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Teachers' Efforts in Implementing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in the Aqidah Akhlak Subject to Enhance Student Creativity at MAN Kota Solok

Husen Kadri^{a, 1}

^aProgram Pascasarjana Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Barat

¹husenkadri@gmail.com

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*Corresponding

Author:

Name: Husen Kadri

Email: husenkadri@gmail.com

Phone/WA: 0821-7090-4639

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar (Independent Learning) curriculum in Aqidah Akhlak (Islamic Creed and Ethics) education at MAN Kota Solok, focusing on enhancing student creativity. The study addresses the problem of how teachers plan, implement, and evaluate the curriculum to foster creativity and moral development among students. The primary objective is to explore the strategies and methodologies employed by educators in aligning the curriculum with national competency standards while promoting holistic student growth. To achieve this, the study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis to gather data on teacher planning, implementation, and evaluation practices. The findings reveal that effective planning in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains significantly enhances student creativity. Collaborative learning strategies, such as group discussions and project-based activities, are instrumental in fostering creativity and moral development. Teachers play a pivotal role as mentors and role models, integrating Aqidah Akhlak lessons with school activities to ensure practical application of moral principles. Evaluation techniques, including cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor assessments, are crucial for measuring student understanding and internalization of moral values. The study concludes that structured planning, diverse teaching methods, and comprehensive evaluation are essential for achieving the goals of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum in Aqidah Akhlak education. These strategies not only enhance creativity but also cultivate moral and religious values, preparing students to become well-rounded individuals. The research contributes to the broader discourse on Islamic education by providing a framework for integrating independent learning principles with moral and ethical development.

Keyword

Independent Curriculum; Aqidah Akhlak; Student Creativity

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini menginvestigasi implementasi kurikulum Merdeka Belajar dalam pendidikan Aqidah Akhlak di MAN Kota Solok, dengan fokus pada peningkatan kreativitas siswa. Studi ini mengkaji bagaimana guru merencanakan, melaksanakan, dan mengevaluasi kurikulum untuk mendorong kreativitas dan pengembangan moral siswa. Tujuan utama adalah mengeksplorasi strategi dan metodologi yang digunakan pendidik dalam menyelaraskan kurikulum dengan standar kompetensi nasional sambil mempromosikan pertumbuhan holistik siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, dengan observasi kelas, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen untuk mengumpulkan data tentang perencanaan, pelaksanaan, dan evaluasi oleh guru. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa perencanaan efektif dalam domain kognitif, afektif, dan psikomotorik secara signifikan meningkatkan kreativitas siswa. Strategi pembelajaran kolaboratif, seperti diskusi kelompok dan kegiatan berbasis proyek, berperan penting dalam mendorong kreativitas dan pengembangan moral. Guru berperan sebagai mentor dan panutan, mengintegrasikan pelajaran Aqidah Akhlak dengan kegiatan sekolah untuk memastikan penerapan praktis prinsip moral. Teknik evaluasi, termasuk penilaian kognitif, emosional, dan psikomotorik, penting untuk mengukur pemahaman dan internalisasi nilai moral siswa. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa perencanaan terstruktur, metode pengajaran yang beragam, dan evaluasi komprehensif esensial untuk mencapai tujuan kurikulum Merdeka Belajar dalam pendidikan Aqidah Akhlak. Strategi ini tidak hanya meningkatkan kreativitas tetapi juga menanamkan nilai moral dan agama, mempersiapkan siswa menjadi individu yang utuh. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada wacana pendidikan Islam dengan menyediakan kerangka untuk mengintegrasikan prinsip pembelajaran mandiri dengan pengembangan moral dan etika.

