



An Analysis of Educational Policies Related to The Implementation of The Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze educational policies related to implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah. This Merdeka Curriculum is implemented based on the Ministry of Religious Affairs (KMA) Regulation Number 347 of 2022 and provides several benefits and challenges. This policy empowers madrasahs in Indonesia to develop curricula at the level of educational units on educational needs and management. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach by collecting information and data from various reliable sources related to implementing the Independent Curriculum in Madrasahs in Indonesia. Researchers used the Mazmanian and Sabatier model approach to analyze the data in the implementation aspect. The results showed that implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs in Indonesia has advantages, such as improving Islamic education, curriculum flexibility, and developing student skills. However, there are also challenges, such as educator training, consistency of educational standards, and integration with the national curriculum. To improve the effectiveness of implementation, clear objectives, theoretical support, a clear legal basis, training of teaching staff, stakeholder support, and stability of social, economic, and political conditions are needed.

Keywords: *Educational Policies, Madrasah, Merdeka Curriculum*



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INTRODUCTION

KMA Number 347 of 2022 concerning "Guidelines for Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs" is a policy enacted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. This policy aims to guide madrasahs in developing an education unit-level curriculum that suits the specific needs and educational management of madrasahs. This aligns with the requirements stated in the National Education System Law, which emphasizes the principles of guiding, fostering motivation, and developing students' creativity in the learning process. It introduces the concept of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes curriculum simplification and provides room for creation and flexibility for education units in managing learning. This concept was introduced because madrasahs must always make

changes and continuous improvements, dare to make innovations or breakthroughs, and use information technology to improve the quality of services to all madrasah residents (bin Saper et al., 2018).

Merdeka Belajar is a natural learning process to achieve independence. It is necessary to understand the meaning of independence first because things may still hinder a sense of independence, a sense of not being free, and limited space for freedom. The essence of Merdeka Belajar is to explore the greatest potential of teachers and students to innovate and improve the quality of learning independently. Independent means not only following the educational bureaucratic process but also exploring educational innovations.

One of the objectives of KMA No. 347 of 2022 is to provide independence to madrasahs in managing education and learning and improving the quality and competitiveness of madrasahs following the demands of 21st-century competencies. 21st-century education reflects four things, namely Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving, Communication Skills, Collaboration Skills, and Creativity Skills and Innovation (Nurjanah, 2019). Trilling & Fadel in (Wijaya et al., 2016) also stated that 21st-century skills are (1) life and career skills, (2) learning and innovation skills, and (3) Information media and technology skills. Therefore, education must be an effort to improve the welfare of human life and be part of national development. These skills must not only be possessed by teachers but also by learners for 21st-century learning to be successful.

The development of Human Resources every year must always be improved and follow the existing developments to be able to compete at a high level. The progress of a nation is highly dependent on the quality of the nation's Human Resources. Quality human resources are one of the main capitals in the progress of a nation in the fields of economy, science and technology, politics, culture, and national character (Mulyani et al., 2020).

The results of research by Elitasari (2022) show that in 21st-century education, teachers must be able to integrate learning through technology. Therefore, teachers must master digital competencies including information skills, communication, educational content creation, and problem-solving.

The targets of KMA No. 347 of 2022 are education units and other stakeholders in managing education and learning in Madrasah. The scope of this policy includes several things, such as Graduation Standards, Content Standards, Curriculum Structure, Curriculum Implementation in Madrasahs, Learning, and Assessment, Strengthening the Pancasila Learner Profile, Madrasah Operational Curriculum, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs, Socialization and Assistance in Implementing Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs, and Learning Outcomes.

In KMA No. 347 of 2022, madrasahs are described as official educational institutions supervised by the Minister of Religious Affairs. Madrasahs are responsible for providing general and vocational education focusing on Islam. The types of Madrasah covered by this definition include Raudhatul Athfal, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Madrasah Tsanawiyah, Madrasah Aliyah, and Madrasah Aliyah Kejuruan. It also provides a clear explanation of what constitutes Raudhatul Athfal and Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Therefore, KMA No. 347 of 2022 has significant importance in the advancement of education in these madrasahs. The aim is to improve the quality and competitiveness of madrasahs following the demands of 21st-century competencies.

In its implementation, KMA No. 347 of 2022 has great potential to influence madrasah education and development in Indonesia (Apriatni et al., 2023). By adopting the Merdeka Curriculum, madrasahs are expected to provide more inclusive, creative, and innovative education to meet learners' needs more effectively (Mulyono & Sulistyani, 2022; Oktaviani, 2020). However, like any other policy, implementing the Merdeka Curriculum on the ground

can face various challenges and obstacles, including resource availability, infrastructure gaps, and teachers' lack of competence in implementing this new curriculum (Mustari, 2022). Therefore, analyzing the implementation of this policy becomes very important to ensure its implementation is effective and can provide optimal benefits for the development of education in madrasahs in Indonesia. As a foundation for research on the Merdeka Curriculum, many related studies have been conducted. For example, in a study conducted by Apriatni et al. (2023), researchers evaluated the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in several madrasahs in various regions in Indonesia. The results of this study provide valuable insights into the challenges and potential of the policy.

In another study Mulyono & Sulistyani (2022), the main focus is on the impact of adopting the Merdeka Curriculum on students' creativity and learning independence in Madrasah. This research shows that the Merdeka Curriculum can open up new opportunities for students to develop their creativity and actively participate in the learning process.

