



Learning strategies for Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti in the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in elementary school

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ABSTRACT

Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti plays a crucial role in shaping the religious character of elementary school students, particularly in addressing the challenges posed by technological development and social change in the digital era. This study aims to analyze the learning strategies for Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka in elementary schools in Ulu Musi District, Empat Lawang Regency, including the supporting and inhibiting factors. This study used a descriptive qualitative approach, employing observation, interviews, and documentation as data collection techniques. The research subjects consisted of principals and Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti teachers in several elementary schools in Ulu Musi District. The results showed that the learning strategies were implemented through the development of teaching modules, grouping students by learning ability, and using diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments. Supporting factors for implementation include teacher readiness, school support, parental involvement, and the availability of facilities and infrastructure. Meanwhile, inhibiting factors include limited facilities, lack of teacher training, and limited internet access and learning resources. This study shows that the successful implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka requires collaboration between schools, teachers, parents, and the government.

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ABSTRAK

Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti memiliki peran penting dalam membentuk karakter religius murid sekolah dasar, terutama dalam menghadapi tantangan perkembangan teknologi dan perubahan sosial di era digital. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti dalam implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka di sekolah dasar di Kecamatan Ulu Musi, Kabupaten Empat Lawang, termasuk faktor pendukung dan penghambatnya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Subjek penelitian terdiri atas kepala sekolah dan guru Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti di beberapa sekolah dasar di Kecamatan Ulu Musi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi pembelajaran dilakukan melalui penyusunan modul ajar, pengelompokan kemampuan belajar murid, serta pelaksanaan asesmen diagnostik, formatif, dan sumatif. Faktor pendukung implementasi meliputi kesiapan guru, dukungan sekolah, keterlibatan orang tua, serta ketersediaan sarana dan prasarana. Sementara itu, faktor penghambat meliputi keterbatasan fasilitas, kurangnya pelatihan bagi guru, serta terbatasnya akses internet dan sumber belajar. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa keberhasilan implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka memerlukan kolaborasi antara sekolah, guru, orang tua, dan pemerintah.

Kata Kunci: Kurikulum Merdeka; Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti; sekolah dasar; strategi pembelajaran

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INTRODUCTION

Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti plays a crucial role in shaping the religious character of elementary school students. At this stage, children are at a crucial point in their development, making it easier for them to adopt the values, norms, and behaviors of their surroundings (Kamila, 2023). Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti serves not only as a means of transforming religious knowledge in the cognitive aspect, but also as a medium for instilling moral values and forming attitudes in the affective aspect and controlling behavior in the psychomotor aspect, thereby shaping the students' personalities as a whole (Ainiyah, 2013). Therefore, Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti in elementary schools is an important foundation in shaping a generation with morals, religious values, and strong character in the future.

The increasingly rapid development of information technology has impacted various aspects of life, including education. Easy access to the internet and digital media has led to rapid social and cultural changes, posing new challenges in character development for the younger generation. Phenomena such as declining communication ethics, low learning discipline, and increasing influence of foreign cultures have become important concerns in the world of education. These conditions indicate the need for continued strengthening of Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti to remain relevant to current developments (Nurhabibah et al., 2025). In this context, learning is required not only to convey religious material but also to instill moral values and character appropriate to students' needs in the digital era (Astuti & Ruslan, 2025).

One effort to maintain the relevance of Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti is the development of a curriculum that adapts to advances in science and technology and to societal needs. The curriculum needs to be continuously refined to meet the challenges of 21st-century education (Aminah & Sya'a, 2023). Therefore, Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi introduced the Kurikulum Merdeka as an improvement on the Kurikulum 2013 (Sukmawati, 2022). The Kurikulum Merdeka emphasizes student-centered learning, flexibility in the learning process, and the development of student competencies and character (Kusmawati et al., 2023). However, the implementation of Islamic religious and character education within the Kurikulum Merdeka still faces various challenges, such as adapting learning materials, teachers' readiness to implement innovative learning strategies, and understanding how to integrate Islamic values into learning (Astuti, 2023).

