



## INNOVATION OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LEARNING MODEL IN MERDEKA CURRICULUM AT MOVER SCHOOL

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**Abstract:** The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum emphasises the aspect of freedom for students and teachers to develop a learning process based on real experiences. The Merdeka Curriculum identifies education as a form or part of the experience gained by students, one of which is the implementation of an effective learning model. Therefore, this study aims to: (1) analyse the learning model of Islamic religious education in the Merdeka learning curriculum in Mover schools (2) analyse the effectiveness of the learning model of Islamic religious education in the Merdeka learning curriculum in Mover schools. The main theories used in this research are Piaget's constructivist learning theory and Wirawan Fadly's learning model theory. This research uses a qualitative approach by choosing the type of case study. Interviews, observation and documentation were used to collect data. After the data was collected, it was analysed using pattern matching, explanation making and time series analysis. The findings of this study were twofold. Firstly, the learning model applied in SMP N 4 Rejang Lebong in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum is varied and interactive. From all aspects of the components that comprise the learning model, it still boils down to differentiated learning in the subjects of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Secondly, in the implementation of the learning process related to the effectiveness of the PAI learning model in the Merdeka Curriculum, it is effective in increasing learning activities, students' positive responses and learning outcomes. . More flexible, student-centred and project-based learning has succeeded in improving the quality of learning in Islamic education, both in terms of student participation and academic achievement, so that the applied learning model brings about positive changes in the learning process and outcomes of Islamic education, in line with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum to produce students who are independent, creative and of strong character in accordance with the Pancasila profile.

**Keywords:** Innovation of PAI learning model, Merdeka Curriculum, mover school.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Quality curriculum development is very important and has a very strategic meaning, because the curriculum is an inseparable part of education and teaching because teachers must have the ability to determine the form of learning that can be used to adjust the characteristics of students (Anggini et al., 2024). According to Iskandar et al., (2023) that the curriculum is the foundation of the learning system that must be adjusted to the development and state of the environment. The process requires good governance so that the goal is achieved, namely improving the quality of Indonesian teaching and education. The Merdeka curriculum, introduced in response to current educational challenges, provides teachers and students with flexibility in designing the learning process (Mayanti 2023; Rahmadayanti and Hartoyo 2022). Research by Zainurrofiq et al., (2023) shows that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is expected to improve the quality of education by providing freedom in structuring and implementing learning. The process of implementing learning for principals is important because this process forms the basis for the educational changes we aspire to (Dewi Anggelia, Ika Puspitasari, and Shokhibul Arifin 2022; Sunarni and Karyono 2023).

A good curriculum must be accompanied by a good governance policy. Merdeka Belajar as a policy is an idea to strengthen the national education system. The Merdeka Belajar policy is also expected to be able to create a dynamic and pleasant educational atmosphere (Meliza, Siraj 2024). The 'Merdeka Belajar' policy is towards an ideal education, an education that is willing to innovate and cooperate with various aspects. The state of the times is used as a land to innovate education starting from the learning system, teaching skills and competencies of teachers. Collaboration with technology, virtual learning methods and artful teaching and learning strategies (Asfiati, 2020; Suryaman, 2020).

The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum with a variety of intra-curricular learning, where the content is optimised so that learners have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies. Teachers have the flexibility to choose different teaching tools so that learning can be tailored to students' learning needs and interests to achieve the Pancasila learner profile developed by the project to strengthen the achievement of the Pancasila learner profile developed based on a specific theme set by the government (Pratiwi, Rahmawati and Susanto 2024). The project is not designed to achieve specific learning outcome targets, so it is not tied to subject content (Kemendikbudristekdikti, 2022; Sunarni & Karyono, 2023).