In addition, Oktaviani (2020) investigated the effectiveness of information technology integration in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The results of his research show that using information technology wisely can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of learning in Madrasah. However, research has also identified some obstacles in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Mustari (2022) highlighted issues related to the availability of adequate resources and supporting infrastructure needed to implement this new curriculum. In addition, some teachers may face difficulties in understanding and implementing the more flexible learning approaches required by the Merdeka Curriculum.

To overcome these challenges, some madrasahs have adopted a collaborative approach to developing and implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The study by bin Saper et al. (2018) highlights the importance of involving all stakeholders, including teachers, principals, parents, and students, in the curriculum planning and implementation process.

Research on Merdeka Curriculum has provided valuable insights into the potential and challenges of implementing this policy. However, much remains to be learned about how to optimize its benefits and overcome obstacles that may arise during the implementation process. With a deeper understanding of these issues, it is hoped that Merdeka Curriculum can become an effective tool in improving the quality of education in Indonesian madrasahs. Therefore, analyzing the implementation of this policy is crucial to ensure that it is effective and can provide optimal benefits for the development of education in madrasahs in Indonesia.

METHODS

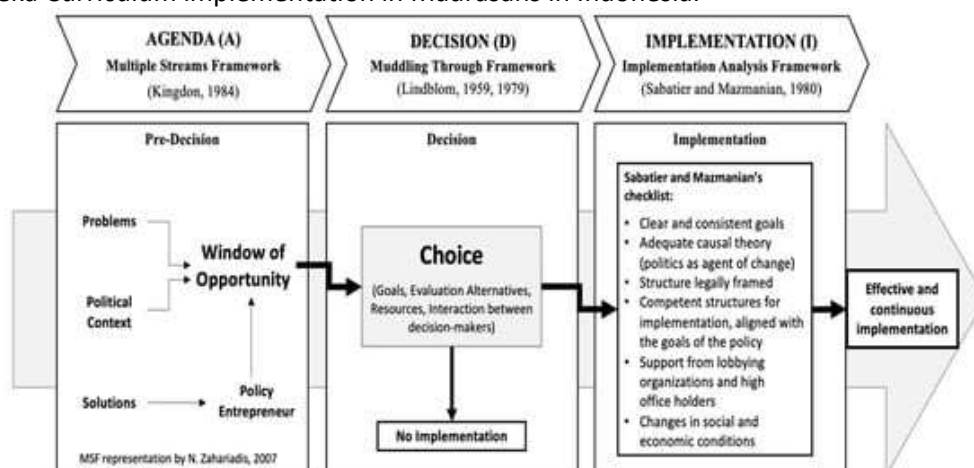
The research method used is qualitative, which allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the views, attitudes, and behavior of the subjects studied (Rukin, 2019). In addition, qualitative research also allows researchers to explore aspects not revealed in depth in previous studies (Purwanto, 2022). In this particular instance, the utilization of the descriptive method in this research enables researchers to systematically, factually, and precisely provide descriptions, images, or illustrations about the facts, characteristics, and connections among the phenomena under investigation. (Rukajat, 2018).

Then, the literature review method is also used in research to collect information and data from various trusted sources related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs in Indonesia (Dr. H. Nizamuddin et al., 2021). Data was collected through documentation studies. Documentation studies involved analyzing official documents, policy papers, and curriculum guidelines related to the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs. The research subject focused on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in madrasahs in Indonesia. The study aimed to explore the views, attitudes, and behaviors of stakeholders involved in the implementation process, as well as the factors influencing its effectiveness.

The data was analyzed using the Mazmanian and Sabatier model in the implementation aspect (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1980). The Mazmanian and Sabatier model approach can be used to examine the policy implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum Implementation in Madrasahs in Indonesia. Several important aspects need to be considered in implementing this policy, including (Banha et al., 2022) :

1. Clear and consistent policy goals or objectives: The objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum Implementation policy in Madrasahs must be clear and consistent with the objectives of national education. The policy objectives must also be measurable and realistically achieved to ensure the success of policy implementation.
2. Strong theoretical support in formulating policies: The success of policy implementation is highly dependent on the quality of the policy formulation itself. Therefore, the Merdeka Curriculum Implementation policy in Madrasahs must be based on a strong and reliable theoretical basis to implement it effectively.
3. The implementation process has a clear legal basis: The policy implementation process must have a clear and standardized legal basis to ensure compliance by officers in the field and target groups. This will facilitate the policy monitoring and evaluation process.
4. Commitment and expertise of policy implementers: The success of policy implementation is highly dependent on the commitment and expertise of policy implementers, such as madrasah teachers and supervisors. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct training and education for policy implementers so that they have sufficient ability to implement the policy properly.
5. Stakeholder support: Policy implementation cannot be done independently but requires support from various parties, such as the community, parents, and other related agencies. Therefore, good communication and coordination with stakeholders are needed to ensure the success of policy implementation.
6. Stability of social, economic, and political conditions: Stable social, economic, and political conditions can facilitate policy implementation. Conversely, policy implementation can only be effective if these conditions are stable.

Thus, the author will be able to identify the factors that influence the implementation of these policies in Indonesia and provide recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation in Madrasahs in Indonesia.



