

# Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum in Islamic Education Subject at SMK Penerbangan Bina Dhirgantara

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum and the supporting and inhibiting factors at SMK Penerbangan Bina Dhirgantara Surakarta. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. The data collection techniques are through interviews, observations, and document analysis. Data validity uses source and technique triangulation. Data analysis techniques involve data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The research results on implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMK Penerbangan Bina Dhirgantara Surakarta have yet to be fully optimal; several aspects must be improved and corrected so that its implementation runs well and optimally. Supporting factors in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum are the increased creativity of educators and students in their learning enthusiasm and student activity in the learning process, as well as enhancing educators' potential in developing their self-capacity. However, obstacles are felt in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education, such as the difficulty in creating quality learning because some teachers still do not master technology and have not fully understood the Merdeka Curriculum.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the essential instruments in improving the quality of human resources (HR) in terms of academics, behavior (attitude), and skills. Education is the primary key to enhancing the quality of human resource development. Education is the process of teaching and learning conducted by educators to help students shape character, improve intellect, and encourage better student behavior (Ab Marsiyah, Firman 2019). Now, the teaching and learning process is not only centered on the teacher during instruction, but the teacher must also be able to explore what the students have learned (Syarnubi, S., Efriani, A., Pranita, S., Zuhijra, Z., Anggara, B., Alimron, A., ... & Rohmadi 2024).

Curriculum development is an instrument for advancing the quality of education. The existence of the curriculum is essential because it is the primary key to education and the energy of educational components that support the achievement of academic goals (Fatmawati. 2022). Therefore, establishing the curriculum with the right educational policies is crucial, as the role of the curriculum is essential for students to achieve academic goals in a structured and sustainable manner. The Ministry of Education and Culture has developed a new curriculum called the Merdeka Curriculum, which is an improvement of the previous curriculum, the 2013 Curriculum (Aminah, I. A. N., & Sya'bani 2023). The learning system in the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the character formation of students (Syarnubi, S., Syarifuddin, A., & Sukirman 2023). (Susilowati, 2022). Schools and teachers

in the Merdeka learning curriculum focus on the freedom to innovate according to the needs of the students (Syarnubi 2022).

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is a highly impactful subject for shaping students' character, especially in forming the Pancasila student profile in the Merdeka curriculum (Darman 2017). As in the Pancasila student profile, which has six aspects of character development dimensions, one of which relates to faith and devotion to God Almighty (Bagaskara 2017). In the religious dimension, students are guided to perfect character education that consists of five elements: teaching about religious ethics and morals (Syarnubi 2019a).

According to (E. F. Wahyuningtyas, ) Afga n.d.) "The implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in PAI subjects is going well because the flow of the Merdeka curriculum is very compatible with the character of PAI." According to (Mahmudi 2023) in his research, "It shows that the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum at SMA 1 Simanjaya has 4 stages: the stage of deepening the Merdeka curriculum, the stage of document preparation, the stage of implementation, and then the stage of evaluation."

According to (Susilowati 2022) "The research results show that the implementation of the independent learning curriculum in schools has been ongoing, but there are several obstacles faced by teachers in its implementation." As stated by (Amril et al. 2024), "The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is very relevant to the subject of PAI because learning is conducted in stages and continuously from one phase to another." Starting with the most fundamental component—the instillation of a strong faith—PAI must be administered gradually and thoroughly before moving on to other areas. The success of PAI education for students is significantly influenced by the capacity of PAI teachers to identify learning objectives based on the defined learning outcomes. Therefore, this research aims to determine: 1. How is the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum at SMK Penerbangan Bina Dhirgantara Surakarta? 2. What are the supporting and inhibiting factors for implementing the Merdeka curriculum?

## METHODS

This research was conducted at SMK Penerbangan Bina Dhirgantara Surakarta. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, and this study aims to delve into implementing the Merdeka Curriculum (Sugiyono 2017). Data sources were obtained from interviews, documents, and observation results. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews with PAI teachers to understand the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, observation, and document analysis. Then, the validity of the data uses source and technique triangulation. The data analysis method for this research uses the Miles & Huberman model, which is explained in three aspects: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verifying. These three components can co-occur. And places more emphasis on interactive data model analysis techniques (Syarnubi 2016).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the conducted research indicate that three main factors demonstrate the success of the independent learning curriculum implementation at SMK Penerbangan Bina Dhirgantara Surakarta in the subject of Islamic Religious Education, namely having adequate facilities and infrastructure, the educator factor, and cooperation that stimulates students' interest in learning.

