



## Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Fiqh Learning at MA Al-Fatah Palembang

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose of the study:** This study aims to examine the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in fiqh learning at MA Al-Fatah Palembang. It focuses on learning planning, teaching strategies, assessment practices, and how the curriculum supports relevant, contextual, and student-centered learning experiences.

**Methodology:** This study employed a descriptive qualitative research method. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews with one fiqh teacher at MA Al-Fatah Palembang, and documentation review of teaching modules, learning objectives, and instructional plans. Data analysis used the interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

**Main Findings:** The findings indicate that the Independent Curriculum was implemented through adaptive, contextual, and student-centered fiqh learning. Teachers developed teaching modules, applied discussion, lecture, presentation, and project-based learning methods, and connected fiqh topics with daily life. Assessment covered cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Although challenges such as students' lack of focus when using digital devices were identified, school support and teacher innovation contributed to effective learning implementation.

**Novelty/Originality of this study:** This study provides an in-depth description of how the Independent Curriculum is implemented in fiqh learning at MA Al-Fatah Palembang. It highlights the integration of contextual fiqh instruction, flexible teaching modules, comprehensive assessment, and student-centered strategies. The study enriches knowledge on practical curriculum implementation in Islamic education and offers insights for improving fiqh learning effectiveness.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes freedom in learning, is often not accompanied by sufficient understanding and support from teachers, especially in the context of fiqh learning. This situation can lead students to misunderstand Islamic laws and how to apply them in daily life. In addition, there are still challenges in integrating normative fiqh material into a contextual, student-centered learning

approach [1]. Therefore, appropriate steps are needed to ensure that fiqh studies remain relevant, focused, and capable of achieving educational goals within the Merdeka Curriculum.

National education serves as a means of developing the character and civilization of a dignified nation, with character serving to enlighten the nation's character [2]. Its goal is to produce students who believe in and obey God Almighty and become citizens who appreciate democracy. Education is understood as a cultural process that fosters a spirit of freedom and independence. Education is expected to be able to shape students' character with a national spirit, build students' personalities to become pioneers in developing the potentials and talents they possess [3].

In every education system, there must be a curriculum, because without a curriculum, the implementation of education cannot occur. The curriculum in the education system functions as a guide to achieve educational goals applied in Indonesia [4]. The curriculum is not only considered an ordinary document, but a vital document that makes education more effective in achieving national educational goals. Therefore, education must better understand the curriculum currently being used for a good teaching and learning process to achieve the desired learning objectives [5].

In the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, it is essential for every educator to emphasize students' freedom, independence, and creativity. Understanding this emphasis approach in the context of fiqh learning is important. Fiqh has strong relevance to daily life, as it involves understanding Islamic laws applied in real life [6]. It is important for educators to accompany and provide understanding in a convincing manner when introducing the concept of fiqh, and not completely leave it to the students [7]. Learning that is entirely free and based only on students, if not done properly, can lead to consequences that are risky for students' lives, and students may face and have to deal with the challenges they experience. Therefore, it is important to consider the risks in giving learners freedom in the context of fiqh learning within the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum [8]. The fiqh curriculum is a crucial element in Islamic education that functions to build students' understanding of Sharia rules, both those related to worship and daily activities. Fiqh learning emphasizes not only memorization but also understanding and application in real situations. Fiqh learning in the Merdeka Curriculum is developed more flexibly, contextually, and student-centered, thereby encouraging independence and critical thinking skills [9].

Several previous studies have examined the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in fiqh learning. Affifah et al. [1] conducted a literature review and found that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum could improve students' understanding through active, student-centered, and contextual learning. However, the study was limited to theoretical analysis and did not investigate the actual implementation of the curriculum in a specific educational institution. Nevertheless, the presence of teachers remains very crucial as educators and guides to ensure that the learning process stays directed and does not cause confusion in understanding Islamic teachings [10].

Furthermore, Khuluqi et al. [8] investigated the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in fiqh learning at MAN 2 Wonosobo. The study found that curriculum implementation involved learning planning through the preparation of Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objectives (TP), Learning Objective Flow (ATP), teaching modules, and P5 projects. Learning activities were carried out through discussions, presentations, and collaborative learning, while assessment was conducted through diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments. However, the study mainly focused on describing the implementation process and identifying supporting and inhibiting factors within the context of MAN 2 Wonosobo.