Source : (Banha et al., 2022)

Figure 1. Mazmanian and Sabatier Model's Stages of Policy Implementation

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Clear and consistent policy objectives or targets

The objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum Implementation policy in Madrasahs must be clear and consistent with national education objectives. The policy objectives must also be measurable and realistically achieved to ensure policy implementation's success.

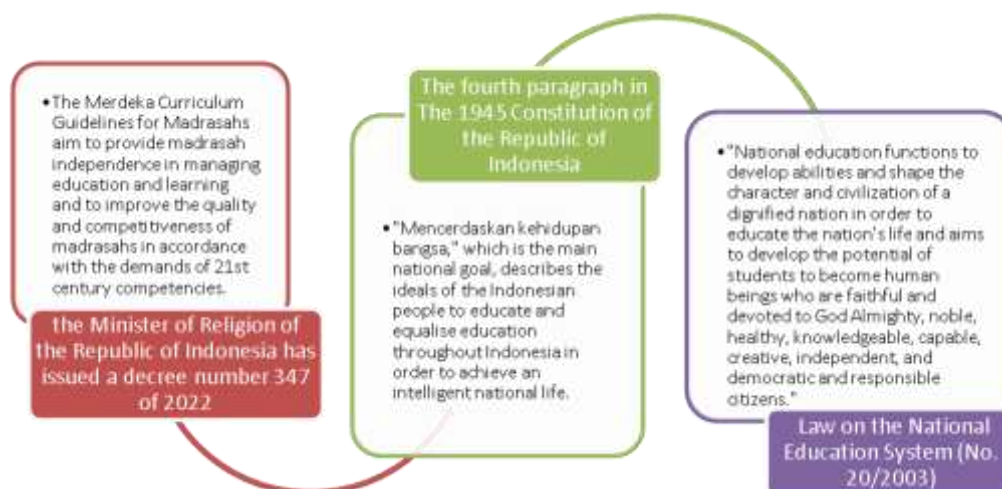


Figure 2. Alignment Of National Education Goals

According to the analysis, the KMA Policy No. 347 of 2022 Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs aims to achieve the national educational goals outlined in the 1945 Constitution and Law No. 20 of 2003. According to Anas et al. (2023), the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs intends to give madrasahs autonomy in managing education and learning and to raise the quality and competitiveness of madrasahs in line with the requirements of 21st-century competencies. This is consistent with the goals and functions of national education, which include the development of skills and the shaping of the civilization and character of a dignified nation to educate the life of the nation.

In this case, it is clarified that the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs seeks to cultivate the holistic development of students, enabling them to become individuals who possess unwavering faith and devotion to God Almighty, exhibit noble character, maintain good health, acquire knowledge, demonstrate capability, unleash creativity, foster independence, and embody democratic and responsible citizenship. Consequently, through this policy, madrasahs are expected to make significant contributions to the education of society and the progress of the Indonesian nation.

The Madrasah curriculum has two major mandates that are very important. First, it aims to equip learners with the attitudes, competencies, and life skills needed to face the challenges of their times. Secondly, the curriculum aims to pass on the nation's cultural character and noble values to the next generation so that the next generation will not be separated from the nation's cultural roots and noble values. This is reflected in the Pancasila and Rahmatan Lil Alamin student profiles. To carry out these two great mandates, the Madrasah curriculum must always be dynamic and develop to answer the demands of the times. In addition, religious values must also be instilled in an integrated manner with the implementation of the curriculum itself. Thus, the value of religiosity will color the way of thinking, behaving, and acting of Madrasah residents in educational practices and policies.

Teachers are at the forefront of implementing this curriculum. They should not just make students mere reservoirs of knowledge. Instead, teachers should focus on building learners'

character and providing attitudes, 21st-century competencies, and life skills. More creative ways must be applied according to the needs of learners in their respective regions (Susilo, 2020; Tafonao & Ristono, 2020). Therefore, teachers should continue improving their capacity. They are expected to work together, collaborate and share knowledge with educational communities to hone their competencies and expand their current insights to provide the best service to learners.

The Merdeka curriculum in Madrasahs has an emphasis on focusing on learners. Learners are the main beneficiaries of this curriculum policy. Differentiated learning is implemented according to the characteristics and needs of learners. Assessment is carried out authentically and comprehensively, which accommodates learner profiles and recognizes the diversity of intelligence and distinctiveness of each learner.

One of the keys to the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah is the seriousness of teachers in providing differentiated learning services to students (Zaini, 2023). This means allowing learners to learn according to their ability level (Teaching at the Right Level). With this approach, each learner will learn according to their potential and abilities.

Through the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, madrasahs are expected to produce students who have strong attitudes, competencies, and life skills and are firmly attached to the nation's noble values. Thus, they will be ready to face challenges in the future and be able to play a role in maintaining and developing the culture and values of the nation that are our identity as a country.