### **Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education at SMK Penerbangan Bina Dhirgantara Surakarta**

Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education has yet to be fully optimal; however, several aspects need to be considered, such as teachers must be able to advance students' thinking abilities to relevant lessons, and teachers must be able to hone students' potential abilities (Darise 2021). Therefore, implementing Islamic Religious Education in the Merdeka curriculum should be oriented towards the students' character (Syarnubi 2020). Thus, critical, creative, collaborative, confident, and communicative thinking abilities can be developed (Syarnubi 2019b). Based on the interview with the PAI teacher at SMK Penerbangan Bina Dhirgantara

Surakarta, *"In this independent learning curriculum, we must be able to make students think critically, be active, and strengthen students' potential. We give freedom to students because we use the independent curriculum, so the learning is freely returned to us without referring to the material."* For example, we link it to Islamic character; we focus one semester on prayer (Said, 2024)

In addition, educators' ability plays a crucial role in supporting the success of the learning process in PAI subjects. Educators are key players in implementing the independent curriculum, and they must be able to master the material and understand the needs of the students. On the other hand, educators must be able to think creatively and innovatively and possess initiative to create a comfortable and meaningful learning process (Muharrom, Aslan 2023). As per the interview with the PAI teacher at SMK Penerbangan Bina Dhirgantara Surakarta, *"Because some students have not performed prayers properly and correctly, the first period can be filled with dhuha prayer, followed by Quran recitation. Since the independent curriculum allows for free material, we can use the dhuha prayer as the prayer material"* (Said 2024).

Islamic Education teachers believe that the curriculum changes in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subject differs from the 2013 curriculum. The material in the Islamic Religious Education subject is considered advanced in its discussions, so educators must ensure that it is effectively conveyed to the students (Lailiyah, S., & Imami 2023). From the interview with the PAI teacher at SMK Penerbangan Bina Dhirgantara Surakarta, *"With this curriculum change, teachers become facilitators for students, so teachers must help students understand the material and identify their learning needs because each student's learning style is different. For example, they can practice prayer, show videos related to the material, and work in groups"* (Said 2024).

During the implementation process, the stages of learning in Islamic Religious Education within the independent curriculum include initial assessment, introductory activities, core activities, and closing. The teacher must carry out the four stages in the teaching and learning process (Satriani, 2022). The PAI teacher at SMK Penerbangan Bina Dhirgantara stated that "Initial assessment has two aspects, namely non-cognitive and cognitive" (Said 2024). Non-cognitive assessment is conducted to understand the students' character, while cognitive assessment measures the knowledge the students will comprehend (Syarnubi, S., Alimron, A., & Muhammad 2022). The preliminary activities of Islamic Religious Education in the classroom begin with a prayer, an ice-breaking activity to refresh the students, and an apperception activity by asking questions and evaluating the material previously learned (Syarnubi, S., Mansir, F., Purnomo, M. E., Harto, K., & Hawi 2021). Then, students will be provided with a reflection on how the study material can be applied daily. In this introductory stage, an initial assessment is also conducted. The core activities usually implement differentiated learning according to the Merdeka curriculum (Syarnubi, S., & Fahiroh 2024). This differentiated learning includes content material tailored to the needs and understanding levels of the students, providing learning approaches according to the student's learning styles, and creating a supportive learning environment for all students. In the closing activities, the teacher conducts reflection activities with the students, such as summarizing the lesson, conducting formative assessments to understand students' responses to the learning material, and assigning tasks to have students seek insights about the material to be discussed in the next meeting (Rahmi, A., Sukardi, T., & Wijaya 2021). Based on the interview with the PAI teacher at SMK Penerbangan Bina Dhirgantara, *"At the beginning of the lesson, it starts with a prayer, then ice breaking, student reflection, and an initial assessment where the teacher asks questions and the students answer."* Core learning is inquiry learning, discovery learning, and project-based learning. Therefore, teachers can utilize technology in learning media (Said 2024).

## Supporting and Hindering Factors in the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education Subject at SMK Penerbangan Bina Dhirgantara Surakarta

### a) Supporting Factors

From the interview results, the following are the supporting factors that have been felt in the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in Islamic Religious Education learning:

Enhancing the creativity of educators and students. The independent curriculum allows educators to use various teaching tools and allows students to learn comfortably, independently, and enjoyably. Therefore, this allows educators and students to explore their creativity in the teaching and learning process (Sulkipli, N. A., Ruslan, M., & Suriani 2023). As stated by the PAI teacher at SMK Penerbangan Bina Dhirgantara Surakarta regarding the supporting factors of this independent curriculum implementation, *"From my own experience, the impact has significantly increased in terms of creativity for both educators and students, as they are compelled to enhance creativity in teaching and learning."* (Said 2024).