Similarly, Sa'idah and Mubarak [9] examined the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in fiqh learning at MTs Darut Taqwa 02 Pasuruan. Their findings showed that the curriculum was implemented through active learning methods, learning media, and school support programs that enhanced students' engagement in learning. Nevertheless, the study was conducted at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level and did not specifically explore the implementation of the curriculum in the context of Madrasah Aliyah.

Based on these studies, it can be seen that previous research has generally discussed the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in fiqh learning and its positive impact on students. However, limited studies have examined the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the context of Madrasah Aliyah in South Sumatra, particularly at MA Al-Fatah Palembang. In addition, there is still limited empirical evidence regarding how fiqh teachers translate curriculum policies into classroom practices through learning planning, instructional implementation, and assessment activities. Although several studies have examined the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in fiqh learning, little empirical evidence is available regarding its implementation at MA Al-Fatah Palembang, particularly in terms of learning planning, instructional implementation, and assessment practices.

Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive analysis of learning planning, instructional implementation, and assessment practices in fiqh learning under the Merdeka Curriculum at MA Al-Fatah Palembang. This study provides empirical evidence regarding how fiqh teachers implement curriculum policies in classroom practices within the context of Madrasah Aliyah. It also highlights the alignment between curriculum objectives and actual teaching strategies applied by teachers in daily instruction. Furthermore, the findings are

expected to contribute to the development of more effective and context-based fiqh learning practices in Islamic schools..

The urgency of this study is based on the need to provide empirical data regarding the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in fiqh learning at the Madrasah Aliyah level. Understanding how teachers design, implement, and evaluate learning is important for identifying effective practices and challenges in curriculum implementation. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of effective learning practices, support teachers in implementing the curriculum, and provide recommendations for improving the quality of fiqh education in madrasahs. Therefore, this study aims to explore how the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in fiqh learning at MA Al-Fatah Palembang can create learning that is relevant, contextual, and responsive to students' needs. Furthermore, the study seeks to examine how learning planning, instructional strategies, and assessment practices contribute to enhancing students' understanding of Islamic law, fostering independent learning, developing critical thinking skills, and strengthening Islamic character values.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative research design to explore and describe the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in fiqh learning at MA Al-Fatah Palembang. A descriptive qualitative approach is appropriate for understanding educational and social phenomena in their natural settings and for interpreting participants' experiences, perspectives, and practices in depth. According to Creswell, qualitative research is an approach used to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Similarly, Bogdan and Biklen explain that qualitative research emphasizes natural settings and descriptive data in the form of words rather than numbers. In addition, Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña state that qualitative research is particularly useful for examining complex educational processes in real-world contexts.

This method was chosen because the present study aims to obtain an in-depth understanding of how fiqh teachers plan learning activities, implement instructional strategies, and conduct assessments under the Merdeka Curriculum. Since the focus of the study is on processes, experiences, and educational practices rather than numerical measurement, a descriptive qualitative approach is considered the most suitable method. This approach allows the researcher to capture real classroom conditions and provide a rich description of curriculum implementation in its natural context.

The research subject was one fiqh teacher at MA Al-Fatah Palembang, who was selected as the key informant because of his/her direct involvement and experience in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in fiqh learning. The selection of the participant used purposive sampling, which refers to a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. In this study, the criteria included teachers who were actively involved in lesson planning, instructional implementation, and assessment practices under the Merdeka Curriculum.

The research procedure was conducted through several stages. First, the researcher identified the research problem and determined the research focus. Second, preliminary observations were carried out at MA Al-Fatah Palembang. Third, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Fourth, the collected data were organized and classified according to the research objectives. Fifth, the data were analyzed and interpreted. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the findings obtained during the research process.

Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to directly examine fiqh learning activities in the classroom, including teacher–student interactions and instructional methods. Interviews were conducted with the fiqh teacher to obtain detailed information regarding lesson planning, teaching module development, and challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Documentation was used to collect supporting data such as teaching modules, learning objectives, and learning flow designs used by the teacher.

To ensure the validity of the data, source triangulation was employed by comparing information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. The data analysis technique in this study adopts an interactive analysis model consisting of three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction is carried out by selecting data that is relevant to the research focus, then presenting it in the form of a descriptive narrative, and concluding by drawing conclusions based on the research results.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Fiqh Learning Planning in the Independent Curriculum at MA Al-Fatah Palembang

Teaching planning is a structured method that includes the identification of educational needs, setting learning objectives, designing tactics or teaching methods, preparing teaching materials, as well as creating evaluations in an effort to achieve the desired learning outcomes. The goal of learning planning is to achieve

improvements in learning. Through these learning improvements, it is hoped that the quality of learning can be enhanced in the future[8].