Previous studies have examined the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti learning. These studies indicate that innovative strategies in Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti learning can improve students' understanding of Islamic values while developing 21st-century skills, such as critical, creative, and collaborative thinking. However, these studies also identified obstacles such as limited resources, teacher preparedness, and inadequate training (Mubaroq et al., 2025). Other studies have shown that the Kurikulum Merdeka is highly relevant to the principles of Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti, particularly in strengthening character, spirituality, and contextual learning. However, these studies still identified challenges,

including teachers' limited understanding of project-based learning, disparities in facilities and infrastructure, and weak support for curriculum implementation (Asykur et al., 2025).

Furthermore, research at SMPN 1 Sanankulon Blitar showed that active learning strategies, such as group discussions, technology use, and project-based assignments, can improve religious understanding and shape students' character in line with Profil Pelajar Pancasila (Insanitaqwa et al., 2023). Based on several previous studies, learning strategies significantly influence the successful implementation of Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti in the Kurikulum Merdeka. However, most previous studies have focused on general discussions of the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka and have not specifically examined learning strategies for Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti at the elementary school level, particularly regarding supporting and inhibiting factors. Furthermore, in practice, students are still found to be less active participants because the learning process is considered less engaging and not fully aligned with their needs. Teachers also tend to rely on routine learning strategies rooted in habit rather than adopting more innovative, context-specific approaches.

Therefore, a more in-depth study of learning strategies for Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti in the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in elementary schools is needed. This research is novel in its focus on Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti learning strategies for implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka at the elementary school level, particularly in Ulu Musi Regency. This research not only identifies the learning strategies used but also analyzes the supporting and inhibiting factors in their implementation, thus hopefully providing a more comprehensive picture of the implementation of Islamic religious education and character education within the Kurikulum Merdeka. Based on the description, this study aims to analyze the learning strategies for Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka in elementary schools in Ulu Musi Regency, including the supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning Strategies

In education in general, and the educational process in particular, the use of appropriate teaching strategies is crucial, as the success of teaching depends heavily on the strategies the teacher employs to effectively achieve learning objectives (Lestari & Laili, 2024). Learning strategies serve as a barometer of a teacher's professionalism in determining the success of the learning process (Azmy & Fanny, 2023). Furthermore, learning strategies also serve as guidelines for systematic actions during the learning process, ensuring students' understanding of the material (Rarasati et al., 2025). Developing learning strategies is essential for educators working in schools. Educational experts have developed various learning strategies to achieve optimal student learning outcomes.

These strategies result from teachers' innovation and creativity, as educators who directly interact with students take into account the foundational principles of education and students' learning needs (Rifansyah & Rawi, 2025). Choosing the right learning strategy significantly impacts student learning outcomes. This is because choosing the right learning strategy will make it easier for teachers to implement the learning process and achieve the desired

learning objectives (Rahman et al., 2024). Teachers must determine strategies appropriate to their teaching environment, as students have different levels of intelligence: some are hyperactive, some are moderate, and some are passive (Azizah & Utami, 2023). Learning strategies are an interesting topic to discuss, as they serve as the starting point for planning and determining the success of a lesson.

Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti

Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti is a conscious effort to foster and guide students in understanding Islamic teachings comprehensively, internalizing their values, and practicing them in their daily lives (Ishak, 2024). Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti not only focuses on delivering religious material but also on shaping students' behavior in accordance with Islamic values and morals (Aziz et al., 2020). Therefore, Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti encompasses two main aspects: character development, or Islamic morals, and mastery of knowledge of Islamic teachings. Therefore, Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti plays a crucial role in shaping the personality of students who are faithful, pious, and have noble character (Musya'Adah, 2020).

At the elementary school level, Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti play a crucial role because children are at a critical developmental stage for accepting and emulating values and behaviors from their surroundings (Munawar & Nursobah, 2024). In this regard, schools, as educational institutions, have a responsibility to instill character values in students through an integrated learning process. This understanding can help students develop religious attitudes, gratitude, and behaviors in accordance with religious teachings. Therefore, optimizing Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti is important because religious education plays a strategic role in shaping students' character and morals. Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti not only develops spiritual aspects but also instills values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, and social awareness (Asyari & Gunawan, 2023).

