obstacles, and the impact generated from the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The changes occurring in the world of education today are very dynamic, driven by rapid advancements in information technology. This demands a learning model that can respond to new challenges, resulting in a shift in the role of teachers or lecturers from merely being the center of learning to a broader scope. The concept of independent learning requires teachers not only to function as sources of information but also as problem solvers in daily learning activities. With this approach, it is hoped that students will become more creative and able to think critically (Kurniati et al., 2022). Teachers now play the role of facilitators, inspirators, and true learners who constantly motivate students. Several factors influencing the dissemination of the Merdeka Curriculum innovation include the clarity of expected benefits, changes in educational needs and demands, availability of resources, support from leadership, and the availability of relevant training. Principals play a crucial role in leading and encouraging the adoption of the Merdeka Curriculum by providing support, promoting the development of teachers' skills, and creating an environment that fosters change (Setiawan et al., 2022).

The approach implemented in the dissemination of the Merdeka Curriculum innovation includes effective and continuous communication to all relevant parties. The dissemination of information regarding the new curriculum, its benefits, and its implementation methods is a key element in increasing awareness and acceptance among teachers and educational staff (Nawawi et al., 2023). In addition, the training and workshops held periodically aim to help teachers understand and master the new approaches and methods introduced by the Merdeka Curriculum. However, the process of adopting the Merdeka Curriculum is not without various challenges. Some teachers may show resistance to change because they are already accustomed to previous practices and teaching

patterns. Concerns related to increased workload, curriculum adjustments to national exam standards, and limited resources also pose obstacles that can hinder the diffusion process of this innovation (Kurniawan et al., 2023).

In analyzing the diffusion of the Merdeka Curriculum innovation, the evaluation of the resulting impact becomes an important aspect that must be considered. This can be done by collecting data on changes in learning approaches, student participation, skill improvement, and the achievement of established learning objectives. Through this evaluation, we can gain deep insights into the extent to which the Merdeka Curriculum has been successfully implemented and identify areas that require improvement (Nawawi et al., 2023; Kurniawan et al., 2023). The process of diffusing the Merdeka Curriculum innovation at the school level is a complex process that involves various parties and takes into account various factors that influence the adoption of the curriculum. This analysis of innovation diffusion is very useful for understanding effective strategies, encountered obstacles, and the impacts generated from the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Yana et al., 2024).

2. METHOD

The research method that will be applied in this study is a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach aims to explore a deep understanding of the phenomena experienced by the research subjects, such as behavior, perception, motivation, and actions, by describing them in detail using language, within a specific natural context, and employing various scientific methods. To obtain relevant and valid data, the researcher will use observation, interviews, and document analysis techniques. The validity of the data will be ensured through examination techniques based on four criteria, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The steps of data analysis that will be carried out according to the Miles and Huberman approach include data condensation, data presentation, and verification (Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, 2018).

Data condensation is a process that involves the selection, simplification, centralization, abstraction, and/or transformation of data obtained from field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials. The purpose of this process is to strengthen the existing data. Data condensation continues the data reduction process by summarizing, integrating, and complementing information that may have been overlooked during the reduction process. At this stage, all data is considered relevant as it has been directed towards the research topic and can be enriched with additional theories to deepen the researcher's analysis. Examples include data transformation from field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical sources.

Data Presentation the purpose of data presentation is to identify significant patterns and provide a basis for accurate conclusions and actions. In this research, data presentation aims to interpret the collected data and organize the information in a structured manner. The main focus is to simplify complex information into a more easily understandable yet still informative format, such as in the form of narrative text (like field notes), matrices, graphs, networks, or diagrams.

Conclusion/Verification. At the third stage of analysis, the main focus is on drawing and verifying conclusions. Since the early stages of data collection, researchers have been striving to understand the meaning of the collected symbols, noting emerging patterns, providing explanations, and identifying cause-and-effect relationships. From this process, initial conclusions that are general and open-ended are obtained, which are then gradually developed into more specific conclusions. The process of drawing conclusions is an important part of the research review, by comparing the collected data with previous records. Initial conclusions begin to be formulated from the early phase of data collection. Verified data serves as the basis for formulating the final conclusion. The final conclusion is expected to provide useful and relevant answers to the research questions that have been formulated previously.