In the Independent Curriculum, fiqh lessons are focused on students in an adaptive and relevant way according to their needs. Teachers design objectives based on learning outcomes (CP) and adapt them to the characteristics of the students. In addition, methods such as discussions, practice, and project-based learning are used, supported by engaging learning media to make the learning process more effective and meaningful[11]. Students not only understand fiqh material theoretically, but are also able to apply it in daily life.

From the discussion above, the researcher has interviewed Mrs. Rostiana Sartika as the fiqh subject teacher at MA Al-Fatah. She stated that student involvement in learning depends on the type of material. If the material is close to everyday life, such as buying and selling, students tend to be more active because it is easy to understand. For certain materials, such as Hajj, students can also be active if related to real phenomena. The teacher usually encourages students to discuss, ask questions, and understand the material through concrete examples so that learning is more meaningful.

The Merdeka Curriculum provides a great opportunity for educators to design a flexible learning process that focuses on students' needs[12]. This planning is realized through the preparation of systematic teaching modules, the formulation of learning objectives that align with learning outcomes, as well as the selection of strategies, methods, and media that support the achievement of competencies. In addition, teachers also need to consider aspects of character, interests, and the development level of students so that learning becomes more meaningful[13]. The Merdeka Curriculum provides a great opportunity for educators to design a flexible learning process that focuses on students' needs.

From the discussion above, the researcher has interviewed Mrs. Rostiana Sartika, who is the fiqh subject teacher at MA Al-Fatah. She stated that in planning lessons according to the principles of the Independent Curriculum, such as student freedom, independence, and creativity, teachers first refer to the provided guidelines. These guidelines can be downloaded and studied as a basic reference. Furthermore, teachers adjust the materials according to the needs and conditions of the students. If the available materials are considered inadequate, the teacher can modify or redevelop them to be more relevant to the characteristics of the students.

Learning modules are educational tools or teaching plans based on the curriculum applied to achieve the predetermined competencies. The main function of a learning module is to assist teachers in designing the teaching process. In creating learning tools, teachers play an important role that can sharpen their thinking skills to create innovations in learning modules[14]. Therefore, creating teaching modules becomes one of the pedagogical competencies that teachers must improve so that teaching methods in the classroom become more effective, efficient, and remain on track according to the achievement indicators[15].



Figure 1. Teaching Module Attachment

From the discussion above, the researcher has interviewed Mrs. Rostiana Sartika as the fiqh subject teacher at MA Al-Fatah. She stated that the use of teaching modules has been tailored to the needs and characteristics of the students. Although not all students can follow optimally, in general, the modules used are already relevant. The teacher also made adjustments, for example, by modifying material from other sources so that it suits the facilities available at the school, such as using PPTs shared via WhatsApp groups if projector facilities are limited.

Learning modules are a type of teaching material that is arranged in a systematic and orderly manner to help students achieve learning objectives either independently or with guidance. An effective learning module must meet principles such as clarity of objectives, completeness of content, clarity of language, and visual appeal

to increase student participation in learning [16]. Educational modules based on illustrations are a type of module that utilizes visual elements in the form of photos to explain and reinforce the delivery of material. The innovation of using images in ablution materials serves as a visual aid that can make it easier for students to understand concepts, especially for elementary school students who still require real objects in the learning process [17]. In this case, in fiqh learning related to ablution, images can show the steps and how to perform ablution clearly, making it easier for students to understand and apply it [18].

The purpose of the learning process is an explanation of the transformation in behavior or skills desired by students after completing the learning stages [19]. In addition to emphasizing shifts in behavior or abilities, this objective is also oriented towards the optimal development of individual potential. This involves improvement in intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions so that students can grow into individuals with good character and high moral standards, while preparing themselves to achieve future success. It also includes enhancing critical thinking skills as well as the ability to communicate effectively [20].

By providing an explanation of the learning objectives, these objectives also include that the learning can be organized based on the established basic competency standards. This aims to provide guidance and focus in the learning process, so that teaching activities become more organized and structured. In addition, learning objectives also play a crucial role in evaluating the extent to which students succeed in acquiring the expected competencies [19]. The purpose of teaching fiqh is not only to provide information to students but also to increase compliance in implementing Islamic law, as well as to develop discipline and a strong sense of social responsibility in personal life and society. Therefore, in the learning process, a teacher should not only focus on the development of students' cognitive aspects but also needs to pay attention to the development of students' affective and psychomotor aspects [21].