Strong theoretical support in formulating policies

The success of policy implementation is highly dependent on the quality of the policy formulation itself. Therefore, the Merdeka Curriculum Implementation policy in Madrasahs must be based on a strong and reliable theoretical basis to implement it effectively. KMA Policy No. 347 in 2022 concerning Guidelines for Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs is supported by several strong theories, they are :

- a. Theory of Constructivism. Based on the results of the literature analysis explain that KMA 347 in 2022 is formulated based on constructivism theory, where constructivism theory emphasizes the active role of students in the learning process and knowledge that is built from direct experience, reflection, and collaboration with others (Dwiputro, 2022; Ize, 2023; Kinasih, 2022).
- b. Sociocultural Theory: Based on the results of the literature analysis, KMA 347 of 2022 was formulated based on an emphasis on the importance of developing student-centered education and learning that takes into account local culture and the distinctive values of madrasah (Uzza, 2023).
- c. Competency Theory: Based on the results of the literature analysis, it explains that KMA 347 in 2022 is formulated based on competency theory where the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in Madrasah emphasizes the development of student competencies as the main goal (Rohmah, 2022; Vachruddin, 2022).
- d. Humanistic Theory. Based on the results of the literature analysis explains that KMA 347 in 2022 is formulated based on humanistic theory, which emphasizes the development of the personality and potential of students and returns educational literacy to the goals of National Education (Marhamah, 2022; Rohmawati, 2022).

KMA Policy No. 347 in 2022 is supported by several strong educational theories, such as constructivism, sociocultural, competence, and humanistic. This policy can provide great benefits for the development of education in madrasahs.

The implementation process has a clear legal basis

To ensure adherence by field officers and target groups, the policy implementation process must be founded upon a well-defined and universally accepted legal framework. This will enhance the process of monitoring and evaluating policies. The KMA Policy No. 347 of 2022 pertains to the Guidelines for Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs, and is founded upon a well-defined and standardized legal framework. This framework is primarily based on three ministerial decrees: the Decree of the Minister of Religion Number 792 of 2018, which outlines the Guidelines for Implementing the Raudhatul Athfal Curriculum; the Decree of the Minister of Religion Number 183 of 2019, which addresses the Islamic Religious Education and Arabic Language Curriculum in Madrasahs; and the Decree of the Minister of Religion Number 184 of 2019, which guides implementing the curriculum in Madrasahs.

For the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum program in madrasahs, the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture released implementation guidelines which the Minister approved of Religious Affairs on April 5, 2022. This guideline serves as a reference for madrasah and other stakeholders in the strategy of organizing learning for all subjects (Erdiansyah et al., 2022; Hattarina et al., 2022; Rahayu et al., 2022). In addition, the competency standards for graduates and graduation standards for subjects in madrasahs are also adjusted to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology requirements and the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education on Madrasahs Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in 2022-2023 No. 3811 of 2022 contains a decision to determine madrasahs implementing the Merdeka curriculum, namely 233 RA, 1,010 MI, 740 MTs, and 498 MA / MAK in 2022/2023. Then, the Director General also provides regular assistance, monitoring, and evaluation of the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in Madrasahs and stipulates a decision that takes effect on July 12, 2022. This is based on the scope of the guidelines for implementing the Merdeka curriculum in Madrasah (Zarkasi et al., 2022).

However, Zakiyah & Achadi (2022) found that the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in the piloting madrasah Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 2 Bantul had not been fully implemented. Even though it is guided by KMA Number 183 of 2022 concerning implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs. This shows that many obstacles occur in the field for Madrasahs that become Piloting Madrasahs. Because more than this policy is needed with the guidelines alone, there needs to be training on the Merdeka curriculum, modules, or learning resources. Of course, there is supervision and an evaluation process.

The same thing is also seen in the research of Tsania & Surawan (2022). This research shows that the preparation of the Tuban Ministry of Religion in welcoming the Merdeka curriculum has been carried out and has become an SOP or provision of the Tuban Ministry of Religion, namely socializing the Merdeka curriculum following KMA 347, which contains the implementation of the independent learning curriculum for madrasahs, where curriculum issues in madrasahs are explained. Then the Director General's Decree No. 3211 of 2022 regarding learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education and Arabic Language in madrasahs. However, training in making teaching materials has yet to be carried out even though socialization starts with the KKM MI, MTs, and MA, which collaborates with the East Java Provincial Education Quality Assurance Center. Starting from the KKM MI, MTs and MA have carried out socialization in collaboration with the East Java Provincial Education Quality Assurance Center. The Head of Curriculum and one teacher from each institution attended the socialization.

From the results of this study, implementing the Merdeka curriculum in Madrasahs still faces many obstacles and challenges in the field. Although there are policies and guidelines issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs related to the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in madrasahs, it has yet to be fully implemented in madrasahs that have become pilot madrasahs. The obstacles faced include the lack of training and teaching materials that support the Merdeka curriculum implementation and the lack of supervision and evaluation of the implementation process.

For this reason, further efforts are needed to improve the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in Madrasah, such as providing quality training and teaching materials, better supervision and evaluation, as well as support and cooperation from all relevant parties, both from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, teachers, as well as parents and the local community. With these efforts, it is expected that the Merdeka curriculum in madrasahs can run more effectively and efficiently to improve the quality of education in madrasahs and help create a more qualified and independent generation.

The implementation of the KMA 347 policy also has a positive impact on the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Through the KMA 347 policy on the Merdeka curriculum in madrasahs in 2022, strengthening religious moderation becomes a mandatory project educational institutions implement. The project of strengthening religious moderation can be carried out intracurricularly, co-curricular, and extracurricular. The concept of religious moderation has become a new idea since it was launched by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in 2019 as a principle of living in diversity. Through educational institutions (especially madrasahs), religious moderation is strengthened in the Madrasah Islamic Education and Arabic curriculum policy. However, strengthening religious moderation is still a hidden curriculum in this policy, and educators must implement it. In addition to educators, educational institutions (madrasah heads) participate in implementing the project.

