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THE ANALYSIS OF KURIKULUM OPERASIONAL MADRASAH AS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MERDEKA CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze Kurikulum Operasional Madrasah (KOM) as the implementation of Merdeka curriculum in MAN 1 Bantul Yogyakarta. KOM is the school curriculum used by the school in applying the new curriculum during a year. The research used a qualitative method through a case study design. The research focused on the analysis of Kurikulum Operasional Madrasah and how was the format of the curriculum. In addition, it explored more about the teachers' perception along with the challenges towards the implementation of Merdeka curriculum. The data collection involved interviews and document analysis providing valuable insights into the practical aspects of this curriculum reform. The data analysis consisted of data collection, data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusion. The findings highlighted the content of Kurikulum Operasional Madrasah focusing on giving the school more opportunities to adjust its characteristics, the students and its environment to achieve the goal of school vision and mission. Besides the teachers' perception dealing with Merdeka Curriculum mostly said that although there were many challenges of the implementation, they agreed that this curriculum brought differences and many benefits in the teaching and learning process. This research hopefully contributes to the ongoing dialogues and cases related to the surrounding curriculum reforms in Indonesian Madrasah especially under the issues of Merdeka curriculum.

Keywords: Merdeka curriculum, KOM, teachers' perceptions

INTRODUCTION

Education is a foundation of societal progress and development, serving as a catalyst for the growth and empowerment of individuals and communities. In the terms of education, curriculum plays a pivotal role in shaping the learning experiences of students and preparing them for the challenges of the modern world. Lisan et al. (2023) said that the education will always evolve in accordance with its era which means that it should be aligned with the improvement of the nations in the future. In recent years, Indonesia has undergone significant transformations in its educational landscape, notably with the introduction of the Merdeka Curriculum, an innovative approach to education aimed at fostering holistic development and equipping students with the skills and knowledge necessary for success in the 21st century. Referring to curriculum change, Kelly (2004) states that one contributing factor to this situation is the failure to acknowledge that the transformations in society have encompassed not only technological and economic

aspects but also social, ethical, and political dimensions, often resulting from these technological and economic advancements. Those aspects are important to note that a country should prepare and design the best curriculum in achieving the best generation of its nation in the future (Lisan et al., 2023).

The curriculum is a very important part of the learning process. The curriculum is among a set of essential tools in education for achieving the vision, mission, and goals, as well as the benchmarks of learning in the madrasah (Baharun, 2017). Therefore, curriculum changes have become a necessity towards better education (Masykur, 2019). This research delves into the analysis of Kurikulum Operasional Madrasah (KOM) as the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, focusing on a comprehensive case study. The Merdeka Curriculum, officially introduced in Indonesia by 2022, marks a departure from previous educational paradigms by emphasizing learner autonomy, critical thinking, and character development. It seeks to create a dynamic learning environment that prepares students not only for academic excellence but also for active citizenship and global competitiveness.

Kurikulum Operasional Madrasah, commonly referred to as KOM, serves as a framework for the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs, Islamic educational institutions that play a crucial role in Indonesia's educational landscape. Madrasahs are instrumental in nurturing Islamic values and providing quality education to millions of students across the country. This research embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the KOM's role in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, aiming to shed light on its effectiveness, challenges, and impacts on madrasah education. By conducting a detailed case study, it seeks to uncover valuable insights into how KOM aligns with the goals and principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, its adaptation to the unique context of madrasahs, and the outcomes it produces in terms of student learning and development.

There are two focuses of conducting this research. First is the analysis of Kurikulum Operasional Madrasah and how was the format compared to the previous curriculum. Secondly, it explored more about the teachers' perception along with the challenges towards the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka.

This research delves into the intricacies of Kurikulum Operasional Madrasah as the embodiment of Merdeka Curriculum, examining its theoretical underpinnings, its

practical application, and the implications for the Indonesian educational landscape especially Madrasah. Through this analysis, it was aimed to contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding educational reform and the pursuit of excellence in education within the context of madrasahs, paving the way for a more inclusive, forward-thinking, and responsive educational system in Indonesia. In addition, it provides new insights on the real implementation in the teaching and learning process.

Beside the implementation of KOM as the reference guidance of IKM for the schools or Madrasah, this research also deals with digging the perceptions of teacher regarding to the implementation of IKM in their teaching and learning process. There are some transitions that should be done by the teacher of this shifting in order what they had known and carried out before can be anticipated and gradually change into the new mindset and also executed well in the learning process.