Increasing students' enthusiasm for learning in the classroom. As a classroom facilitator, the teacher provides students free access to learning independently in groups or through other methods while adhering to educational procedures. In the learning process, students must think critically, be able to communicate and collaborate with their group members and be active in learning activities (Isnaeni Subekti, Arbangatun Fitriana, Chuswatun Chasanah, Jana Riskiana 2016). From such activities, one of the supporting factors of the independent curriculum emerges, which requires the enhancement of soft skills, strengthening of competencies and character of students, and not just focusing on cognitive learning (Hasmiati, H., Fawzani, N., & Muhlis 2024). As stated by the PAI teacher at SMK Penerbangan Bina Dhirgantara Surakarta, *"We, as PAI teachers, implement the independent curriculum in the classroom by giving students the freedom in the learning process to enhance critical thinking and collaboration because we have adequate facilities such as LCDs, projectors, and other learning media tools."* (Said 2024)

Improving the self-competence of an educator. As is known, an Educator is required to implement this independent curriculum. Educators are not only required to master the subject matter, methods, media, and so on, but on the other hand, they must also create a quality learning process, have a comfortable and conducive learning atmosphere, and meet the needs of the students. (Andini Rahmawati & Syahrullah, 2024). Therefore, educators must enhance their capacities so that the process of Islamic Religious Education can run smoothly, according to plan, and achieve the learning objectives. (Dahlan et al., 2016). The PAI teacher at SMK Penerbangan Bina Dhirgantara Surakarta said, *"Here, the teachers also feel a bit challenged in implementing the independent curriculum because previously, the teachers focused on mastering the material and other aspects." We must do more than that, such as providing quality, enjoyable, and needs-based teaching and learning, to improve educators' competencies continuously. "But as a teacher here, I am also grateful to be able to improve my competencies as an educator, so we must always develop our competencies"* (Said, 2024).

### b) Hindering Factors

The researcher found several hindering factors in implementing this independent curriculum: 1. Teachers need more mastery of the independent curriculum, as some educators are still adapting to the Independent Learning Curriculum (Syarnubi 2024). The transition from the previous curriculum requires adjustments, and some educators still need to understand the essence and application of this new curriculum fully. Interview results: *"Overall positive, the Merdeka curriculum has new and interesting elements, but honestly, there are several challenges that I and my fellow teachers face, such as not fully understanding the Merdeka curriculum, lack of practical guidance in its implementation, and so on."* (Said, 2024). As a result, they need help to design effective learning strategies that meet the needs of the students. The Merdeka Belajar curriculum gives students more freedom. This impacts classroom management, where some educators need help to direct and control student behavior during the learning process (Redana,

D. N., & Suprpta 2023). 2. Teachers need to gain experience in using Computer Technology. As a result, the learning process becomes less innovative and varied and does not meet the learning needs of students in this digital era. Regular training for teachers on using computer technology in modern learning implementation is necessary to address this issue. Thus, teachers can enhance their competencies, students can gain a richer learning experience, and the overall quality of education can be improved (Perwita 2020). Interview results with the PAI teacher at SMK Penerbangan Bina Dhirgantara Surakarta: "Some teachers here are older and still struggle with technology use, which becomes one of the obstacles in the classroom learning process. However, as for myself, God willing, I already understand this matter." (Said, 2024).

## CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMK Penerbangan Bina Dhirgantara Surakarta shows that teachers have made efforts to apply the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, such as providing freedom to students in learning, developing students' potential, and integrating Islamic character values into the learning process. Teachers have also conducted initial assessments to understand students' character and learning needs, as well as implemented differentiated learning by considering content, process, and product. However, implementing the Merdeka Curriculum still needs to be fully optimal because teachers still need help understanding the essence of the Merdeka Curriculum in lesson planning.

Supporting factors for the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMK Penerbangan Bina Dhirgantara Surakarta include: 1) Enhancing the creativity of teachers and students, 2) Boosting students' learning enthusiasm, and 3) Improving teachers' self-competence. Meanwhile, the hindering factors identified are: 1) Teachers' need to understand the essence of the Merdeka Curriculum and 2) Teachers' lack of experience in using computer technology. The lack of understanding among teachers regarding the essence of the Merdeka Curriculum leads to difficulties in designing effective learning strategies and managing the classroom. On the other hand, the limited ability to use computer technology hinders teachers from creating innovative and varied learning experiences.

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