The Merdeka Curriculum implemented in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah can be adjusted to the needs and characteristics of students, which can facilitate the learning process with no sense of burden in implementing learning in Madrasah because the process of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah is more in-depth, fun, and independent (Akhmad Zaenul Ibad et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the policy implementation process must be based on clear, standardized laws. The existence of a clear legal basis will ensure the compliance of officers in the field and target groups with the policy. In addition, this will also facilitate the process of monitoring and evaluating the policies carried out. According to (Mursyid et al., 2023), it was found the policy implementation process requires a clear legal basis. By having a standardized legal basis, policy implementation actors will better understand their duties and responsibilities and carry out policies with the necessary consistency and conformity. KMA Policy No. 347 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs, as explained (Anas et al., 2023) has a clear and standardized legal basis. This policy is based on the Minister of Religious Affairs Decree No. 792 of 2018 concerning Guidelines for Implementing the Raudhatul Athfal Curriculum, Minister of Religious Affairs Decree No. 183 of 2019 concerning the Islamic Religious Education and Arabic Language Curriculum in Madrasahs, and Minister of Religious Affairs Decree No. 184 of 2019 concerning Guidelines for Implementing the Curriculum in Madrasahs. With this clear legal basis, implementing the Merdeka curriculum in madrasah ibtidaiyah can be carried out with guaranteed suitability and compliance.

(Swandari & Jemani, 2023) stated that the importance of a clear legal basis is also highlighted. In this context, policies based on standardized regulations and laws will help implementation partners, such as foundations, educational institutions, and communities, better implement Merdeka curriculum policies.

So, the process of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum policy must be supported by a clear and standardized legal basis. KMA Policy No. 347 of 2022 provides implementation guidelines based on the relevant minister of religion's decree. The existence of this clear legal basis will provide a strong foundation for policy implementation actors to carry out their duties and responsibilities appropriately.

Commitment and expertise of policy implementers

The success of policy implementation is highly dependent on the commitment and expertise of policy implementers, such as madrasah teachers and supervisors. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct training and education for policy implementers so that they have sufficient ability to implement policies properly.

The implementation of training must support the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, the provision of teacher learning resources, and innovative and creative teaching tools. The implementation and organization of education must collaborate actively for the progress and improvement of the quality of education. Apart from the role of the curriculum, the role of schools, educators, and students as the main subjects of the curriculum has an existence whose urgency is very important (Rahayu et al., 2022; Sari & Gumindari, 2022; Utami & Pd, n.d.). This is also supported by the provision of learning materials, namely handbooks and supporters in learning, such as the design and scheme of learning objectives, madrasah operational curriculum, teaching modules, and the Pancasila learning profile strengthening project for educators.

The research of Khalifatul Sa'adah et al (2023) obtained information that the leadership of the principal of MAN 2 Probolinggo in carrying out his role as a leader effectively through continuous innovation and empowerment efforts in facing the challenges of the times, such as training, can provide strong motivation. This shows that the Principal of MAN 2 Probolinggo has successfully carried out his role as an effective leader through continuous innovation and empowerment. One example of his efforts is to provide training to educators and other education implementers, improving their skills and providing strong motivation to do a better job.

A study at MAN 2 Serang City aimed at examining the readiness of the Madrasah in implementing KMA no 347 of 2022 showed that the attitude of the Madrasah head and deputy head of curriculum was welcomed positively to the Merdeka curriculum. The deputy head of the madrasa stated that the curriculum change from the 2013 curriculum to the Merdeka curriculum, which was gradually implemented, must have gone through the stages of an in-depth study by experts in the curriculum field. So that the deputy head of the curriculum will prepare technically for the implementation of this Merdeka curriculum at MAN 2 Serang City for the upcoming academic year, namely the 2023/2024 academic year, the head of the Madrasah also stated that he would prepare as well as possible so that this Merdeka curriculum could be implemented at MAN 2 Kota Serang next year (Apriatni et al., 2023).

This shows a commitment from the policy implementation to preparing all education components in implementing the Merdeka curriculum in Madrasahs. It is very necessary to conduct training and education for policy implementers so that they have sufficient ability to implement policies properly (Sauliyusta & Rekawati, 2016; Tsania & Surawan, 2022; Zarkasi et al., 2022).

Stakeholder support

In implementing the Merdeka Curriculum policy in Madrasah, support from various stakeholders is very important. Stakeholders, including the community, parents, and other related agencies, must support this policy's success. Good communication and stakeholder coordination are key to successful policy implementation.

The study (Mursyid et al., 2023) highlighted the importance of stakeholder support in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at the learning implementation level. In this case, active participation from the community, parents, and other related agencies is crucial in ensuring successful implementation. (Khalifatus Sa'adah et al., 2023) emphasizes the important role of the madrasah principal in supporting the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum policy. Madrasah principals with transformational leadership can provide direction, motivation, and support to stakeholders in implementing this policy. Research (Mujiono, 2020) found that teachers' perceptions of the concept of independent learning from the Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim influenced teachers' support for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The support and proper understanding of teachers as the main stakeholders at MTs are very important to achieve the objectives of this policy. Then (Swandari & Jemani, 2023) discussed the challenges faced in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah and the importance of support from implementation partners. Involving implementation partners consisting of various stakeholders can help overcome problems that arise and support the smooth implementation of policies. Highlighting the importance of collaboration and coordination between Madrasah and various related agencies in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. In this case, active support from stakeholders is a key factor in overcoming the various challenges that arise (Anas et al., 2023). Furthermore, (Zarkasi et al., 2022) discuss the important role of madrasahs in supporting and integrating the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in their approach. In this context, the support of stakeholders, including the community, parents, and related agencies, plays a very important role. Implementing this policy can only be successful with all relevant parties' active participation and collaboration. As the main stakeholders, Madrasahs must ensure compatibility between policy objectives and practices carried out in supporting the Merdeka Curriculum. Therefore, good communication with stakeholders and a deep understanding of their roles are essential to achieving Merdeka Curriculum policy goals.

