

## Madrasah Head Strategies In Implementing The Independent Curriculum Atman Batu Bara

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Strategy; Head of Madrasah;  
Merdeka Curriculum

#### Article history:

Received 2024-01-14

Revised 2024-02-12

Accepted 2024-07-17

### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the madrasah head's strategy in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at MAN Batu Bara, focusing on the understanding of the madrasah head and teachers, strategic implementation steps, and competence in using technology. The research method used is qualitative with a Phenomenological approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and observations of the madrasah head, teachers, students and related documentation. The results showed that the level of understanding of madrasah principals and teachers about the concept and objectives of Merdeka Curriculum is relatively high, which is reflected in the implementation of daily learning practices. Strategic steps such as the formation of a curriculum development team, intensive training, and adjusting the madrasah's vision and mission are key to successful implementation. In addition, the competence in using technology by madrasah principals and teachers has supported the effectiveness of teaching based on the Merdeka Curriculum, although there are challenges in adopting technology by a small number of teachers.

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## INTRODUCTION

The madrasah head has a very important leadership role in managing education. The role of madrasah principals is indispensable because they have considerable responsibilities (Syarnubi, Fauzi, et al., 2023). They are considered the main pillar in improving the quality of education and teaching in the madrasah environment (Maryatin, 2013). This is due to their responsibility in planning, organizing, coordinating, supervising and managing all educational activities in madrasah (Hadi, et al., 2014). Because of their role as a leader, madrasah principals must be able to realize educational goals (Syarnubi, 2016). The main purpose of the role of the madrasah head is to create an atmosphere that supports and enables the learning process to run in the most efficient and effective way (Martanti, 2024).

In its implementation, the madrasah head has a lot of tasks and authority (Syarnubi, 2019a). The duties of madrasah principals are not only limited to managing madrasah administration, but also in developing educational institutions as a whole (Tanjung, et al., 2021). They have full control over the running of madrasah activities and have a major impact on the progress of madrasah (Ahmad, et al., 2017). Madrasa principals should have a strong commitment in implementing education in the madrasah (Syarnubi, 2019b). Madrasah principals who can show efforts in overcoming various educational problems in their madrasah environment as well as possible and in a serious way (Syarnubi, S., Alimron, A., & Muhammad, 2022). The implementation of the teaching and learning process, and the welfare of all individuals in the madrasah environment will be good if the madrasah head is good (Umayah, 2015). As the main leader, the madrasah principal is also

responsible for creating a comfortable and harmonious working environment by providing instructions, guidance, and high-quality services to all madrasah staff (Mulyati, 2022). Thus, it is important for madrasah principals to focus on the educational goals they will achieve (Fauzi et al., 2023).

School/madrasah principals have three crucial aspects in the context of education: as educational administrators, managers, and supervisors (Muflihah & Haqiqi, 2019). These functions include strategic planning, setting up organizational structures, inspiring the educational community, and overseeing the implementation of madrasah activities (Maujud, 2018). The madrasah principal must also ensure a high level of discipline in the madrasah environment, as this is crucial for improving the learning spirit and work motivation of education staff (Muhaemin & Umar, 2022).

In this context, an efficient leadership strategy is crucial to achieving the educational goals that have been set. A good leadership strategy is able to support the achievement of organizational goals in both the short and long term (Yulmawati, 2016). The success or failure of the madrasah head in achieving its goals can be seen from the output it produces (Syarnubi, 2023). Therefore, madrasah heads must have optimal abilities in managing education and adjusting to the times, in accordance with the principles stipulated in applicable laws and government regulations (Muat & Rahmat, 2024). Strategies are used to achieve long-term goals, and have a significant impact on the continuity of the organization, both in the short and long term (Riadi, et al., 2021).

By implementing strategies, educational institutions can be more responsive to environmental changes and strengthen their position in meeting the demands of society and the job market (Komaruddin, et al., 2022). Thus, strategic management is not only a tool to achieve competitive advantage, but also a tool to improve the quality of education (Tohet & Suriyanto, 2023).