Furthermore, this research seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on educational reform and curriculum development in Indonesia and beyond. The findings of this study may inform policymakers, educators, and stakeholders about the strengths and weaknesses of the KOM in realizing the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum, ultimately advancing our understanding of how innovative educational frameworks can be effectively implemented and improved to enhance the quality of education and shape the future of the nation.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Curriculum

Curriculum is all those activities in which children engage under the auspices of the school. This includes not only what pupils learn, but how learn it, how teachers help them, using what supporting materials, style and method of assessment, and in what kind of facilities (Richards, 2001). A curriculum is the heart of any educational system, serving as a blueprint that outlines what students will learn, how they will learn it, and the educational goals they are expected to achieve. The concept of curriculum encompasses everything related to what is designed, put into practice, taught, acquired, assessed, and studied within educational institutions across all levels of education. The term "curriculum" derives from the Latin word "currere," which signifies "a path to be followed" or "the act of running along the path." Typically, it refers to the educational

program or subjects offered within an educational establishment (McKernan, 2008). Curriculum, on the other hand, is a concrete and distinct matter that consistently connects with the decision-making processes within various institutions, be they educational institutions, religious organizations, nonprofit entities, or government initiatives.

The centrality of curriculum in education can be attributed to two main factors. Firstly, it determines the content and subjects that should be imparted to students. Secondly, it seamlessly integrates thinking, practical application, and overall educational objectives (Null, 2011). It is a dynamic and evolving framework that not only imparts knowledge but also shapes the overall learning experience. A well-designed curriculum considers various factors, including the needs and aspirations of learners, societal demands, and the rapidly changing landscape of knowledge and technology. It encompasses not only academic subjects but also character development, skills acquisition, and the cultivation of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. A curriculum, in essence, is a compass that guides both teachers and students on their educational journey, striving to empower individuals with the tools and competencies necessary for personal growth, professional success, and active participation in the global community. Therefore, the analysis of Kurikulum Operasional Madrasah as the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum holds paramount importance in understanding how curriculum choices can shape the educational experiences and outcomes of students within the context of madrasah education in Indonesia.

Merdeka Curriculum

The Merdeka curriculum is put into practice in accordance with the guidelines outlined in Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation Number 56 of 2022 (Kemendikbudristek, 2022b). This regulation addresses the implementation of the curriculum within the framework of learning recovery or evaluation, which serves as a means of enhancing the curriculum in response to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Merdeka Curriculum is a pioneering educational framework introduced in Indonesia with the aim of redefining and revitalizing the country's educational landscape. This curriculum aimed to give more freedom and the creativity of the students in exploring their potential (Faiz & Kurniawaty, 2020).

Launched in 2022, Merdeka Curriculum represents a departure from previous approaches to education by placing a strong emphasis on fostering holistic development

in students. The curriculum envisions education as a means to cultivate not only academic excellence but also character, critical thinking skills, and an entrepreneurial spirit. It seeks to empower learners to take charge of their education, encouraging them to explore their interests, engage in self-directed learning, and develop a strong sense of curiosity and creativity. With its learner-centric approach, the Merdeka Curriculum aims to produce graduates who are not only well-prepared for academic pursuits but also equipped with the skills and values needed to navigate the complexities of the modern world. One of the main points in this curriculum is to realize the learning process in adjustment of the proficiency of the students, their interest and talents (Wijaya et al., 2022). This curriculum reflects Indonesia's commitment to nurturing well-rounded individuals who can contribute positively to society and compete on the global stage. The analysis of its implementation in madrasahs through Kurikulum Operasional Madrasah is essential in understanding how it adapts to diverse educational contexts and contributes to the broader goals of education reform in the country.

Madrasah Operational Curriculum (KOM)

Madrasah Operational Curriculum, known as Kurikulum Operasional Madrasah (KOM), serves as a critical bridge between Indonesia's traditional Islamic educational institutions, madrasahs, and the innovative Merdeka Curriculum. As the vehicle for implementing Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs, the KOM holds a pivotal role in reshaping Islamic education in Indonesia. It addresses the unique needs and values of madrasah education while incorporating the progressive principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, such as learner autonomy, critical thinking, and character development. The KOM seeks to harmonize Islamic teachings with modern knowledge and skills, preparing madrasah students for a well-rounded education that encompasses both religious and secular subjects. By examining the KOM's adaptation and implementation within madrasahs, we gain insights into how Islamic educational institutions are evolving to meet the demands of a changing world, fostering not only religious understanding but also equipping students with the tools to thrive in a diverse and globalized society.