Kata Kunci

Kurikulum M erdeka; Aqidah Akhlak; Kreatifitas Siswa

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) curriculum in Indonesia represents a significant shift in the educational paradigm, emphasizing student-centered learning, creativity, and critical thinking. As a progressive curriculum, Merdeka Belajar aims to foster an environment where students can explore their potential independently, with teachers acting as facilitators rather than mere transmitters of knowledge (Haq & Wakidi, 2024). In the context of Islamic education, particularly in the subject of Aqidah Akhlak (Faith and Morals), this curriculum offers a unique opportunity to enhance students' creativity while deepening their understanding of Islamic values (Yusuf et al., 2020); (Nurdin et al., 2024). However, the successful implementation of this curriculum relies heavily on the efforts of teachers to adapt their teaching strategies to align with its principles. This study focuses on the efforts of teachers at MAN Kota Solok in implementing the Merdeka Belajar curriculum in Aqidah Akhlak to enhance student creativity, addressing a critical gap in the intersection of curriculum innovation and Islamic education (Amalia et al., 2024).

The primary issue this research seeks to address is the lack of empirical evidence on how teachers in Islamic senior high schools (MAN) implement the Merdeka Belajar curriculum, particularly in the Aqidah Akhlak subject, and how these efforts contribute to fostering student creativity. While the Merdeka Belajar curriculum has been widely discussed in general education contexts, its application in Islamic education remains underexplored. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the strategies employed by teachers, the challenges they face, and the outcomes of their efforts in enhancing student creativity. The research questions guiding this study are: (1) How do teachers at MAN Kota Solok implement the Merdeka Belajar curriculum in Aqidah Akhlak? (2) What

challenges do teachers encounter in this process? (3) How does the implementation of this curriculum contribute to enhancing student creativity? By answering these questions, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics between curriculum innovation, teaching practices, and student outcomes in Islamic education.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to contribute to both academic and practical domains. Academically, it enriches the literature on curriculum implementation in Islamic education, particularly in the context of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. Practically, it offers insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers on effective strategies to enhance student creativity through innovative teaching practices. Furthermore, this study addresses a critical gap in the existing literature by focusing on the unique challenges and opportunities of implementing a student-centered curriculum in a religious education context. Previous studies have predominantly focused on the general education sector, leaving a void in understanding how such curricula can be adapted to subjects like Aqidah Akhlak, which are deeply rooted in religious teachings and values.

A review of prior research reveals a growing interest in the Merdeka Belajar curriculum and its impact on student outcomes. However, most studies have focused on its implementation in secular subjects or general education settings, with limited attention to Islamic education. For instance, research by Hikdawati et al. highlights the positive impact of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum on student motivation and engagement in science and mathematics (Hikdawati et al., 2024). Similarly, Han and Abdrahim emphasizes the role of teacher creativity in implementing the curriculum effectively (Han & Abdrahim, 2023). However, these studies do not address the specific challenges of integrating such a curriculum into religious education, where the balance between doctrinal teachings and creative exploration must be carefully managed. This study aims to bridge this gap by providing a focused analysis of the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum in Aqidah Akhlak, offering new insights into how religious education can adapt to contemporary educational innovations.

The hypothesis of this study is that the effective implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum in Aqidah Akhlak at MAN Kota Solok will significantly enhance student creativity by providing them with greater autonomy, encouraging critical thinking, and fostering a deeper connection between Islamic values and creative expression. This hypothesis is grounded in the argument that a student-centered approach, when thoughtfully applied in a religious education context, can empower students to explore their faith creatively while adhering to core Islamic principles. By testing this hypothesis, the study aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for improving curriculum implementation in Islamic education, ultimately contributing to the broader goal of nurturing well-rounded, creative, and morally grounded individuals.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design with a case study approach. The qualitative design is chosen to explore the efforts of teachers in implementing the Merdeka Belajar curriculum and its impact on student creativity in depth. The case study approach is suitable as it allows for an intensive examination of the specific context of MAN Kota Solok, focusing on the Aqidah Akhlaq subject.

The research subjects include: 1) Teachers: Aqidah Akhlaq teachers at MAN Kota Solok who are actively involved in implementing the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. 2) Students: Students from MAN Kota Solok who are enrolled in the Aqidah Akhlaq subject and are exposed to the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, where participants are selected based on their direct involvement in the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum and their ability to provide relevant insights into the research topic.