As the leader of an educational institution, the madrasah head must have certain strategies to encourage teachers and education personnel in their workplace (Syarnubi, 2024). As a madrasah head, he must have a leadership spirit that can make changes and breakthroughs to improve the quality and quality of education (Murni, 2020). A madrasah principal's strategy is the art of using the skills and resources of an organization to achieve specific goals through effective relationships with the environment under the most favorable conditions (Banun, et al., 2016). To improve the quality of education, madrasah principals must have high credibility, be able to take and utilize all existing potential for the progress of madrasah, and have a good educational background (Mukhtar, 2015) (Mukhtar, 2015).

The role of the madrasah principal in supporting the improvement of the quality of education in the madrasah environment has great significance (Syarnubi, 2020). In addition to the school/madrasah principal must successfully carry out his main duties and functions as a manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator, he must understand and practice the purpose of his responsibilities (Hamidah & Julkifli, 2021) Moreover, the task of the madrasah principal is clear, namely advancing the madrasah and improving the quality of education in accordance with the eight national standards for education: Content Standards, Graduate Competency Standards, Educational Process Standards, Facilities and Infrastructure Standards, Management Standards, Financing Standards, Assessment Standards, Educator Standards, and Education Personnel (Kasmawati, et al., 2022).

The education system in this country has many challenges in its implementation (Syarnubi et al., 2021). The Indonesian government seeks to respond to this situation through various policies, including changes in the education curriculum with the birth of the Merdeka Curriculum (Irhamyiah, 2023). Education in this era is directed at increasing the potential of students in the application of technology so that students can provide assistance to deal with existing developments (Syarnubi, Syarifuddin, et al., 2023). The current issues faced by the world of education involve adaptation to technology-based learning, changes in teaching-learning patterns, and adjustments to the needs of diverse students (Ambarwati, et al., 2022). In this context, curriculum change is a strategic step to maintain the quality of learning and answer educational needs (Syarnubi, Efriani, et al., 2024). As explained by the Ministry of Education and Research, education in Indonesia is currently facing complex challenges, namely there is a gap in the quality of student learning as

shown by the results of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), namely 70% of 15-year-old students are below the minimum competency in basic mathematical concepts and understanding simple reading and challenges in the use of technology that is very rapidly developing and exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The functions of the curriculum are very diverse and include several important aspects. First, it functions as a planned program designed to achieve specific educational outcomes. Second, the curriculum sets out the expected learning outcomes, including the knowledge, skills and attitudes that students must achieve. Third, the curriculum functions as a cultural reproduction tool that passes on cultural values from one generation to the next. In addition, the curriculum is also a collection of discrete tasks and concepts that must be learned by students to achieve educational goals. The curriculum also functions as a social reconstruction agenda, which is used to change and improve existing social structures.

The role of the curriculum in the education system is also very important and diverse (Syarnubi, 2022). The curriculum has a conservative role that preserves cultural values inherited from the past. In the era of globalization, where foreign cultural influences easily enter, the conservative role of the curriculum becomes very important to maintain and preserve the noble values of society. In addition, the curriculum also has a creative role that must contain new elements that allow students to develop their full potential. This is important so that students can actively contribute to an ever-evolving and dynamically changing society. Finally, the curriculum has a critical and evaluative role that serves to select and evaluate which values and cultures should be retained and which need to be adopted.

This curriculum change is mainly realized through the Merdeka Curriculum. Within the policy framework, there are various regulations, such as Permendikbudristek No. 5 of 2022 concerning Graduate Competency Standards and Permendikbudristek No. 262/M/2022 which contains Curriculum Implementation Guidelines in the Framework of Learning Recovery (Permendikbud, 2022). The Ministry of Religious Affairs then issued a policy to implement the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasas through Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs Number 347 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs. The challenges arising from this change are not only technical, but also include aspects of students' social and emotional adaptation and teacher readiness in implementing the new curriculum.

The development of Merdeka Curriculum is inseparable from the challenges that need to be overcome. These challenges involve the madrasah head's strategy in implementing the new curriculum, teachers' adaptation to new learning methods, meeting technological needs, and adjusting learning materials to the actual situation in the field. In this context, the role of madrasah principals becomes very important. The madrasah principal's strategy in implementing the independent curriculum was identified early in the preparation and planning of the madrasah's vision and mission.