Kurikulum Merdeka

Kurikulum Merdeka was introduced in response to learning loss during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in students' achievement in literacy and numeracy competencies (Alimuddin, 2023). To address this situation, the government previously implemented the Kurikulum Darurat as a form of learning adjustment during the pandemic. Kurikulum Darurat then served as the basis for the development of the Kurikulum Merdeka, which was officially implemented by the Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi in the 2022/2023 academic year at various schools across Indonesia based on Keputusan Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia Nomor 56/M/2022 tentang Pedoman Penerapan Kurikulum dalam Rangka Pemulihan Pembelajaran. This curriculum is designed as an alternative to address learning setbacks while improving the quality of education by being more adaptive to students' needs (Sucipto et al., 2023).

Kurikulum Merdeka emphasizes the concept of "*Merdeka Belajar*," which provides flexibility for teachers and educational units to design and implement learning processes according to

students' needs, potential, and characteristics (Ardianti & Amalia, 2022). This curriculum focuses on essential material, competency strengthening, and character development through the Profil Pelajar Pancasila (Anjeliani et al., 2024). This curriculum change also encourages a shift in the learning paradigm, namely, providing teachers with greater freedom in managing learning and strengthening student agency, or students' ability to determine learning goals, reflect on the learning process, and take responsibility for their own learning success (Fitriyah & Wardani, 2022). The successful implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in educational units is influenced by various supporting factors, including teacher readiness, the availability of facilities and infrastructure, school environmental support, and the school's ability to create an innovative and collaborative learning culture (Anggraini et al., 2022; Widiansyah et al., 2025). Therefore, good cooperation among all parties within the school environment is required to ensure the effective implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in accordance with the expected goals.

METHODS

This research is a field study using a descriptive qualitative approach. It was conducted in several elementary schools in Kecamatan Ulu Musi, Kabupaten Empat Lawang, that have implemented the Kurikulum Merdeka in Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti. The subjects consisted of principals and Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti teachers at SDN 1 Ulu Musi, SDN 2 Ulu Musi, and SDN 3 Ulu Musi. The research focus included the implementation of Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti learning strategies within the Kurikulum Merdeka, teacher preparedness for learning, implementation of learning assessments, and factors that support and hinder the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in elementary schools.

Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted of the Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti learning process in the classroom, teachers' use of learning strategies, the implementation of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, and the condition of supporting learning facilities and infrastructure. In-depth interviews were conducted with school principals and Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti teachers to gather information on the learning strategies used, the schools' and teachers' readiness to implement the Kurikulum Merdeka, supporting factors, and obstacles encountered during implementation.

Documentation was conducted by reviewing various documents related to the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka, including teaching modules, learning objective flows, learning objectives, learning tools, student assessment results, photographs of learning activities, and school documents supporting its implementation. The data analysis technique adopted the Miles approach, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification. Data reduction was performed by selecting and simplifying the interview data. Next, the data are presented by grouping them based on discussion topics: learning strategies, supporting factors, and inhibiting factors. Finally, conclusions are drawn to derive meaning from the research results. Data verification is carried out through triangulation of sources using different subjects and data collection techniques, thereby ensuring data validity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Learning Strategies

This topic is crucial to discuss to ensure that learning aligns with the law's mandate and reaches all levels of the educational environment. The results of interviews with Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti teachers at elementary schools in Ulu Musi District are as follows,

"In teaching Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti, we employ several strategies to ensure that the learning aligns with the learning objectives of the Kurikulum Merdeka. The first step is to conduct an assessment to determine the students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities. Then, we determine the learning objectives that students are most likely to achieve through the learning process. There is no specific strategy for implementing Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti. However, the most important step before implementing the learning process is preparing teaching materials. In the Kurikulum Merdeka, there are three things to consider: learning objectives, the flow of learning objectives, and teaching modules. These three things must be prepared before implementation to ensure that learning is focused and consistent, resulting in optimal results,"

Based on the principals' explanations above, which are supported by the results of observations and documentary studies, the initial strategy schools must adopt to implement the Kurikulum Merdeka is to determine students' ability levels and prepare teaching materials. This aims to ensure that the learning process achieves optimal results. Based on the interview results above, several assessments are needed to support the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti. These assessments aim to determine students' initial abilities, learning processes, and outcomes.