Data will be collected through the following methods: 1) In-depth Interviews: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with Aqidah Akhlaq teachers to gather detailed information about their strategies, challenges, and experiences in implementing the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. 2) Observation: Classroom observations will be carried out to assess how the curriculum is applied in practice and its impact on student creativity. 3) Document Analysis: Relevant documents, such as lesson plans, curriculum guidelines, and student work, will be analyzed to support the findings from interviews and observations.

The data collection process will follow these steps: 1) Preparation: Develop interview guides, observation checklists, and questionnaires tailored to the research objectives. 2) Permission: Obtain permission from the school administration and informed consent from participants. 3) Interviews: Conduct one-on-one interviews with teachers in a conducive environment. 4) Observation: Observe classroom activities during Aqidah Akhlaq lessons, focusing on teacher-student interactions and creative learning processes. 5) Document Collection: Collect and review relevant documents related to the curriculum implementation.

The data analysis will involve the following steps: 1) Transcription and Organization: Transcribe interview recordings and organize observational notes, questionnaire responses, and document data. 2) Coding: Use thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum and its impact on student creativity. 3) Triangulation: Cross-validate findings from interviews, observations, questionnaires, and document analysis to ensure reliability and credibility. 4) Interpretation: Interpret the data in the context of the research objectives, linking the findings to existing theories and literature on curriculum implementation and creativity in education.

This methodology provides a comprehensive framework for investigating the efforts of teachers in implementing the Merdeka Belajar curriculum in the Aqidah Akhlaq subject and its impact on student creativity at MAN Kota Solok. By combining qualitative data collection methods and thematic analysis, the study aims to generate meaningful insights that can contribute to the improvement of Islamic religious education practices.

RESULTS&DISCUSSION

1. Teacher planning in implementing an independent learning curriculum in Aqidah Akhlaq subject in increasing student creativity at MAN Kota Solok.

Table 1. Planning in Independent Curriculum Learning

No. Findings

- 1 Planning in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains enhances

No. Findings

- creativity.
- 2 Collaborative learning in Aqidah Akhlak fosters student creativity.
- 3 Effective planning ensures alignment with national competency standards.
- 4 Holistic approaches in planning improve learning outcomes.
- 5 Teaching materials and schedules are tailored to student needs.
- 6 Moral and religious behavior is cultivated through structured planning.
- 7 Planning tools and resources are essential for professional teaching.
- 8 Planning provides a roadmap for achieving educational goals.

Planning in Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor Domains Enhances Creativity. The research highlights that effective planning in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains plays a crucial role in fostering student creativity. By setting clear learning objectives, selecting appropriate teaching strategies, and encouraging creative thinking, educators can create an environment that supports holistic student development. This approach is particularly relevant in the context of Aqidah Akhlak education, where moral and ethical development is as important as academic achievement.

Collaborative Learning in Aqidah Akhlak Fosters Student Creativity Collaborative learning strategies, such as group discussions and project-based activities, are effective in enhancing creativity among students. These methods allow students to engage actively with the material, share ideas, and develop a deeper understanding of Aqidah Akhlak principles. The use of teaching modules designed by educators further supports this process by providing structured yet flexible learning opportunities.

Effective Planning Ensures Alignment with National Competency Standards The study emphasizes the importance of aligning lesson plans with national competency standards. This alignment ensures that the curriculum meets the required educational benchmarks while addressing the specific needs of students. By translating these standards into actionable teaching strategies, educators can create a cohesive and effective learning experience.

Holistic Approaches in Planning Improve Learning Outcomes. A holistic approach to planning, which integrates cognitive, emotional, and practical aspects of learning, is essential for achieving desired educational outcomes. This method ensures that students not only acquire knowledge but also develop the skills and attitudes necessary for moral and ethical growth. The research underscores the importance of preparing educators to implement such approaches effectively.

Teaching Materials and Schedules Are Tailored to Student Needs The preparation of teaching materials, semester schedules, and instructional strategies is a critical component of effective planning. These elements are tailored to meet the unique needs of students, ensuring that the learning process is both engaging and relevant. The study highlights the role of educators in designing these resources to support student creativity and understanding.