The vision and mission of the madrasah must be oriented to the needs at the stage of implementing the independent curriculum which has a direct impact on the learning process, educators and students. So that the head of the madrasah must ensure that the madrasah's vision and mission are oriented and adjusted to changes in the independent curriculum. The expectations of the Merdeka Curriculum involve strengthening character education, improving 21st century skills, and increasing the competitiveness of graduates at the global level. This curriculum is designed to create a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also has superior character and skills that are relevant to the demands of the times.

However, in the midst of these great expectations, problems arise, the potential inequality of the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in various madrasahs, especially those in areas with limited access to technology, is a concern. The challenges of madrasah principals in managing curriculum changes are also a major focus. Therefore, the strategy of the madrasah head is key in handling curriculum change and ensuring its successful implementation (Sumarmi, 2023).

Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) Batu Bara is one of the madrasah-based educational institutions in Batu Bara district, which has a strategic role in dealing with changes in the education curriculum, especially the Merdeka Curriculum. Located on Jalan Perintis Kemerdekaan No. 76

Lima Puluh, Kota Lima Puluh, Batu Bara Regency, which is the learning center for students based on the only State Aliyah Madrasah in Batu Bara Regency. This madrasah is faced with various challenges and opportunities in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, especially in adapting learning with the use of supporting technology. These challenges include a deep understanding of the new curriculum, teachers' readiness to implement these changes, and support from various related parties.

As the initial observations made by researchers at MAN Batu Bara, it was found that the preparation of strategies for implementing the independent curriculum was still not optimal, this was indicated by complaints from teachers at the socialization of the independent curriculum, they felt that they did not understand the independent curriculum deeply, especially in the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) and the Rahmatan Lil Alamin Student Profile Program (PPRA) which were initiated in the independent curriculum for madrasah-based educational institutions, and teachers also had to make a lot of efforts to change their old learning patterns by enriching the use of media and technology during learning which made it a little difficult for some teachers.

In addition, teachers must also take part in an independent teaching training program on the Merdeka Teaching Platform (PMM), and in order to fulfill this program, the impact of teacher time on students is reduced. This is an initial challenge in the implementation of the independent curriculum, it is hoped that there will be a strategy from the madrasa head in optimizing the independent curriculum at MAN Batu Bara This is what attracts the author's attention to examine the problem in the form of the right strategy used by the madrasa head in responding to the challenges of implementing the independent curriculum, so that the title of the research that the author will research is "STRATEGY OF THE MADRASAH HEAD IN IMPLEMENTING THE INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM AT MAN BATU BARA" with the hope that through this research it can be formulated how the right strategy is used by the madrasa head in implementing the independent curriculum.

This research brings novelty by evaluating the level of understanding of madrasah principals and teachers of Merdeka Curriculum holistically, from basic concepts to implementation in daily learning practices. The structured and integrated implementation strategy, including the establishment of a curriculum development team and intensive training, offers a model that can be replicated by other madrasahs. The research also highlights the importance of technology integration in learning, as well as collaboration and continuous professional development, showing how these approaches can improve the effectiveness of Merdeka Curriculum implementation.

## METHODS

This research was conducted using a qualitative research research method with a descriptive approach. This research also includes field research with a phenomenological approach. Descriptive qualitative research is research that explores a number of data, both primary data and secondary data with concrete steps (Syarnubi, Fahiroh, et al., 2024). The data sources in this study, namely: The source of data for this strategy was learned from the head of the Madrasah, WKM Curriculum, 3 teachers who actively carry out training and direct implementation of the independent curriculum, 2 students who have participated in the implementation of the independent curriculum. Secondary data sources are teacher and student data, documents, and books and journals that discuss the problems of this study, which are related to the implementation strategy of the independent curriculum at the Batu Bara MAN Madrasah. The data collection techniques in the research on the implementation strategy of the independent curriculum carried out by the head of the Madrasah, teachers and all elements that have an impact on the implementation of the independent curriculum in the MAN Batu Bara environment are observation, interviews and document studies, The data analysis technique in this study includes data reduction, then after the data is reduced, the next stage is data presentation. Furthermore, conclusion drawing is the final stage in data analysis. Triangulation techniques are used to ensure data validity. Data triangulation is done by combining information from various sources and methods to ensure that the data obtained is complete and as expected.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. The Level of Understanding of the Madrasah Head and Teachers about the Merdeka Curriculum at MAN Batu Bara