In the Kurikulum Merdeka, these assessments are referred to as initial, formative, and summative assessments. Initial assessments are conducted before learning begins. These assessments aim to diagnose students' initial abilities before participating in the learning process. Formative assessments are conducted during the learning process to monitor progress and identify the quality of the learning. Summative assessments are conducted at the end of a learning period, such as the end of a semester or the academic year.

Supporting Factors

Supporting factors are key to the success of the learning process. These schools have various support measures in place, including facilities and infrastructure, strong relationships with parents, support from the principal, and positive relationships among teachers. As stated by the following source.

"There are actually many supporting factors, such as the government's commitment to supporting the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka, which is one of the main factors contributing to the success of the Kurikulum Merdeka,"

"At SDN 02, one of the supporting factors in the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka is the readiness of the teachers themselves. The Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti teacher, in particular, firmly stated during the meeting on the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka. Although it has not been fully implemented yet, thank God, it is slowly being implemented,"

"For SDN 01, there are many supporting factors. We know that SDN 01 has adequate human resources, the school is very supportive of all changes, and the facilities and infrastructure are adequate, although not yet perfect,"

"Thank God, we have adequate facilities and infrastructure, although not yet perfect. At SDN 3, the school and teachers are clearly ready to implement this, as this is a government requirement. Furthermore, parents can also be invited to collaborate. For example, if we give their children a project assignment, the parents are ready to help,"

"This allows their children to complete the assigned tasks. So communication between the school and parents is very smooth,"

"For me, the supporting factor for this Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti learning strategy is government support. The government provides a website that teachers can access to find teaching modules, learning objectives, and learning flow. So teachers do not have to work hard to create a curriculum from scratch; they look for the framework on the website and adapt it to their respective school's circumstances,"

"A supporting factor for Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti learning is support from the school. The principal, fellow teachers, and education staff are all ready to support and assist each other. Moreover, if we have any misunderstandings regarding the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti, the principal is available 24/7 to provide guidance and input,"

Based on the results of the interviews above, it is evident that these schools have many factors supporting the implementation of learning. This is reinforced by observation results, which show that the facilities and infrastructure at these three schools are quite good and support the teaching and learning process. These facilities and infrastructure are certainly key factors in supporting the implementation of learning; good facilities and infrastructure can motivate students to learn more enthusiastically (Mulyawan & Rusman, 2025). This is further supported by the fact that a positive relationship between teachers and parents can enhance students' learning outcomes. Additionally, support from superiors and colleagues fosters a healthy work environment that enhances teachers' performance (Tarso et al., 2025).

Inhibiting Factors

In addition to supporting factors, there are inhibiting factors that pose challenges for schools in implementing learning strategies. Some of these inhibiting factors are outlined in the following interview.

"While there are supporting factors, there are also inhibiting factors. One obstacle we experience is the lack of government support. Ulu Musi is located on the outskirts of the district, so the government rarely visits the field to monitor the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka. So, sometimes we are unsure whether our efforts are appropriate. The second obstacle is the lack of references, so our school lacks definitive modules or technical guidelines for implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka. Furthermore, there is a lack of facilities and infrastructure. We have facilities and infrastructure, but they are still imperfect, and the results are not optimal,

"The obstacles at SDN 02 are more related to the lack of facilities and infrastructure. We have laptops to access online features, but the signal is often lost, or the electricity goes out. So, this really hinders our school from updating learning media, for example,"

"At this school, facilities and infrastructure, such as textbooks for teachers and students, are very limited. There are not enough books to give to each student individually, so books can only be borrowed. So, if students want to study with textbooks, they can only do so at school. At home, they can only use the internet. In fact, there are frequent power outages and no signal here,"

"Of course, there are inhibiting factors, such as limited government support, both in terms of budget and regulations. So, schools can only implement what they can, and it is not optimal,"