The Mover School programme launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture is intended as an effort to realise the vision of Indonesian Education in realising an advanced Indonesia that is sovereign, independent and has a personality through the creation of Pancasila Students (Ritonga et al. 2022; Kurniasih 2022). Sekolah Penggerak focuses on developing holistic student learning outcomes that include competencies (literacy and numeracy) and character, starting with excellent human resources (principals and teachers). In general, the final picture of the Mobilising Schools Programme, will create learning outcomes above the expected level with a safe, comfortable, inclusive and fun learning environment. Through student-centred learning, create programme and budget planning based on self-reflection, teacher reflection, so that improvements in learning occur and schools replicate (Rizal and Iqbal 2022).

One of the challenges for teachers in implementing the merdeka curriculum in mover schools is that teachers must take the time to prepare creative, innovative and challenging learning every day ('Relevance of the Independent Learning Curriculum with the 21st Century Learning Model in the Development of the Society 5.0 Era,' n.d.; Lestari et al. 2023; Sunario Tanggur 2023) 'Teacher involvement in the curriculum development process is important to align curriculum content with student needs in the classroom' (Fatmawati 2021; Adilla 2024) Another obstacle faced is related to Human Resources (HR), namely in inviting teachers to change their thinking to get out of their comfort zone, because the changes made by the principal will be in vain if the teachers do not want to change. In addition, teachers in the mover school must have the ability to mobilise other teachers so that the goal can be achieved together (Rahayu et al. 2022).

The implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in school learning is a problem for Islamic religious education teachers as well as teachers of other subjects (Utari 2022; Noor, Izzati and Azani 2023). Islamic Religious Education teachers are one of the important components in the character building of students (Abdul Ghani, Ribahan and Nasri 2023). The results of the learning process produce students who not only have academic skills, but also have emotional skills, which are reflected in good attitudes, character and morals. In school learning activities, Islamic religious education has several functions. First, Islamic Religious Education has the function of inculcating the values of Islamic teachings through quality learning. Second, Islamic Religious Education has the function of excellence both in terms of learning and in terms of the resulting output, namely the realisation of students with the personality of insan kamil. Thirdly, Islamic Religious Education has the function of rahmatan lil 'alamiin, which means that students can spread peace as the essence of Islamic teachings in both their personal and social lives.

In the transformation of the value of Islamic religious education, there is a reciprocal relationship between teachers and students. Islamic education seeks to teach Islamic values that are manifested to become a way of life for human beings, Islamic education also seeks to instill Islamic values in human nature, education also seeks to improve the quality of life both as an individual and as a community group. Education is also a way to approach Allah with devotion (Tobroni, Isomudin and Asrori 2021; Wafi 2018).

The role of Islamic religious education in the development of learners' character is enormous, as it helps them to understand and implement the moral and ethical teachings of Islam (Aminah and Sya'bani 2023). Islamic religious education teaches important values such as honesty, justice, responsibility and respect, which play an important role in everyday life (Susilowati 2022). By equipping learners with religious knowledge and spiritual insights, Islamic religious education fosters individuals who are noble, have integrity and can make a positive contribution to society. In addition, RE serves as a moral foundation that enables students to face challenges and make the right decisions (Islam 2024).

In implementing learning merdeka curriculum in Islamic Religious Education learning, there are several things that must be considered, including Islamic Religious Education learning must stimulate students' critical attitudes, be related to the current context and usefulness, can foster student creativity, enable students to collaborate and communicate well, can make students have self-confidence (rifa'i, elis kurnia, 2022; Darise, 2021).

Many factors influence the achievement of learning objectives including the issue of learning methods/techniques and media, learning models as a conceptual framework that describes systematic procedures in organising learning experiences to achieve certain learning objectives, and serves as a guide for learning designers and teachers in planning and implementing learning activities. Teachers must be good at choosing models that are suitable or in accordance with the characteristics of the subject, teachers can no longer teach with conventional, standard or mediocre learning strategies. Teachers must be innovative by enriching and renewing knowledge and skills to be able to present interesting and interactive learning activities by utilising technology. Where students are required to be active and independent in forming 4C skills or what is commonly referred to as *critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity* (Muharrom, Aslan, and Jaelani 2023).