Moral and Religious Behavior Is Cultivated Through Structured Planning Structured planning in Aqidah Akhlak education helps students internalize moral and religious values. By incorporating principles of Akhlakul Karimah (noble character) into daily lessons, educators can guide students in developing behaviors that reflect these values both at home and in school. This process is essential for fostering a sense of responsibility and ethical awareness among students.

Planning Tools and Resources Are Essential for Professional Teaching
 The availability of teaching tools, such as modules, syllabi, instructional media, and assessment instruments, is crucial for professional teaching. These resources enable educators to deliver lessons effectively and measure student progress accurately. The research highlights the importance of equipping educators with the necessary tools to enhance their teaching practices.

Planning Provides a Roadmap for Achieving Educational Goals
 Planning serves as a roadmap for educators, guiding them in achieving their teaching objectives. It provides a structured framework for accountability, ensures efficient use of time and resources, and offers a clear method for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching strategies. This structured approach is vital for maintaining a balance between educational goals and practical implementation.

The findings of this research underscore the critical role of planning in the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum for Aqidah Akhlak education. By focusing on cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, educators can foster creativity and moral development among students. Collaborative learning, alignment with national standards, and the use of holistic approaches are key strategies for achieving these goals. Furthermore, the availability of teaching tools and resources ensures that educators can deliver high-quality instruction tailored to student needs. Ultimately, effective planning not only enhances the learning experience but also cultivates moral and religious values, preparing students to become well-rounded individuals.

2. Implementation of teachers in implementing an independent learning curriculum in Aqidah Akhlak subjects in increasing student creativity at MAN Kota Solok

Table 2. Implementation of Independent Learning Curriculum

No. Key Findings

- 1 Implementation of Aqidah Akhlak education based on pre-established plans.
- 2 Role of educators as mentors and role models in fostering moral behavior.
- 3 Integration of Aqidah Akhlak lessons with school activities to enhance creativity.
- 4 Use of diverse teaching methods and relevant resources by educators.
- 5 Importance of punctuality and good habits in fostering student creativity.
- 6 Classroom management and effective planning in teaching Aqidah Akhlak.
- 7 Encouragement of active student participation and critical thinking.
- 8 Application of moral principles in students' daily lives.
- 9 Use of interactive teaching strategies (e.g., group discussions, debates).
- 10 Emphasis on cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains in learning.

Implementation of Aqidah Akhlak Education Based on Pre-Established Plans.
 The study highlights that the teaching of Aqidah Akhlak is systematically implemented according to a structured plan. This includes preparation, core activities, and closing sessions, ensuring a comprehensive approach to moral and faith-based education.

Role of Educators as Mentors and Role Models. Educators play a pivotal role in shaping students' moral and ethical behavior. By serving as mentors and exemplars, they instill discipline, adherence to school rules, and positive behavior, which are essential for students' moral development.

Integration of Aqidah Akhlak Lessons with School Activities. The research underscores the importance of integrating Aqidah Akhlak lessons with extracurricular activities. This holistic approach enhances students' creativity and ensures the practical application of moral teachings in their daily lives.

Use of Diverse Teaching Methods and Relevant Resources. Educators employ a variety of teaching methodologies and utilize relevant resources to deliver Aqidah Akhlak lessons effectively. This diversity caters to different learning styles and fosters a deeper understanding of moral principles.

Importance of Punctuality and Good Habits. The study emphasizes the significance of educators' punctuality and the cultivation of good habits. These practices indirectly enhance students' creativity by setting a positive example and creating a structured learning environment.

Classroom Management and Effective Planning. Effective classroom management and meticulous planning are critical in teaching Aqidah Akhlak. Educators maintain control over the classroom while ensuring that lessons are delivered in an engaging and impactful manner.

Encouragement of Active Student Participation and Critical Thinking. Educators encourage active participation and critical thinking among students. Techniques such as group discussions, opinion sharing, and peer feedback create an interactive and stimulating learning environment.

Application of Moral Principles in Daily Life. The research highlights the practical application of Aqidah Akhlak teachings in students' daily lives. This is achieved through consistent guidance and reinforcement of moral values by educators.