"As a teacher, the most obvious inhibiting factor is the lack of government support for training related to the Kurikulum Merdeka. So, we are left to develop our creativity on our own, without coordination or collaboration with other schools. Training would be great, allowing us to exchange information and provide feedback,"

Based on the interview results above, it is evident that these schools face challenges in understanding the Kurikulum Merdeka and have limited access to learning materials and textbooks. The lack of understanding of the Kurikulum Merdeka can be addressed by participating in government-organized webinars (Putri et al., 2025). The limited availability of learning materials can be addressed by participating in training sessions on creating engaging and enjoyable learning materials, such as Canva (Nunirmala et al., 2024). Furthermore, the issue of limited textbooks can be addressed by directing students to study at libraries that provide open access (Ardiansah et al., 2022).

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that the implementation of Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti learning strategies under the Kurikulum Merdeka in elementary schools in Kecamatan Ulu Musi has been carried out through the development of learning modules, the identification of students' learning abilities, and the implementation of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments. These findings reflect the characteristics of the Kurikulum Merdeka, which emphasizes flexible, student-centered learning and adapting the learning process to student needs and characteristics. This aligns with the view that the Kurikulum Merdeka provides teachers with flexibility in designing learning based on students' abilities and learning needs (Ardianti & Amalia, 2022). The implementation of assessments at the beginning, during, and at the end of learning also indicates that teachers have attempted to apply differentiated learning principles to optimize student learning outcomes.

Further findings revealed that teachers play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti learning strategies. Teachers are not only responsible for delivering learning materials but also for designing learning experiences that encourage active student participation, critical thinking, and character development. These findings support research indicating that learning strategies are crucial to the success of learning, as they influence student engagement and understanding (Lestari & Laili, 2024). In practice, teachers at the schools studied implemented various strategies tailored to students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities. This indicates that learning strategies in Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti focus not only on knowledge transfer but also on character formation and moral development.

The implementation of Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti in the Kurikulum Merdeka also demonstrates the integration of religious values and character education into the learning process. This finding aligns with the opinion that Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti plays a crucial role in shaping students' personalities, attitudes, and morals (Musya'Adah, 2020). Through the application of contextual and student-centered learning, students are encouraged not only to understand religious concepts theoretically but also to apply Islamic values in their daily lives. In this regard, the Kurikulum Merdeka provides teachers with broader opportunities to integrate character education into learning activities through project-based learning and collaborative activities.

This study also identified several factors that support the successful implementation of learning strategies, including government support, teacher preparedness, adequate human resources, school support, parental involvement, and the availability of facilities and infrastructure. Research suggests that the successful implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka is strongly influenced by teacher preparedness, school culture, and institutional support (Anggraini et al., 2022). Parental involvement in supporting student project assignments also demonstrates that implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka requires collaboration between schools, teachers, and families to achieve optimal learning outcomes. These findings reinforce previous studies that emphasize the importance of collaborative learning environments in supporting character education and competency development among elementary school students.

However, this study also identified several factors that inhibit the implementation of learning strategies in Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti. These obstacles include limited government assistance, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, unstable internet access, limited learning resources, and a lack of teacher training related to the Kurikulum Merdeka. Previous research found that limited teacher understanding, inadequate training, and uneven educational facilities remain major challenges in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka (Asykur et al., 2025). Limited access to digital learning resources in rural areas, such as Kecamatan Ulu Musi, also indicates that the successful implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka remains influenced by regional disparities in educational infrastructure.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of learning strategies for Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti in the Kurikulum Merdeka at elementary schools in Ulu Musi District has generally reflected the principles of student-centered learning. Teachers implemented learning by preparing teaching modules, identifying students' abilities, and using diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments. These strategies contributed not only to students' cognitive development but also to the strengthening of religious character and moral values. The implementation was supported by teacher readiness, school support, parental involvement, and adequate facilities. However, several obstacles remained, including limited infrastructure, inadequate internet access, and a lack of training related to the Kurikulum Merdeka. Therefore, collaboration between schools, parents, and the government is needed to optimize the implementation of Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti learning in elementary schools. Further research could examine the challenges teachers face in understanding the Kurikulum Merdeka and developing instructional materials.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

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