Teacher's perceptions

As noted by Walgito (2004), perception is a sequential process that begins with sensing, which is the initial reception of stimuli through the sensory organs, often referred to as the sensory process. Importantly, this process does not culminate with sensing but

proceeds to the subsequent stage, which is the actual process of perception. According to Sumanto (2014), perception is the cognitive process through which individuals comprehend and attribute meaning to sensory input or stimuli. These stimuli are derived from the sensory organs' reception of information related to objects, events, or the relationships between various sensory inputs, all of which are subsequently processed by the brain. Perception enables individuals to become conscious of their surrounding circumstances as well as their own internal states.

According to Bahri (2015) perception is divided into two types, namely: perception of objects (physical environment) and perceptions of humans or social. Perception of humans is more difficult and complex because humans are dynamic. It can be said that there should a way to identify and discover the perception of human. In summary, perception involves the cognitive evaluation carried out by an individual's mental faculties after receiving sensory input through their five senses. These stimuli evolve into thoughts, ultimately shaping a person's perspective on a given situation or event currently unfolding. Hence, the teacher's perception is necessary to identify toward to the new curriculum to dismantle and reveal how far they responds to the implementation of Merdeka curriculum.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative approach within a case study framework. The selection of qualitative research stems from the study's primary objective, which is to elucidate the perspectives of both school and teachers concerning the implementation of Merdeka curriculum in the form of analyzing the KOM. Additionally, it seeks to delineate the challenges encountered during this implementation process. Afrizal (2016) defines qualitative research as a method within the realm of social sciences that gathers and interprets data in the form of verbal or written expressions, as well as human actions. Creswell, as cited in Imam Gunawan (2013), characterizes qualitative research as a means to construct knowledge statements rooted in interpretive viewpoints, which can encompass meanings derived from individual experiences, societal and historical values. This approach aims to formulate specific knowledge, theories, or patterns and can also be grounded in participatory perspectives such as political orientations, issues, collaborations, or change. The case study methodology entails an intensive and meticulous exploration of a program, event, or activity, whether at the individual, group,

institutional, or organizational level. Its purpose is to acquire profound insights into the subject matter (Mudjia, Rahardjo: 2017).

This research was conducted in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Bantul which is one of the most favorite Islamic schools around the area of Bantul. Data sources in qualitative research According to Lofland (in Moleong, 2013). The main data sources in qualitative research are words and actions, the rest are additions such as documents and others. In this research, the interview was considered as the main data and also the document of KOM become the secondary source along with the observation.

The data collection was gathered through observation, interviews, and documentations. In terms of interview, the informants included the school supervisor of Madrasah and the head of education section of Kemenag Bantul, the principal of MAN 1 Bantul, the vice of curriculum, and some teachers who are senior in the school. In the data analysis, as stated by Sugiyono (2016) there are four sequences containing data collection, data display, data reduction and drawing conclusion.

In data display, this stage serves as a means to present the raw data, thereby distinguishing between research-relevant and irrelevant information (Zulfa, 2010). Moreover, it has a crucial function of enhancing comprehension and guiding subsequent actions based on the insights gained (Djam'an & Aan, 2013). Then it proceeds to data reduction. As Sugiyono (2016) asserts, the wealth of data acquired in the field necessitates meticulous and detailed record-keeping. Data reduction involves the process of summarization, prioritizing essential elements, focusing on key aspects, and identifying prevalent themes and patterns. The purpose of the data reduction process is to select and retain the pertinent information required for the study. Consequently, reduced data offer a more lucid representation and facilitate further data collection and investigation if necessary. The last is Conclusion Drawing, the ultimate phase in qualitative data analysis is the process of drawing conclusions or verification. According to Djam'an and Aan (2013), initial conclusions are provisional and subject to modification if compelling evidence contradicts them. If these preliminary conclusions are substantiated by valid and consistent evidence upon revisiting the data collection process, they evolve into credible and substantiated conclusions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

MAN 1 Bantul is one of the outstanding Madrasah located in Bantul under the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Bantul area. Its location is not far from the city center of Bantul, making it easily accessible, especially for commuting students. This school aims to be an educational institution that molds students who are Smart, Islamic, Skillful, Diligent, Trustworthy, and Independent, collectively known as CITRA Mandiri.

MAN 1 is among the early adopters of Merdeka Curriculum in Bantul region. Additionally, the school has been selected as the sole representative of MA Bantul to receive specialized training and guidance for the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. This training program is organized by the Religious Training Center in Semarang, which has received specific authorization from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag). The training is attended by various stakeholders, including school supervisors, lecturers, school principals, and select teachers. They receive intensive guidance through both online and offline platforms. Therefore, this represents a significant advantage for MAN 1 compared to other schools in preparing for the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, including the development and execution of the Madrasah Operational Curriculum.