The learning process in the Merdeka curriculum is more student-centred; learning is the process of providing students with opportunities to learn according to their needs and desires (Kamarullah, Marganingsih and Thoharudin 2024; Insani and Munandar 2023). Learning is the core activity in the educational process because this process determines whether learning goals are achieved (Privitera, Ng, and Chen 2023). Achievement in the teaching and learning process is characterised by changes in students' behaviour, both in terms of changes in knowledge (cognitive), skills (psychomotor) and in the value of attitudes (affective). In addition, learning also aims to influence feelings, intellectual and spiritual in students to learn. Therefore, to achieve educational goals, teachers are required to be able to play a variety and type of learning models.

Choice of types and varieties of models, teachers are given the freedom to choose the model that is deemed most appropriate so that teachers can implement distinctive and specific innovations (Lidya et al., 2020). For Islamic religious education teachers, choosing a learning model is a must because teachers are considered to have quite a heavy task, not only learning that focuses on activities, memorisation, reading and writing, but students are expected to be able to understand basic competencies in an applied way (Delpiera, 2020). However, Islamic religious education teachers have many problems in the learning process. The problems that often occur in Islamic religious education teachers are not yet skilled in the use of media, sources and facilities.

The existence of the mover school (SMPN 4 Rejang Lebong) is aimed at implementing the Merdeka Curriculum comprehensively and acting as a pioneer in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and is expected to become a learning resource centre that will share good practices and learning innovations with other schools in the area to promote a broader improvement in the quality of education in the region. Researching the PAI learning model in this school, according to the author, is important for several reasons, namely, to improve the quality of learning with the right learning model that can improve students' understanding of PAI material and build a character based on Islamic values. By studying the learning model used, the advantages and disadvantages can be identified, and efforts can be made to improve the quality of learning.

This study aims to explore different learning methods and strategies used by PAI teachers to improve students' skills. By identifying and developing the learning model, this research can contribute to the development of PAI learning models that can be applied in other

schools, especially in areas with similar characteristics, and can provide added value to policy makers and educational practitioners in developing and implementing effective and relevant learning strategies. Therefore, it is important to look at the learning system in SMPN 4, which should ideally be oriented towards strengthening competence and developing character according to the values of Pancasila, both through learning activities in and out of the classroom. In classroom learning activities, ideally, learning is differentiated, learning outcomes are simplified, students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies, and teachers are free to choose teaching tools as needed. As a first-year mover school, it makes researchers interested in seeing and analysing how learning activities through learning models, so that there is an improvement in Islamic religious education learning in the Merdeka Curriculum in mover schools as a unit of analysis and implementation of the Islamic religious education learning model in the Merdeka Curriculum.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Learning Model for Islamic Religious Education at the Mover School**

The Merdeka Belajar Curriculum has become a breakthrough in the world of Indonesian education, with the main objective of providing freedom and flexibility in the learning process to suit students' needs and interests. At SMP 4 Rejang Lebong, the application of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning model in the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is an approach, method and strategy used by educators to convey Islamic religious material to students with the aim of forming a deep understanding, positive attitude, and behaviour in accordance with religious teachings has shown results in increasing the effectiveness and relevance of religious education.

Based on the observation results at SMP Negeri 4 Rejang Lebong, PAI teachers have begun to apply the principles of Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, although adaptation to this policy still takes time. The use of more flexible and project-based learning models has begun to be applied, but challenges related to resources and teacher readiness are still felt. The results of the evaluation conducted by the author indicate that SMPN 4 Rejang Lebong has carried out and implemented the merdeka curriculum with various innovative programmes run. Because SMPN 4's role as a mover school requires this school to be a pioneer and inspiration for other schools.

The author pays attention to the learning system that occurs at SMPN 4. This school is oriented towards strengthening competence and developing character in accordance with the values of Pancasila, both through learning activities inside and outside the classroom. In classroom learning activities, the school applies differentiated learning, learning outcomes are simplified, students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies and teachers are free to choose teaching tools according to their needs.