So it can be concluded that the support of stakeholders, including the community, parents, related agencies, madrasah heads, and teachers, has a very important role in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum policy in Madrasah communication and coordination with stakeholders is the main key to ensuring the successful implementation of this policy. Active support from these stakeholders supports policy implementation and helps overcome various challenges that may arise during the implementation process. Therefore, collaboration and active participation from all related parties are important elements in achieving the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum policy in Madrasah.

Stability of social, economic, and political conditions

Stable social, economic, and political conditions can facilitate policy implementation. Conversely, if these conditions are unstable, policy implementation can be difficult and ineffective. When these conditions are stable, policy implementation has a solid foundation to run smoothly and effectively. However, on the contrary, if social, economic, and political conditions are unstable, policy implementation can face various difficulties that hinder its progress and effectiveness. (Tamam, 2021) states that the stability of social, economic, and political conditions plays a crucial role in facilitating the implementation of disciplinary character education policies in madrasahs. When these conditions are stable, policy implementation can run more smoothly and effectively. (Amin & Rasmuin, 2019) mentioned that the stability of social, economic, and political conditions greatly influenced the dynamics and implementation of the madrasah curriculum during the 20th century. Furthermore, (Reksiana & Adlia, 2022) emphasized that the stability of social, economic, and political conditions creates a supportive context for the development of the Islamic education curriculum in madrasahs. Under stable conditions, curriculum policy implementation can run

better. The stability of social, economic, and political conditions plays an important role in ensuring the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs. When conditions are stable, teachers tend to have a better understanding and support for the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Khalifatatus Sa'adah et al., 2023; Mujiono, 2020; Mursyid et al., 2023).

Furthermore, in the study (Swandari & Jemani, 2023), it was found that the stability of social, economic, and political conditions plays a crucial role in the success of partners in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs. When these conditions are stable, a collaboration between implementation partners and madrasahs can run more effectively and make a positive contribution to the implementation of this policy. (Anas et al., 2023) revealed that the stability of social, economic, and political conditions affects the implementation process of the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasah ibtidaiyah. Stable conditions allow madrasahs to implement policies in a more planned and effective manner.

The stability of social, economic, and political conditions is identified as an important factor that has an impact on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs. When these conditions are stable, madrasahs can more easily adapt and use the Merdeka Curriculum platform as an effective learning tool (Zarkasi et al., 2022). Stable conditions create a conducive environment for implementing the policy more smoothly and effectively. The dynamics and implementation of the madrasah curriculum during the 20th century were greatly influenced by the stability of social, economic, and political conditions. Stable conditions provide a solid foundation for curriculum change and facilitate its successful implementation.

In implementing the Merdeka Curriculum policy in Madrasah, support from various stakeholders is very important. Stakeholders, including the community, parents, and other related agencies, must support this policy's success. Good communication and stakeholder coordination are key to successful policy implementation.

The development of the Islamic education curriculum in madrasahs is also highly dependent on the stability of social, economic, and political conditions. In a stable context, curriculum policy implementation can run better and make a positive contribution. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs is strongly influenced by the stability of social, economic, and political conditions. A stable environment allows for effective collaboration between implementation partners and madrasahs so that this policy can be implemented well. This means that it is very important to maintain the stability of social, economic, and political conditions as supporting factors in the implementation of policies in the field of madrasah education. By paying attention to these factors, it is expected that the implementation of education policies in madrasahs can run more smoothly and effectively and provide optimal benefits for students.

Stable social conditions mean there is harmony and good relations between individuals in society. This creates a conducive environment for madrasahs to implement education policies effectively. Students can focus on learning, develop expected character values, and interact positively with teachers and classmates. Social stability helps create a supportive climate for learners to develop their potential. Furthermore, economic stability has a significant impact on the implementation of education policies in madrasahs. When economic conditions are stable, the resources needed to support educational activities are readily available. Sufficient funds can be allocated to pay teachers' salaries, provide adequate learning facilities and devices, and provide other resources that support the teaching and learning process. In a stable economic environment, madrasahs can provide quality education and ensure that learners get the maximum benefit from the education policies implemented. Political stability is also an important factor in implementing education policies in madrasahs. Stable political conditions create legal certainty and a clear framework for madrasahs to carry out educational activities. Clear and consistent education policies can be implemented easily, without any doubts or

obstacles. In addition, political stability allows for effective collaboration between madrasahs, implementation partners, and the government in achieving the desired educational goals.

By maintaining stable social, economic, and political conditions, we can create a supportive environment for implementing education policies in madrasahs. Stable conditions provide a strong foundation for the implementation of these policies. The implementation of education policies in madrasahs will run more smoothly and effectively and provide optimal benefits for students. Learners will receive a quality education, teachers will have a conducive working environment, and madrasahs can function optimally as educational institutions.