From the observation during the training program and also developing the KOM itself, it can be said that Merdeka Curriculum places a strong emphasis on empowering students to become independent learners and to experience a different learning atmosphere through various means more freely in any context and situations. Within this curriculum framework, the primary goal is to produce graduates who can fulfill their roles in accordance with the contemporary context while remaining deeply rooted in their religious and cultural heritage. Therefore, 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, literacy, and social skills are considered essential elements to be nurtured within the students.

Madrasah, as an Islamic-based public school, adheres to the guidelines set by the Ministry of Education, Research, and Technology. However, there are some adaptations made to align with the unique characteristics, distinctiveness, and needs of madrasah education. Islamic values are integrated into the curriculum development to foster the students' sense of identity and the unique essence of madrasah education. The core principle of the Merdeka Curriculum is to transform the inner classroom atmosphere,

change the teaching methods employed by teachers, ignite the motivation of learners, and truly revolutionize lifelong learning. The transformation within the classroom is the primary focus of attention for all madrasah stakeholders. Every element within the madrasah ecosystem must work collaboratively and synergistically to ensure the successful implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in the madrasah. Each participant is expected to contribute according to their respective roles, duties, and functions.

Merdeka Curriculum encompasses a crucial cycle related to the implementation of learning, where there is a close relationship between the curriculum, teaching, and assessment aimed at creating the Pancasila Learner Profile and the Rahmatil lil Alamin Learner Profile. Subsequently, it emphasizes a teaching approach known as "Teaching at the Right Level," wherein teachers are encouraged to tailor their teaching and assessment methods to the individual abilities of their students. Additionally, it promotes differentiated learning, wherein teachers not only identify students' abilities but also consider their interests and learning styles to ensure that classroom instruction is engaging and enjoyable.

There are guiding principles for learning in the Merdeka Curriculum, as articulated by Mrs. Heni Prilantari, M.Pd, the School Supervisor from Kemenag in Bantul:

1. Future-oriented: The curriculum is designed to prepare students for the future.
2. Worship-oriented: It aligns with religious practices and values.
3. Tailored to student characteristics: It is customized to meet the unique characteristics of each learner.
4. Fosters lifelong learning: It supports continuous learning throughout life.
5. Promotes holistic development of competence and character: It addresses all aspects of a student's growth.
6. Contextual and community involvement: It is designed in a contextual manner, involving parents and the community as partners.

Mrs. Bin Umartati, S.Pd, as the school's curriculum vice principal, provided a more detailed explanation of the terminology differences in the Merdeka Curriculum. These include the transformation of KI-KD (Competence and Basic Competence) into CP (Competency Profile or learning outcomes) and TP (learning objectives), Silabus (Syllabus) into ATP (learning objectives flow), and RPP (Lesson Plan) into Teaching Modules. The formulation process involves aligning the content with the CP for each grade level by analyzing the competencies and scope of the CP. This alignment can be

achieved by directly applying the content, translating it based on topics, or through cross-element integration. In the Teaching Modules, there are elements that are quite similar to RPP but with additional specifications such as trigger questions, the desired learner profile, reflections, and other elements.

According to Mrs. Khoiriyatun, S.Pd., M.Sc, the principal of MAN 1 Bantul, the assessments used in the Merdeka Curriculum have become more distinct and flexible. Formative assessment is now given greater emphasis to monitor students' developmental progress, rather than solely relying on summative assessment. Various assessment instruments are utilized, including student observation, performance assessment, written tests, oral tests, and portfolios. Additionally, assessment instruments that can be employed encompass rubrics, checklists, notes, and developmental progress charts.

The perceptions of teachers regarding the implementation of Merdeka curriculum can vary depending on their individual experiences and viewpoints. However, here are some common perceptions that some teachers towards IKM as follows:

1. **Increased Flexibility:** Some teachers may view the new curriculum as an opportunity to be more flexible in designing their teaching. This can allow them to better tailor the content to the needs and interests of their students.
2. **Challenges in Implementation:** Teachers may also face challenges in implementing the curriculum, especially if they are accustomed to more structured curricula. This may require adjustments and a deeper understanding.
3. **Importance of Active Learning:** The curriculum often emphasizes active and project-based learning. Some teachers may see this as an opportunity to engage students more actively in the learning process.
4. **Need for Additional Resources:** Implementing the curriculum may require more resources, such as diverse learning materials or technology devices. Teachers may feel the need to seek additional resources to support this curriculum.
5. **Increased Collaboration:** Some teachers may see the importance of collaborating more with fellow teachers in designing and implementing the curriculum, especially if it involves group projects or cross-disciplinary teaching approaches.
6. **Different Assessment Methods:** The curriculum may also bring changes in assessment methods. Teachers may need to develop assessment methods that align with this curriculum, such as project-based assessments or portfolios.