The process of learning fiqh in the Merdeka Curriculum begins with planning and learning objectives aimed at building students' character. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in fiqh learning can be carried out in various ways. One of them is by enhancing students' character through fiqh learning that not only focuses on teaching Islamic teachings but also aims to develop good character in students [22]. Learning that places students at the center of the Merdeka Curriculum is expected to provide a learning experience that is more suited to them. Therefore, teachers are expected to help students develop their abilities and interests in new and creative ways. In addition, the emphasis on the use of technology in learning also aims to create a more engaging and interactive learning experience for students [23].

Fiqh learning is carried out in line with the independent curriculum through an approach that encourages students to actively participate in the learning process. This approach is known as P5, which stands for Project, Strengthening, Profile, Student, Pancasila. This approach is also known as project-based learning to achieve learning outcomes, exploration, assessment, interpretation, systematic organization, and information usage in the learning process. Cross-disciplinary learning is also used to help students understand the relationship of fiqh with social contexts [1].

From the discussion above, the researcher has interviewed Mrs. Rostiana Sartika as the fiqh teacher at MA Al-Fatah. She stated that the assessment is carried out comprehensively, covering cognitive aspects, attitudes, and skills (practice). Cognitive: assessing students' understanding of the material. Attitude: observing changes in students' behavior after learning. Practice: evaluating students' ability to apply the material, such as practicing funeral prayers or direct observation of activities in the surrounding environment. The teacher also utilizes students' real experiences as part of the assessment to make it more contextual.

In carrying out their duties, a teacher must master the subject matter, have teaching skills, as well as creativity, the ability to motivate students, and be able to integrate Islamic values into the learning process. The delivery of fiqh material to students must be done gradually and carefully, and adjusted to the needs of the students. Therefore, an educator needs to systematically prepare a plan of material objectives according to what is required by the students [24].

From the discussion above, the researcher has interviewed Mrs. Rostiana Sartika, who is the fiqh subject teacher at MA Al-Fatah. She stated that in the implementation of fiqh learning based on the Merdeka Curriculum, there are still obstacles, one of which is the lack of student focus when using devices such as mobile phones. When the teacher distributes the material, some students instead open other applications, so the teacher has to divide attention between reprimanding unfocused students and continuing the learning. This condition certainly affects the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process in the classroom. To address this issue, the teacher provides special handling for students who are less disciplined so that the learning process can continue properly. On the other hand, the school has essentially provided sufficient support in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, both in terms of policies and available facilities. However, the success of learning still heavily depends on the teacher's ability to make optimal use of this support, so teachers are required to be creative and able to adjust learning to the existing conditions.



Figure 2. Learning Objectives Attachment

Researchers can conclude that the planning of fiqh learning in the Merdeka Curriculum at MA Al-Fatah Palembang has been carried out by adjusting to the needs and characteristics of the students. Teachers design learning objectives, teaching modules, and choose learning methods and media that support the achievement of learning outcomes. Learning is conducted flexibly and student-centered through discussions, practice, and project-based learning so that students not only understand fiqh material theoretically but are also able to apply it in daily life. In addition, assessments are carried out comprehensively, covering cognitive, attitude, and skill aspects. Although there are still obstacles, such as students' lack of focus when using digital devices, teachers continue to strive to overcome these challenges by adjusting the learning process and utilizing the facilities available at the school optimally.

### 3.2. Implementation of methods and strategies for teaching fiqh in the independent Curriculum at MA Al-Fatah Palembang

Students should not only memorize and understand information theoretically, but they are also taught to think critically about the Islamic laws they are studying. Teachers provide opportunities for students to speak and ask questions, so that they can explore their understanding more deeply and thoroughly. The goal of this approach is for students to be able to implement the values learned from fiqh lessons into daily life, while also enhancing awareness of the importance of practicing Islamic law correctly and responsibly [25]. To achieve these objectives, various learning methods are used by teachers in the process of teaching fiqh. One of the methods used to teach fiqh is the lecture method. In this method, the teacher explains the material in language that is easy to understand and provides real examples that are related to daily life. Through this method, it is expected that students can more easily understand the material and be able to relate it to practice in everyday life [26].

From the discussion above, the researcher has interviewed Mrs. Rostiana Sartika, a fiqh subject teacher at MA Al-Fatah. She stated that the fiqh teaching strategy is adjusted to the situation and conditions. For example, in the Hajj material, which does not always align with the actual time of implementation in the real world, the teacher uses media such as videos from television or YouTube so that students can still understand the practice. For other materials, such as sacrifice and zakat, students can observe directly in their environment, then document it in the form of photos or videos as assignments. In addition, for buying and selling materials, the teacher relates it to daily life, such as transactions in markets or minimarkets. Students are taught to be meticulous, understand the rights and obligations as buyers and sellers, and apply the values of honesty in transactions.