The school integrates the values of Pancasila in every aspect of learning, so that students not only excel academically, but also have strong character and in accordance with the nation's values. From the author's observation, it was found that the learning carried out has also been

project-based by encouraging students to engage in project-based learning that emphasises character development, critical thinking skills, and collaboration.

The learning model is a representation of several phenomena that exist in the world of education consisting of approaches, strategies, methods, techniques and even learning tactics. All these components must be assembled into a unified whole. So, the learning model is basically a form of learning that is illustrated from beginning to end which is presented characteristically by the teacher. In other words, the learning model is a wrapper or frame of the application of an approach, method, and learning technique.

The researcher found that regarding the application of the learning model as described by the informants, it depends and is adjusted to the learning material taught by the informants themselves. However, regardless of the model used by the informants, it is adjusted to the merdeka curriculum which is required to be implemented at SMPN 4 as the first batch of mover schools. However, the researcher noticed the enthusiasm of the students in participating in the learning even though there were still some who were less responsive.

In the Merdeka curriculum, learning is in principle more student-centred. In its implementation, Islamic religious education learning at SMPN 4 Rejang Lebong uses two types of learning approaches, namely a student-centred approach and a teacher-centred approach. In principle, both approaches are used, but the division of roles between teachers and students is done through discussions and question and answer sessions during each group's presentation. Learning strategies become one of the barometers of a teacher's professionalism, considering that the learning process is a multidirectional communication process between students, teachers and the learning environment. Therefore, learning strategies become guidelines for acting systematically in the implementation of learning so that the subject matter can be easily understood. Furthermore, the contextual learning model is a concept that helps teachers to relate subject content to real-life situations and to motivate learners to make connections between knowledge and its application in their lives as family members, citizens and workers. In this model, for example, the strategy used in delivering learning material on ulul azmi material, where the teacher tells different stories about ulul azmi and examples related to intransigent attitudes and provides opportunities for students to ask questions about intransigent attitudes, followed by randomly selecting students who will be appointed to answer other students' questions. Then implement and ask about students' experiences of never giving up. Students are asked to give examples of unyielding attitudes and to discuss and conclude with their group some attitudes that reflect unyielding attitudes in life.

In addition, the cooperative learning model is also the learning model applied in this school. Cooperative learning strategy is a strategy that consciously and deliberately develops fostering interactions between students, involving several students in small groups, with different levels of ability to avoid irritation and misunderstanding that can lead to hostility. The cooperative learning model itself is a learning model that supports contextual learning. The system is defined by structured group learning which according to Johnson and Johnson has five main elements including positive interdependence, personal interaction, cooperation skills, individual responsibility and group process.

Based on the interview, it appears that the school's planning process for differentiated learning uses a differentiated learning approach that is based on the needs of the pupils. The

school prepares for differentiated learning by improving teachers' competence through discussions, combination activities and workshops with competent resource persons.

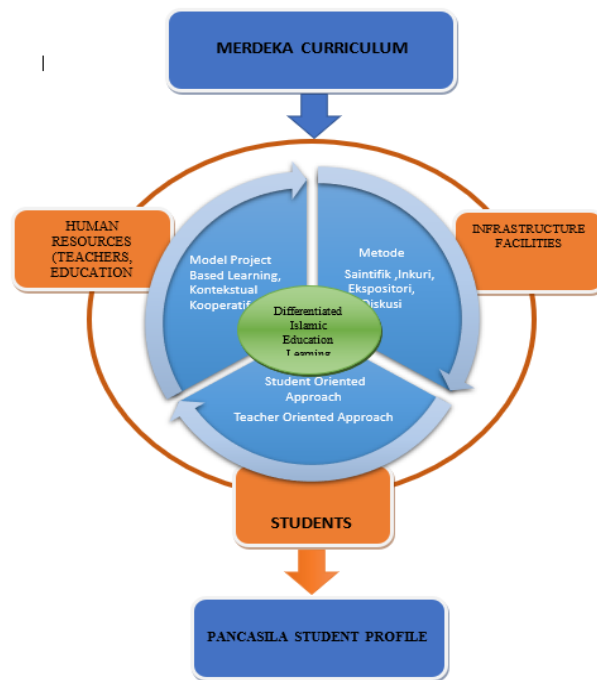
The method is important in the delivery of learning material. Methods of learning in PAI subjects are one of the factors that enable teaching and learning activities to be carried out properly. If the method is not used, the learning objectives will not be achieved. Learning methods are also considered to be learning techniques. Learning methods can be interpreted as a way of implementing plans that have been prepared in the form of real and practical activities to achieve learning objectives. There are several learning techniques that can be used to implement learning methods, including lectures, demonstrations, discussions, simulations, field experiences, brainstorming, debates, and so on.