7. A More Enjoyable Approach: Some teachers may view it as a more enjoyable way of teaching because it allows them to be more creative in their teaching approaches.

Teachers' perceptions of the independent curriculum can vary widely, and it is important to listen to various viewpoints and experiences of teachers in an effort to improve the implementation of this curriculum. Additionally, what fundamentally distinguishes the new curriculum is the inclusion of Pancasila Learner Profile strengthening project (P5) as the five primary objectives from Kemendikbud (Ministry of Education and Culture) and the additional value points from Kemenag (Ministry of Religious Affairs) which can be seen in the following table:

| Pojek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5) | Profil Pelajar Islam Rahmatal Lil Alamin (PPRA) |
|--|--|
| Faith and piety towards the One Almighty God, and possessing noble character (<i>Beriman, bertakwa kepada Tuhan YME, dan Berakhlak Mulia</i>) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moral ethics and reverence (<i>Ta'addub</i>) Exemplary conduct (<i>Qudwah</i>) |
| Global diversity appreciation (<i>Berkebinekaan Global</i>) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citizenship and nationalism (<i>Muwatanah</i>) Tolerance (<i>Tasāmuḥ</i>) |
| Collaboration and mutual support (<i>Bergotong Royong</i>) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation (<i>Syura</i>) Justice and moderation (<i>Adil wa I'tidal</i>) |
| Independence (<i>Mandiri</i>) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balance (<i>Tawazun</i>) Moderation (<i>Tawasuth</i>) |
| Critical thinking and creativity (<i>Kreatif dan Bernalar Kritis</i>) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equality (<i>Musawwa</i>) Dynamism and innovation (<i>Tathawwur wa Ibtikar</i>) |

The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum involves granting autonomy, freedom, and flexibility to madrasah institutions in shaping their educational practices. This freedom empowers madrasahs to engage in creativity, innovation, and breakthroughs to advance their educational goals. Madrasahs are provided with the latitude to craft and innovate curricula that accommodate the unique characteristics, distinctiveness, needs, and vision of each individual madrasah. The components of Operational Madrasah Curriculum (KOM) include:

1. Analysis of Madrasah Characteristics: This involves adjusting the curriculum to align with the environment and taking input from various stakeholders. It's about understanding the unique features of the madrasah and its surroundings.

Subsequently, this analysis informs the development of the vision, mission, objectives, and strategies.

2. **Vision, Mission, Objectives, and Strategy:** The curriculum's vision, mission, objectives, and strategies are crafted in alignment with the earlier analysis. These components provide the overarching framework for curriculum development and implementation.
3. **Organization of Learning:** A distinctive feature of the Merdeka Curriculum is the inclusion of P-5 (Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan) and PPRA (Penguatan Pendidikan Agama) as mandatory activities for students. These activities involve projects conducted during regular curriculum time, co-curricular, or extracurricular activities as agreed upon by the school.
4. **Learning Planning:** This component encompasses the creation of TP-ATP (Activity Teaching Plan), teaching modules, assessments, and the implementation of differentiated learning approaches. It involves the detailed planning of what and how students will learn.
5. **Guidance and Evaluation:** There is the aspect of guidance and evaluation during the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum. This is essential for monitoring progress and ensuring that the curriculum aligns with its intended goals. In the first year of implementation, it serves as a foundation for improvement, evaluation, and follow-up actions to achieve the curriculum's vision of producing highly competitive 21st-century learners.

CONCLUSION

From this research, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is a highly positive initiative to adopt and develop. This is particularly important given the myriad of new knowledge, methods, and experiences. It offers to both teachers and students the new ways, knowledge and experiences as they prepare for the 21st century. The application of Merdeka Curriculum is indeed a commendable step in the context of curriculum implementation. However, it also poses challenges, especially considering that it is in its inaugural year. There are undoubtedly numerous lessons to be learned and areas for improvement to advance the school especially for the Madrasah who also has some additional goals and achievements for Islamic schools. The format of

Kurikulum Operasional Madrasah has been clear to be the guidance in executing the curriculum.

Furthermore, the perspectives of the teachers involved, including school supervisors, the school principal, curriculum deputies, and several teachers, have indicated positive feedback regarding the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum. Some teachers also said some points including flexibility, importance of active learning, the need of additional sources, collaboration, different assessment methods, and more enjoyable approach. They also said about the challenges that should be resolved. However, they committed to maximize the available opportunities to ensure the successful and optimal implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at MAN 1 Bantul.

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