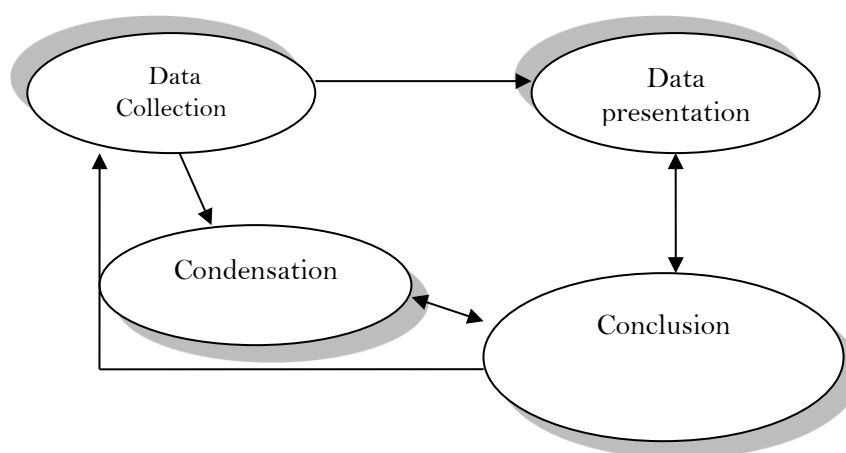


Figure 1. Research stage

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Bustanul ‘Ulum Jayasakti Anak Tuha Central Lampung has shown success in applying the principle of diversity in learning. The teachers have successfully adapted this principle by designing diverse learning activities according to the interests and needs of the students. With this approach, student engagement in the learning process has significantly increased. They are more actively involved in learning activities designed to meet their individual preferences, which in turn strengthens their understanding

of the subject matter. This diversity not only enriches the students' learning experiences but also creates an inclusive learning environment at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Bustanul 'Ulum Jayasakti Anak Tuha Lampung Tengah.

The Merdeka Curriculum has brought positive impacts through its flexibility in developing learning materials at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Bustanul 'Ulum Jayasakti Anak Tuha Central Lampung. With this approach, the school can better adjust the curriculum to the local context and the characteristics of the students, such as teaching Islamic values, Arabic language, and character education. This flexibility allows teachers to design learning that is more relevant and aligned with the needs and interests of students, thereby increasing their motivation to learn. In addition, a flexible curriculum also allows Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Bustanul 'Ulum Jayasakti Anak Tuha Lampung Tengah to respond to changes in the educational environment more dynamically, ensuring that the education provided remains relevant and competitive in this ever-changing era.

One of the challenges that emerged in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Bustanul 'Ulum Jayasakti Anak Tuha Lampung Tengah is the readiness of human resources to adopt and consistently apply this curriculum. Although there has been success in applying the principles of diversity and utilizing the flexibility of the curriculum, there are still several obstacles that need to be addressed. More intensive efforts are needed in training and competency development for teachers so that they can fully understand and effectively implement the Merdeka Curriculum. In addition, continuous support from the school and local government is also important to maintain consistency in the implementation of this curriculum and to ensure that all aspects of education can be well integrated in the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Bustanul 'Ulum Jayasakti Anak Tuha Lampung Tengah.

3.1 Innovation Merdeka Curriculum

As stated by the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim, the concept of independent learning is not a new topic that requires further debate. This idea has long been advocated by education practitioners. In relation to this matter, several discussions have been held on the theme of independent learning, which have received positive responses from various circles, especially educators. This concept is considered a new innovation with great potential to revolutionize the world of education (Nawawi et al., 2023). Merdeka belajar is an innovation of the main program introduced by the Minister of Education and Culture in 2019. The concept of independent learning aims to formulate strategic and specific policies related to the implementation of the National Standard School Examination (USBN), the National Examination (UN), as well as the Lesson Implementation Plan (RPP), and the Zoning System related to the new student admission

process (PPDB). However, the concept of independent learning does not only encompass classroom learning activities, which often become the main focus of educators. Moreover, merdeka belajar has a noble aspiration to realize national ideals without neglecting the responsibilities towards the world of education (Kurniawan et al., 2023).

Thus, this indicates that educators also have freedom in the teaching process. Nevertheless, the fundamental concept of independent learning is an action that emphasizes freedom while maintaining the quality of learning with constructive criticism, without sacrificing moral values and high aspirations for educational practitioners (Yana et al., 2024; Nawawi et al., 2023). However, nowadays many are trapped in the interpretation of the methods and goals of independent learning, which impacts school administration related to bureaucracy, accreditation, and priority objectives. The concept of independent learning is considered easy to say but difficult to implement, as it is closely related to commitment, independence, and the ability to realize it, where all three are interconnected and inseparable. Commitment to learning becomes an important foundation in achieving the ideals and goals outlined in the national education law. Independence in the context of independent learning is also an essential foundation for achieving those goals, although its implementation is often difficult. As a result, many are caught in the manipulation of rules and positions, which hinders the process of educational innovation (Marisa, 2021; Kurniawan et al., 2023).