The Merdeka Curriculum that has been implemented at MAN Batu Bara is something new and the success of its implementation depends on the stages of understanding that must be possessed by the head of the madrasa, teachers, then students, to parents and several parties involved in implementing the independent curriculum in the MAN Batu Bara environment. So that at the initial stage the principal must first know and understand how the definition and characteristics of the independent curriculum are.

From the information in the interview with the madrasa principal above, there are interesting things about this independent curriculum that interest the madrasa principal to understand more deeply so that it can be implemented properly. At the training stage, the madrasah principal and teachers gain a variety of understandings and experiences on how to implement the independent curriculum and realize that the increasing competence they have, the teacher resources at MAN Batu Bara are sufficient and qualified, the level of understanding and implementation of the independent curriculum is very good, because with a lot of training and evidence of application in the learning process and competence has shown a lot of improvement.

This independent curriculum is a curriculum that emphasizes the need to develop the creativity of both teachers and students so that learning is innovative or full of interesting ideas, as well as an adaptive learning process through assessment, namely identifying and adjusting to the needs of students and the environment or situation conditions that support learning. However, there are challenges that arise such as various tasks either independently or in groups in certain learning projects. Then there was the IKMBK training that we attended for a week and developed for 6 months, and attended MOOC training online every week, monitored and assessed their learning and many other trainings either independently or facilitated by schools and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and related agencies / institutions.

Mrs. Palupi's training experience is the same as that of other teachers. It is indicated that at the stage of implementing the independent curriculum in the learning process in the classroom, it is well planned and implemented, the projects given to students are very innovative and adaptive by integrating with technology and effective independent project assignments. Even so, according to the teachers, the implementation of a very interesting independent curriculum through innovative and adaptive learning and building character can be more independent, collaborative, and creative.

Based on the results of observations, namely the strategy of the madrasa head who answers the challenges of implementing an independent curriculum in understanding the independent curriculum and how to socialize and ensure that this understanding is owned by everyone involved in implementing an independent curriculum including the madrasa head, teachers, students and parents who have an impact on school policies in implementing an independent curriculum. By using the SWOT strategy as recommended in the Operational Curriculum Development Guidebook in Education Units from the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, the madrasah head together with the curriculum development team analyzed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that the madrasah has in implementing the independent curriculum.

The SWOT strategy analysis on understanding shows that there are weaknesses and threats at the beginning of implementing the independent curriculum, such as difficulty understanding new concepts and terms in the independent curriculum, understanding the learning and assessment process, understanding online or offline training materials and procedures, understanding P5 and PPRA, and there is a threat to the effectiveness of implementation if it is not complete in understanding. However, there are also strengths and opportunities from several aspects such as relatively good resources, sufficient facilities, and support from many parties. So that slowly the results of training and cooperation between teachers in strengthening understanding of the independent curriculum have increased.

Based on the results of interviews, observations and documentation described above, it can be concluded that the level of understanding of the madrasah heads and teachers at MAN Batu Bara has relatively increased, indicated by the learning received by students which greatly reflects the successful implementation of the independent curriculum. The aspects of understanding that madrasah heads and teachers already have about the independent curriculum include; understanding of the concepts of definition and regulation, understanding of learning and assessment, understanding of adjustments and development of education units, and understanding of P5 and PPRA learning projects, as well as increasing competence and understanding of the use of technology. These results are expected to continue to increase along with the steps and policies that will be implemented by the madrasah head together with the curriculum development team as a result of the preparation of an independent curriculum implementation strategy.