Use of Interactive Teaching Strategies. Educators utilize interactive strategies such as lectures, Q&A sessions, group projects, and debates to enhance student engagement. These methods promote collaboration and critical analysis among students.

Emphasis on Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor Domains. The study reveals that educators focus on developing students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills. This holistic approach ensures well-rounded moral and intellectual growth.

The findings demonstrate that the teaching of Aqidah Akhlak is a multifaceted process that requires careful planning, effective classroom management, and the use of diverse teaching strategies. Educators play a crucial role in fostering moral behavior, creativity, and active participation among students. By integrating moral education with practical activities and emphasizing the application of Islamic principles in daily life, schools can significantly contribute to the holistic development of students.

3. Teacher evaluation in implementing an independent learning curriculum in Aqidah Akhlak subject in increasing student creativity at MAN Kota Solok

Table 3. Evaluation in Implementating Independent Learning Curriculum

No.	Aspect	Key Findings
1	Cognitive Domain Evaluation	Useful for assessing students' understanding of Aqidah Akhlak materials and fostering innovative religious thinking.
2	Emotional Domain Analysis	Determines students' effectiveness in absorbing, understanding, and applying religious principles.

No.	Aspect	Key Findings
3	Psychomotor Domain Assessment	Evaluates students' ability to practice newly acquired Aqidah Akhlak knowledge.
4	Behavioral Observation	Positive behavioral changes in students, such as respect for teachers, indicate effective teaching approaches.
5	Assignment-Based Evaluation	Assesses students' comprehension of course materials and serves as a foundation for improving learning standards.
6	Role of Educators	Educators must motivate, model positive behavior, and help students grow into better individuals.
7	Classroom-Based Assessment	Utilizes cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains to evaluate learning outcomes.
8	Evaluation Techniques	Written, oral, and non-test formats are used to foster religiosity, honesty, responsibility, and discipline.
9	Internalization of Moral Values	Aqidah Akhlak learning helps students internalize values like responsibility, patience, forgiveness, and honesty.
10	Post-Learning Assessment	Educators assess learning effectiveness through questions and exercises to ensure material application.

Cognitive Domain Evaluation: The assessment of the cognitive domain is crucial in determining the extent to which students comprehend the materials related to Aqidah Akhlak (Islamic creed and ethics). This evaluation also plays a significant role in nurturing innovative religious thinking among students, enabling them to engage critically and creatively with religious concepts.

Emotional Domain Analysis: The examination of the emotional domain helps in evaluating how effectively students internalize and apply religious principles in their daily lives. This analysis ensures that students not only understand the theoretical aspects of Aqidah Akhlak but also embody these principles emotionally and spiritually.

Psychomotor Domain Assessment: The psychomotor domain assessment focuses on students' ability to translate theoretical knowledge into practical actions. This evaluation measures their capability to practice the ethical and moral teachings of Aqidah Akhlak in real-life situations.

Behavioral Observation: Positive behavioral changes, such as students showing respect toward their teachers, serve as indicators of effective teaching methodologies. These observations reflect the success of educators in delivering content in a manner that resonates with students and encourages moral development.

Assignment-Based Evaluation: Assignments are used to gauge students' understanding of course materials. The results of these evaluations provide educators with insights into areas that require improvement, thereby enhancing the overall quality of Aqidah Akhlak education and fostering student creativity.

Role of Educators: Educators in Aqidah Akhlak are not merely lecturers or evaluators; they are mentors who inspire and model positive behavior. Their role extends to motivating students, demonstrating ethical conduct, and guiding them toward personal and spiritual growth.

Classroom-Based Assessment: Classroom-based assessments encompass cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains to holistically evaluate learning outcomes. This approach ensures that students' intellectual, emotional, and practical development are all addressed.

Evaluation Techniques: A variety of evaluation techniques, including written tests, oral assessments, and non-test methods, are employed to cultivate religiosity, honesty, responsibility, and discipline among students. These techniques ensure a comprehensive evaluation of students' moral and ethical development.