Furthermore, there is an opinion that educators do not need to rely on experts or specialists in the field of education. Educators do not need to strive to become perfect individuals with all-encompassing abilities. On the contrary, effective educators are those who can learn from failures, whether experienced by themselves or by their colleagues (Hamdi, 2020). Thus, from these experiences of failure, educators can learn better and be able to implement what they have learned. The concept of daring to learn in this context does not intend to claim knowledge, but rather to be able to share knowledge with others. Furthermore, the concept of independent learning is defined as a process that does not impose target achievement, but rather acknowledges that learning requires time to develop new innovations (Sutri Ramah & Miftahur Rohman, 2023). Students need a different learning experience than before, and the role of educators in this regard is very important. The potential possessed by students is not only formed through the learning process in the classroom but also from other learning environments. Therefore, the competencies acquired by students are not only individual but also grow together with their learning environment (Reni Nurhayati, 2023).

Like independent individuals, everyone has a diversity of roles that are each unique. The concept of "merdeka belajar" or "belajar merdeka," although using different terms, actually does not have substantial differences, only varying in methods and systems of implementation (Andrianto et

al., n.d.). Merdeka belajar aims to create a pleasant learning environment for students and educators, with the goal that all parties involved can enjoy a happy learning atmosphere, free from the burden of heavy achievement demands. In 2021, the National Examination (UN), which had long been the gateway for students in Indonesia to continue to higher levels of education, was abolished and replaced with the Minimum Competency Assessment and Character Survey (Nawawi et al., 2023; Kurniawan et al., 2023). This decision was made because the UN was deemed inappropriate as it prioritized memorization over understanding, which negatively impacted students' cognitive development.

3.1 The Innovation Process of the Independent Curriculum in Learning at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Level

This study reveals that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at the Bustanul ‘Ulum Jayasakti Anak Tuha Lampung Tengah level underwent a complex innovation process and required various adjustments. The process of diffusing the Merdeka Curriculum innovation involves various actors, including school principals, teachers, educational staff, as well as parents and the community around the school (Kurniawan et al., 2023; Feraco et al., 2023). In general, the adoption of this curriculum is influenced by several key factors. Analysis of the diffusion of this innovation highlights that the clarity of the expected benefits of the Merdeka Curriculum is the main factor influencing its acceptance and implementation. Educational stakeholders acknowledge the need for a paradigm shift and a more adaptive learning approach to keep up with the times and meet students' needs (Nawawi et al., 2023).

Moreover, effective and sustainable communication strategies with all stakeholders have also proven to be important in influencing awareness and acceptance of the Merdeka Curriculum. The dissemination of good information about the new curriculum, its benefits, and how to implement it is a crucial step to overcome resistance to change and increase the active participation of teachers in implementing this curriculum (Reni Nurhayati, 2023). However, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum faces several obstacles. Some of these include resistance from some teachers who are still attached to conventional teaching methods, concerns related to increased workload, and the availability of adequate resources. These factors pose challenges that need to be addressed in order to ensure the success and sustainability of the Merdeka Curriculum as an innovation in the field of education (Kurniati et al., 2022). Thus, the results of this research provide an in-depth overview of how the innovation process of the Merdeka Curriculum is unfolding at the Bustanul ‘Ulum Jayasakti Anak Tuha Lampung Tengah level, as well as the critical factors influencing its adoption and implementation. This analysis not only provides a better understanding of the dynamics of

change in education but also offers guidance for future policies and practices in advancing a more adaptive and inclusive education system (Marisa, 2021; Asrori, 2022).

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the diffusion of the Merdeka curriculum innovation, it can be concluded that this innovation has great potential to enhance flexibility and participation in the educational process. Factors such as institutional frameworks, policies, and individual attitudes influence the level of adoption and implementation of the Merdeka curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum gives schools the freedom to design a curriculum that meets the needs and characteristics of the students. However, the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum is not easy. The change in paradigm and the established school culture becomes a challenge that must be overcome. Strong support from educational institutions, adequate training and professional development for teachers, as well as coordination between schools to maintain consistency and a shared understanding of the Merdeka curriculum, is required. In addition, government support is very important in the context of policy. This article provides an understanding of the diffusion process of the Merdeka curriculum innovation and the factors influencing it. The results of this study can serve as a basis for education policymakers to optimize the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum at all levels of education. This research also provides insights to education practitioners regarding the challenges and benefits associated with the adoption of the Merdeka curriculum innovation.

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