Figure 3. Attachment of learning process documentation

This method is usually used in the early stages of learning to introduce material, so that students can have a clear understanding. In addition to using lectures, discussions are also used to increase student engagement. Teachers provide questions that stimulate thinking, and then students are encouraged to express their opinions and arguments based on their understanding of fiqh material. With discussions, the learning process becomes more interactive and encourages students to think more critically and understand the material more deeply[27]. The learning process begins with activities aimed at preparing students mentally and emotionally to be ready to follow the lesson[28]. The teacher starts with a joint prayer as an initial step in creating a calm and religious atmosphere. After that, the teacher explains the learning objectives that have been prepared in accordance with the basic competencies in the Merdeka Curriculum, provides motivation to the students, and poses introductory questions designed to stimulate students' curiosity and prepare them to actively participate in the learning process[29].

In the core phase, the teacher uses a variety of strategies and methods to ensure that fiqh learning takes place interactively and effectively. The activity begins by giving a stimulus in the form of a brief explanation by the teacher, which aims to provide an initial framework for the students. After that, the students are divided into groups to make presentations on certain topics that they have prepared beforehand. In this session, they not only present the results of their discussions but also engage in interactive discussions involving the whole class[30].

Based on the findings, the researchers conclude that the implementation of fiqh learning methods and strategies in the Merdeka Curriculum at MA Al-Fatah Palembang has been carried out flexibly and adapted to students' needs. Teachers employ various methods such as lectures, discussions, presentations, video media, and the surrounding environment to make learning more engaging and easier to understand. These findings support Ulum [27], who argues that the Merdeka Curriculum encourages student-centered learning through active participation, collaboration, and creativity development. Likewise et al. [25] found that discussion-based and inquiry learning can improve students' critical thinking skills and deepen their understanding of fiqh concepts. Therefore, the findings of this study strengthen previous evidence that varied and contextual teaching methods contribute to more meaningful Islamic learning experiences.

This finding indicates that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has transformed fiqh learning from a teacher-centered approach into a more student-centered model. Unlike conventional instruction that primarily emphasizes knowledge transmission, this approach encourages students to actively construct knowledge through discussions, presentations, and contextual learning activities. As a result, students are not only expected to understand fiqh concepts theoretically but also to apply Islamic values in their daily lives. This finding confirms that the integration of interactive and contextual teaching methods, as implemented at MA Al-Fatah Palembang, can create more meaningful learning experiences and support the achievement of the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic education.

The novelty of this study lies not only in its focus on the implementation of fiqh learning under the Merdeka Curriculum in a madrasah context but also in its comprehensive description of how multiple teaching methods including lectures, discussions, presentations, video media, and contextual learning are integrated to support student-centered learning in Islamic education. This combination has received limited attention in previous studies, particularly regarding the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in fiqh learning at Islamic senior high schools (Madrasahs), including MA Al-Fatah Palembang.

The implications of this study suggest that teachers should continuously innovate in selecting and combining teaching methods to support active learning and critical thinking. Schools are encouraged to provide adequate training and learning resources to optimize the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. In addition, policymakers may use these findings as a reference to strengthen student-centered learning approaches in Islamic education. This study has several limitations. First, it involved only one fiqh teacher at MA Al-Fatah Palembang, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study focuses mainly on teachers' perspectives without deeply exploring students' perspectives. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve more participants, including students and school stakeholders, as well as different madrasah settings.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in fiqh learning at MA Al-Fatah Palembang has been carried out through three main aspects: learning planning, instructional implementation, and assessment practices. Learning planning was conducted by preparing teaching modules, learning objectives, and learning activities adjusted to students' needs and characteristics. The implementation of learning emphasized active, contextual, and student-centered approaches through discussions, presentations, practice activities, and the use of learning media related to students' daily lives. Assessment practices were carried out comprehensively by evaluating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. The findings indicate that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has contributed to creating fiqh learning that is more relevant, contextual, and responsive to students' needs. Although challenges were encountered, particularly students' lack of concentration when using digital devices, teachers and the school provided support to ensure effective learning implementation. Future research is recommended to

examine the effectiveness of specific learning models, digital learning media, or project-based learning approaches in improving students' understanding and application of fiqh in daily life.

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