Discussion

The purpose of this research is to investigate the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs and its relation to national education objectives. The study aims to analyze the strengths and limitations of the Merdeka Curriculum policy, identify educational theories that support its implementation, examine the legal basis and guidelines for its execution, assess the importance of teacher competencies, explore the role of stakeholder involvement, and emphasize the significance of continuous evaluation and monitoring. Through this research, a comprehensive understanding of the potential for improving the quality of education in Madrasahs through the Merdeka Curriculum can be attained.

The research concludes that the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum Implementation Policy in Madrasahs must be clear and consistent with the objectives of national education. In this case, the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs aims to provide independence to madrasahs in managing education and learning, improve the quality and competitiveness of madrasahs, and develop abilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation to educate the nation's life. This goal is in line with the objectives of national education as stated in the 1945 Constitution and Law No. 20 of 2003. In implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs, students are the main beneficiaries of this policy. Differentiated learning is carried out according to the characteristics and needs of students. Assessment is also carried out authentically and comprehensively, accommodating learner profiles and recognizing each learner's diversity of intelligence and distinctiveness.

The results showed that several strong educational theories support the Merdeka Curriculum Implementation Policy in Madrasahs. These theories include constructivism, socio-culture, competence, and humanism. Constructivism theory emphasizes the active role of students in learning and knowledge built from direct experience, reflection, and collaboration with others. The sociocultural theory emphasizes the development of student-centered education and learning, considering local culture and the distinctive values of the madrasah. Competency Theory emphasizes the development of student competencies as the main goal. Meanwhile, Humanistic Theory emphasizes the development of the personality and potential of students and returns educational literacy to the goals of National Education.

The process of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum policy in Madrasahs is based on a clear and standardized legal basis. This policy refers to the Decree of the Minister of Religion, such as the Decree of the Minister of Religion Number 792 of 2018, the Decree of the Minister of Religion Number 183 of 2019, and the Decree of the Minister of Religion Number 184 of 2019. In the research, it was seen that there are guidelines for implementing the Merdeka curriculum that serve as a reference for the madrasah and other stakeholders in the strategy of organizing learning in the madrasah. In addition, graduate competency standards have also been set according to the madrasah education level, thus providing a clear direction in designing the curriculum and managing the learning process.

Research shows that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs needs to be supported by strengthening teacher competencies. Teachers need to understand the curriculum well and have the necessary skills and knowledge to implement a student-centered

learning approach, authentic assessment, and develop student potential. This study found that strengthening teachers' competencies is carried out through various training and development programs organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and related agencies. The program includes training on the Merdeka curriculum, project-based learning, authentic assessment, and teacher professional development.

The results show that the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs depends heavily on the involvement and partnership between madrasahs and stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Education Office, parents/guardians of students, and the local community. This study shows that madrasahs that have successfully implemented the Merdeka Curriculum are madrasahs that actively collaborate with stakeholders. They involve parents/guardians in decision-making and provide space for community participation in developing curriculum and learning programs that suit local needs.

The research emphasizes the importance of continuous evaluation and monitoring in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs. Evaluation is carried out to evaluate the achievement of goals, the effectiveness of learning strategies, and the quality of the learning implemented. Monitoring is carried out to monitor curriculum implementation, teacher understanding, and problems and challenges that arise during the implementation process. In this study, it was seen that various parties, such as the supervisory team from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Education Office, and the madrasahs themselves, carried out evaluation and monitoring. The evaluation and monitoring results are used as a basis for improving and developing policies and strategies for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs.

This study concludes that implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs has the potential to improve the quality of education and learning in Madrasahs. However, the success of this implementation requires comprehensive support from various aspects, such as clear objectives, a strong legal basis, strengthening teacher competencies, stakeholder involvement, and continuous evaluation and monitoring. With the right support, Merdeka Curriculum can be a strong foundation for achieving more inclusive and relevant educational goals for madrasah students in Indonesia.

The research provides valuable insights into the alignment of the Merdeka Curriculum objectives with those of national education, establishing the policy's legitimacy and relevance. Additionally, the identification of educational theories supporting the Merdeka Curriculum implementation offers a solid theoretical foundation for its student-centered approach. The clear legal basis and guidelines mentioned in the research demonstrate that the Merdeka Curriculum has a robust framework for execution. The emphasis on strengthening teacher competencies highlights the importance of empowering educators to successfully implement the student-centered learning approach. The study's emphasis on stakeholder involvement recognizes the significance of collaboration and community participation in curriculum development. Furthermore, the research acknowledges the essential role of continuous evaluation and monitoring in improving the implementation process and ensuring the curriculum's effectiveness.

While this research provides a comprehensive overview of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation in Madrasahs, some areas warrant further investigation. Future research could focus on in-depth case studies of specific Madrasahs to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking the long-term impact of the Merdeka Curriculum on student outcomes and learning achievements would provide valuable insights. Exploring best practices from other countries or regions with similar student-centered curricula could offer valuable lessons for the Indonesian context. Furthermore, research on innovative teaching methodologies and technology integration in the Merdeka Curriculum implementation could enhance its effectiveness. Lastly, conducting comparative studies between Madrasahs and

non-Madrasah schools implementing the Merdeka Curriculum could provide valuable insights into the curriculum's effectiveness across different educational settings.