Based on the research findings on the level of understanding of the madrasah head and teachers about the Independent Curriculum at MAN Batu Bara, the implementation of the independent curriculum begins with an understanding that must be possessed by the madrasah head and teachers, the level of understanding can gradually be seen from each process to the evaluation of the implementation of the independent curriculum at MAN Batu Bara. Based on the SMI guidelines, this understanding includes an understanding of definitions, regulations and objectives, an understanding of the learning process based on an independent curriculum and assessment, the development of educational units through adjusting the madrasah's vision and mission and educational innovation, as well as an understanding of strengthening learning projects conceptualized in P5 and PPRA.

In the guidebook for developing an operational curriculum in education units published by the Ministry of Education and Culture, it is explained that the concept map for understanding the implementation of an independent curriculum consists of 4 concepts of understanding, namely; (1) understanding the definition of an independent curriculum consisting of regulations and studies of an independent curriculum, (2) understanding learning and assessment, (3) understanding the development of an operational curriculum for education units in an independent curriculum consisting of analyzing characteristics and creating a vision, mission, and objectives of education units, (4) and understanding the process of developing learning projects to improve the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project.

As the findings of the implementation of the independent curriculum at MAN Batu Bara that the 4 understandings described by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research through the guidebook for the operational curriculum of the education unit as explained above show that the principal and teachers through many joint and independent trainings both online and offline as a whole have understood the 4 understandings. marked by increasing competence and learning effectiveness at MAN Batu Bara after the implementation of the independent curriculum and the use of technology in the training and learning process. The stages of the level of understanding can be described as follows:

- a. Understanding the Concept and Purpose of the Independent Curriculum, the head of madrasah and teachers at MAN Batu Bara have shown a deep understanding of the concept and purpose of the Independent Curriculum. Although in the early stages there were difficulties in adjusting all teachers to the concept, they slowly understood that the independent curriculum is an innovative and adaptive new curriculum approach, designed to increase student creativity, develop teacher competence, and adapt learning to the individual needs of students. This understanding is reflected in their awareness of the importance of changing the learning paradigm to be more dynamic and responsive to the times, this can be seen from the learning process that has been identified as applying the independent curriculum concept.
- b. Understanding of independent curriculum learning and assessment, after carrying out training and competency development in the independent curriculum, the head of madrasah and teachers at MAN Batu Bara have learned a lot about every lesson that is oriented to the independent curriculum. They also realized the importance of exploring

regulations, assessments, making learning tools, and applying digital technology in the context of this new curriculum. The training helped them better understand how to integrate elements of the Merdeka Curriculum into their learning practices. The madrasah principals and teachers have also implemented Merdeka Curriculum in their daily learning practices. They recognize that Merdeka Curriculum gives teachers freedom in choosing appropriate learning methods. Teachers actively use assessments to identify students' learning needs and interests and group them based on similar characteristics to develop effective learning strategies.

- c. Understanding of evaluation and sustainable madrasah development, the madrasah head and teachers are active in evaluating the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum. They regularly evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that arise during the learning process. This evaluation is the basis for sustainable development in improving the quality of learning at MAN Batu Bara, so that they can continuously improve and adjust learning methods according to student needs and technological developments. Then for development in the education unit, the head of the madrasah along with the curriculum development team also designs the vision and mission to adapt to learning needs and changing times through the use and development of competencies in technology, this is indeed felt by the madrasah head and teachers to be quite difficult but slowly can be adjusted to the needs.
- d. Understanding of learning projects that develop the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project and the Rahmatan Lil Alamin Student Profile. learning projects that are integrated into Pancasila values and religious values. As a description of the projects that have been carried out as activities for all students and teachers in the madrasah environment such as the activities of dhuha and zuhur prayers in congregation, the election of the head of the osim in democracy and deliberation, and other PHBI activities, besides that there are also activities carried out as projects for each subject, such as drama, speeches, presentation of paper results or learning experiments and others.

## 2. Steps for Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at MAN Batu Bara

The change in curriculum from the K13 curriculum to the independent curriculum is a challenge for every educational unit, both schools and madrasahs, so MAN Batu Bara tries to prepare as well as possible all the needs that become procedures in implementing the independent curriculum. The head of the madrasah studied how the independent curriculum should be implemented, so that further action was needed. So a special team of curriculum developers was formed and compiled as a team that coordinates planning, organizing, applying, monitoring and evaluating related to the curriculum. with the formation of this team, it is easier for the madrasah head to make the right strategy in implementing the independent curriculum. Furthermore, the madrasah head also ensures proper training for teachers which is intended to optimize the implementation of the independent curriculum so that they understand the concept of the independent curriculum in depth.