The role of the teacher when using this method is that of a facilitator. We invite students to be more independent in their learning and we as teachers support them by providing guidance and helping them to find solutions to the problems they face. As a counsellor, I also constantly monitor students' progress and give constructive feedback. We also often reflect with students after learning to understand what they have understood and what needs to be improved. So, there are many methods that can be used in PAI learning. Choosing the right method will result in maximum learning objectives. In addition, the teacher must also be able to condition the students to a more directed and quality learning process.

### **The Effectiveness of the Islamic Religious Education Learning Model in the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum at the Movement School (SMP Negeri 4 Rejang Lebong)**

The application of various PAI learning models in the Merdeka curriculum implemented in SMPN 4 Rejang Lebong shows satisfactory results in the PAI learning process in the school. A learning model is a plan or pattern that can be used to formulate a curriculum (long-term learning plan), design learning materials, and guide classroom learning, among others. Learning models can be used as a pattern of choice, which means that teachers can choose learning models that are appropriate and efficient to achieve their educational goals. In the context of this research, the results showing the improvement of students' abilities after using the learning model in the independent curriculum confirm that discussion activities in learning have a significant positive impact.

Based on the results of the research and data analysis that the authors conducted, it was found that the learning model for Islamic religious education in the Merdeka Belajar curriculum at the mover school (SMPN 4 Rejang Lebong) can be seen in the following scheme:



PAI Learning Model in Merdeka Belajar Curriculum at the mover school (SMPN 4 Rejang)

## Conclusion

After conducting an in-depth analysis and discussion of the Islamic Religious Education Learning Model in the Merdeka Curriculum at SMP Negeri 04 Rejang Lebong Regency, the researcher came to the following two conclusions:

The learning model applied at SMP N 4 Rejang Lebong in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum is varied and interactive. All aspects of the learning model still boil down to differentiated learning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects. This is evidenced by the learning process that takes place to fulfil the diverse learning needs of students. This differentiated learning includes content differentiation, where teachers adjust teaching materials based on students' abilities, such as providing simpler or more complex materials as needed. Process Differentiation i.e. Providing various learning methods, such as group discussions, presentations, or independent learning. Product Differentiation Students can demonstrate understanding through various forms of assignments, such as essays, creative projects, or presentations.

In the implementation of the learning process, student activity in learning Islamic religious education in the Merdeka curriculum is better. Students are more active in the learning process because the methods used are participatory. Student activities are no longer limited to listening and taking notes, but also exploring, presenting, and solving problems related to Islamic religious education material, which is in accordance with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum which emphasises independent and creative learning. Overall, the Islamic religious education learning model in the Merdeka curriculum has been effective in improving learning activities, students' positive responses, and learning outcomes. Learning that is more flexible, student-centred, and project-centred has succeeded in improving the quality of Islamic



religious education learning, both in terms of student engagement and academic achievement. However, some obstacles such as initial adaptation to new methods and the need for further training for teachers still need to be addressed to optimise this effectiveness. Overall, this learning model brings positive changes to the learning process and outcomes of Islamic Religious Education, in line with the Merdeka Curriculum's goal to produce students who are independent, creative, and have strong character according to the Pancasila Profile.

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