CONCLUSION

The Merdeka Curriculum is an Indonesian government initiative that aims to give schools, including madrasahs, the freedom to determine a curriculum that is relevant to local needs and student characteristics. It was introduced as an effort to improve the quality of education and provide greater flexibility to schools.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs provides several advantages that can enrich Islamic education. First, this curriculum can take into account the distinctiveness and characteristics of Islamic education taught in madrasahs. Thus, madrasahs can place a stronger emphasis on religious understanding, Quranic studies, and character education following Islamic values. This allows students to gain a deeper understanding of Islamic teachings and strengthen their religious identity. Another advantage of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs is the development of broader student skills. This curriculum allows madrasahs to include practical and contextual subjects that can help students develop academic skills, social skills, and life skills. With this holistic approach, students can become more skilled individuals who are ready to face challenges in everyday life. Thus, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs provides advantages in respecting the distinctiveness of Islamic education, providing flexibility in curriculum development, and enabling broader skill development for students. Through utilizing these potentials, madrasahs can provide quality and relevant education, and prepare students for success in an increasingly complex and dynamic future.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs in Indonesia is an initiative that aims to provide freedom to schools, including madrasahs, in determining a curriculum that is relevant to the needs and characteristics of local students. Although it has great potential for improving the quality of Islamic education, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is also faced with several challenges that need to be addressed properly. Some of the main challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs include 1) From the perspective of Educators, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum requires educators who can develop and implement a flexible curriculum. Madrasah teachers need to receive adequate training and professional development so that they can understand the concepts and principles in the Merdeka Curriculum and be able to implement them properly in the learning process. 2) Quality training will assist madrasah teachers in developing learning approaches that suit student characteristics and local needs. Education Standards, one of the concerns that arise in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs is the potential variation in education standards between one madrasa and another. This can occur because the freedom to determine the curriculum can lead to differences in approaches and subject matter between one madrasah and another. Therefore, it is important to ensure that there is an effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism to ensure that education standards are maintained and the quality of education is not negatively affected. 3) The existence of the Integrated Curriculum means that madrasahs need to ensure that the curriculum developed in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum still meets national education standards and can be well integrated into the broader education system. Despite having flexibility in determining the curriculum, madrasahs need to ensure that the subject matter taught still covers aspects that are important in education in general, such as literacy, numeracy, and general knowledge. Integration with the national curriculum will ensure that madrasah students are well-equipped to face the wider world.

Overcoming these challenges requires serious attention from the government, educational institutions, and all relevant parties. Training and development for madrasah

teachers should be a priority so that they can master the concepts and techniques of flexible curriculum development. In addition, the government also needs to develop effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure the quality of education is maintained. Madrasahs also need to maintain a balance between curriculum freedom, meeting national education standards, and integration with the wider education system. By addressing these challenges, implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs has great potential to improve the flexibility, relevance, and quality of Islamic education in Indonesia. With the right efforts in developing educators, maintaining educational standards, and integrating the curriculum, madrasahs can become educational institutions that can provide better learning and follow the times.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs is a step in improving the quality of Islamic education in Indonesia. However, to ensure the success of this implementation, several factors need to be considered and carried out properly. Here are some aspects that need serious attention in developing the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs. First, training and development are crucial steps that must be taken by the government to prepare madrasah teachers to develop a curriculum that follows the principles and objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum. Regular training programs, workshops, and mentoring by experienced education experts can help madrasah teachers master the concepts and techniques of curriculum development that are flexible and relevant to student needs. Second, coordination between madrasahs is very important in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. By cooperating and sharing experiences between madrasahs, synergy will be created in curriculum development, improving the overall quality of education. Information exchange, collaboration in developing subject matter, and teaching experiences can provide great benefits in improving the quality of education in madrasahs. Third, effective monitoring and evaluation need to be carried out by the government to ensure that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs remains following the established education standards. Regular monitoring and periodic evaluations need to be carried out to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum, identify potential improvements, and provide feedback to madrasahs to continue to improve. Fourth, research and development related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs need to be carried out continuously. By conducting studies and research, it can be seen the impact of this policy on the quality of education, student success, and better curriculum development in the future. This research can also help in finding the best solutions for overcoming challenges and maximizing the potential of the Merdeka Curriculum. Fifth, communication and providing clear information to madrasahs, teachers, parents, and the community are also very important. The government needs to improve communication with all parties related to the Merdeka Curriculum, both through direct meetings and by providing easily accessible documents and guidelines, as well as through social media and digital platforms. Transparent and easily accessible information will help all parties involved understand the objectives, benefits, and implementation of this policy.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs has great potential for increasing the flexibility, relevance, and quality of Islamic education in Indonesia. However, challenges in educator development, maintenance of educational standards, integration with the national curriculum, and evaluation mechanisms need to be effectively addressed. With proper efforts in training, coordination, monitoring, research, and communication, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs can provide significant benefits to Islamic education in Indonesia.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

In this study, there is a conflict of interest that needs to be disclosed. The researcher who conducted this research is also a doctoral program S3 Education Science student at Universitas

Negeri Padang (UNP) in the 2022/2023 academic year. This research was conducted as an assignment from the program's Education Management and Policy Analysis course. Therefore, the researcher is interested in completing this research to fulfill the academic requirements of the study program.

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