Efforts made to implement the independent curriculum. As in the training that brings presenters to MAN Batu Bara, online-based independent training or following the independent curriculum platform confirmed to the development team, to national-based training that the development team facilitates and prepares. Optimizing the implementation of the independent curriculum is expected to be a form of effort in improving the quality of education in Indonesia, especially at MAN Batu Bara, which is a pilot model for Madrasah Aliyah in Batu Bara Regency, with the impact of implementation that can improve the competence of teachers and students with character and adjust to the times.

After the formation of the curriculum development team, the first step of the team's work program is assessment, preparation of needs, adjustments and other planning. The curriculum development team prepares a training schedule that adapts to the teacher's situation. After training is carried out for all teachers, the next step is to arrange the distribution of tasks to teachers and their implementation in the learning process.

In implementing it as a whole, it is necessary to supervise each teacher so that it is in accordance with and based on the SME procedures that have been learned in the independent curriculum training, but at the beginning of the implementation there were still many teachers who had difficulty in implementing it. The curriculum development team together with the madrasah head evaluates the process of implementing the independent curriculum by analyzing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that arise, the results of which become improvements for the future so that an ideal and adaptive way and system for implementing the independent curriculum is found based on the conditions of teachers, facilities, media, and other conditions.

Based on the results of observation and documentation, the steps for implementing an independent curriculum at MAN Batu Bara use a SWOT analysis strategy that analyzes strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats which are integrated as the preparation of appropriate strategic designs at the planning, organizing, implementing, supervising, evaluating, and developing innovation stages. In addition to the curriculum development team and the madrasah head, there is also direct assistance and supervision from the curriculum development team from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Batu Bara district as a party that makes joint efforts in developing and implementing an independent curriculum, especially madrasah in Batu Bara district. So that MAN Batu Bara becomes a leading madrasah that is prepared to become a model and pilot for the development and implementation of an independent curriculum for other madrasahs in Batu Bara district.

Based on the results of interviews, observations and documentation as described above, it can be concluded that the steps for implementing an independent curriculum at MAN Batu Bara include; preparation of a curriculum development team, training and awareness, gradual implementation of an independent curriculum, continuous monitoring, assistance and evaluation, and collaboration between teachers, students and other related parties.

### **3. The Ability of Madrasah Principals and Teachers in Using Technology to Implement the Independent Curriculum at MAN Batu Bara**

The need to use digital technology is felt to be very important in implementing the independent curriculum, because as a more adaptive curriculum, adjusting to the times is highly dependent on the use of digital technology, besides that in the practice of training, there are many facilities that utilize technology as a means that makes it easier to understand and directly integrate the results of training on these technological devices.

The application of technology to students to support the optimal implementation of the independent curriculum at MAN Batu Bara cannot be implemented evenly due to the need for a fairly expensive budget in facilitating all of them, but as a solution the madrasah head makes a policy that answers the challenges of implementing an independent curriculum. This is felt by students who feel the impact of implementing a curriculum that uses a lot of technology, although the technology support facilities are not evenly distributed to all classes, the madrasah policy supported by parents of students is expected to optimize the use of technology that makes it easier for teachers and students to accept and be active in interesting learning in digital classes.

The digital class which is a superior class is intended as an optimal class in implementing the independent curriculum, because it will be very good for the process of implementing the independent curriculum if it is equipped with supporting facilities, even though there are differences in costs and facilities, the implementation of the curriculum is still maximized in other classes with a digital facility system that alternates between classes and continues to maximize independent digital learning projects through each student's cellphone or supporting digital devices owned by the teacher.

In its application, the madrasah head and teachers must be able to use technological devices consisting of software and hardware, as stated by Kurniawan that educational technology is divided into three, namely; the first technology that focuses on hardware, the second technology that focuses on software, and the third technology which is a combination of the two.

The ability of the madrasah head and teachers in using technology to implement the Merdeka Curriculum at MAN Batu Bara is expected to adapt to the challenges in implementing



the independent curriculum. The digital class as a superior class which is intended to maximize the implementation of the independent curriculum in certain classes is also a challenge for the teachers who are in the class, so it is very important that the principals and teachers have deep mastery in the use of technology.

Mr. Erwin Parlindungan Nasution, S.Ag, MM integrates technology in the management of school administration such as schedule setting, monitoring student attendance, and communication with parties that impact the use of technology in implementing the independent curriculum. The madrasah principal actively facilitates training and professional development for teachers related to the utilization of technology in learning, the madrasah principal also oversees the implementation of technology infrastructure in the school to support effective learning activities.

The use of technology is also very important for teachers at MAN Batu Bara, so based on the results of the research, teachers at MAN Batu Bara show a good ability to adopt technology to improve the learning process in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum. Each teacher is able to use digital learning software and applications to compile interactive and interesting teaching materials for students. Utilizing social media and platforms that support implementation and training on the independent curriculum and to increase student engagement outside of class hours. Teachers also integrate technology in learning assessment and evaluation to provide faster feedback to students.

Collaboration between teachers and the use of technology is also expected to maximize the performance of teachers who have difficulties in using technology because in the research information there are 80% who are proficient in using technology and the rest are not as proficient as others, only limited to being able to use difficulties to develop at the learning innovation stage, so the madrasah head and teachers at MAN Batu Bara must demonstrate the ability to collaborate to use technology effectively. The collaboration includes participation in joint training sessions and workshops to exchange experiences and ideas in the use of technology for education, in building strong communication networks between teachers to support each other and share technology resources, and garnering support from the education community and related parties to improve access to and use of technology in the school environment.

Thus, the ability of madrasah principals and teachers to adopt and implement technology in the context of Merdeka Curriculum at MAN Batu Bara is crucial to creating a learning environment that is inclusive, responsive and relevant to the demands of the times. By continuously strengthening this ability through continuous training and professional development, MAN Batu Bara can improve the quality of education and prepare students to face future global challenges.

Based on the results of interviews, observations and documentation as described above, it can be concluded that the ability of the madrasah head and teachers to use technology at MAN Batu Bara shows a significant increase during the implementation of the independent curriculum, this is as needed by the madrasah head and teachers in adjusting learning, training, and developing an independent curriculum which gradually uses technology as a means of facilitating the process. Although not all teachers are proficient, there are 80% of teachers who are proficient enough to collaborate with each other and cooperation between teachers to help meet the needs of using technology evenly and be able to maximize the implementation of an independent curriculum that uses technology as a facilitating innovation. Another innovation implemented at MAN Batu Bara is that there is a superior class, namely the digital class which has facilities for digital-based learning that are more complete than other classes which automatically requires teachers to be able to use digital devices when entering the class.

## CONCLUSION

Deep Understanding The madrasah principal and teachers at MAN Batu Bara demonstrate a deep level of understanding of the concepts and objectives of Merdeka Curriculum, learning and assessment, madrasah development, and the P5 and PPRA projects. They recognize the importance of this curriculum as an innovative and adaptive new approach, designed to enhance students'

creativity and the relevance of learning to the needs of the times. This awareness is reflected in their commitment to changing the learning paradigm to be more dynamic and responsive. Strategic Steps Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum at MAN Batu Bara is supported by structured strategic steps. The formation of a curriculum development team, intensive training for teachers, adjustments to the madrasah's vision and mission, implementation in learning practices, and continuous evaluation are an integral part of this process. These steps not only ensure conformity with Merdeka Curriculum principles but also improve overall learning effectiveness. The adjustment of the madrasah's vision and mission by the madrasah head and the curriculum development team is indicated as a strategy in implementing the independent curriculum. Competence in Using Technology madrasah principals and teachers at MAN Batu Bara demonstrate significant competence in adopting and implementing technology to support the Merdeka Curriculum. They use technology for various purposes, from school administration to developing interactive teaching materials. This ability allows them to maximize learning efficiency and provide a better learning experience for students.

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