Internalization of Moral Values: The study highlights that Aqidah Akhlak education facilitates the internalization of moral values such as responsibility, patience, forgiveness, kindness, and honesty. These values are essential for shaping students' character and guiding their actions in accordance with Islamic teachings.

Post-Learning Assessment: After completing instructional activities, educators assess the effectiveness of the learning process through questions and exercises. This post-learning evaluation ensures that students can apply the knowledge and skills acquired during lessons, thereby reinforcing their understanding and practice of Aqidah Akhlak.

The findings of this research underscore the multifaceted nature of Aqidah Akhlak education, which integrates cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor domains to foster holistic moral and ethical development. Educators play a pivotal role in not only delivering content but also modeling and inspiring positive behavior. Effective evaluation techniques, including classroom-based assessments and post-learning evaluations, are essential for ensuring that students internalize and apply the principles of Aqidah Akhlak in their daily lives (Mustakim et al., 2023). This comprehensive approach ultimately contributes to the cultivation of individuals who are religiously committed, ethically grounded, and socially responsible.

The findings of this research align closely with several established educational theories, particularly those emphasizing holistic and student-centered learning (Kerimbayev et al., 2023); (Zhang et al., 2023). The constructivist theory of learning, proposed by Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky (Halid, 2024); (Negi, 2020), underscores the importance of active student engagement and collaborative learning in constructing knowledge (Langford, 2005); (Piaget & Inhelder, 2000). This is evident in the study's emphasis on collaborative learning strategies, such as group discussions and project-based activities, which foster creativity and deeper understanding of Aqidah Akhlak principles (Azhar et al., 2020). Similarly, the Bloom's Taxonomy framework, which categorizes learning into cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, is reflected in the study's focus on planning and evaluation across these domains to enhance student creativity and moral development (Limbu, 2024).

The social learning theory by Albert Bandura also resonates with the findings, particularly in the role of educators as mentors and role models (Bandura, 1971). The study highlights how educators' behavior and teaching methods influence students' moral and ethical development, reinforcing Bandura's assertion that learning occurs through observation and imitation. Furthermore, the holistic education theory, which advocates for the integration of intellectual, emotional, and practical aspects of learning, is mirrored in the study's emphasis on a holistic approach to planning and implementation in Aqidah Akhlak education.

This research builds on and corroborates findings from previous studies on Islamic education and curriculum implementation. For instance, a study by Ritonga et al

on the integration of moral values in Islamic education emphasizes the importance of aligning curriculum planning with national standards and using diverse teaching methods to foster moral and ethical development (Ritonga et al., 2024). Similarly, research by Hashim (2020) highlights the role of educators as moral exemplars and the significance of interactive teaching strategies in enhancing student engagement and creativity in Islamic education.

The findings also align with studies on the Merdeka Belajar (Independent Learning) curriculum, which advocates for flexibility and creativity in teaching. Research by Moore et al., (2021) found that effective planning and the use of tailored teaching materials are critical for the successful implementation of this curriculum (Moore et al., 2021). The current study extends this by demonstrating how these elements are applied specifically in Aqidah Akhlak education to enhance student creativity and moral development.

Moreover, the study's emphasis on the evaluation of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains is consistent with research by Lisawati (2020), which underscores the importance of comprehensive assessment techniques in Islamic education to ensure the internalization of moral values (Lisawati, 2020). The use of diverse evaluation methods, such as written tests, oral assessments, and behavioral observations, as highlighted in the current study, further supports the findings of Lisawati (2020) regarding the need for multifaceted evaluation approaches.

This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge in several ways. First, it provides a detailed exploration of the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum in the context of Aqidah Akhlak education, an area that has not been extensively studied. While previous research has focused on general curriculum implementation in Islamic education, this study specifically examines how the principles of independent learning can be applied to enhance creativity and moral development in Aqidah Akhlak subjects.

Second, the study introduces a holistic framework for planning, implementation, and evaluation that integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. This framework not only aligns with established educational theories but also offers practical insights for educators on how to design and deliver Aqidah Akhlak lessons that foster both intellectual and moral growth. The emphasis on collaborative learning and interactive teaching strategies, such as group discussions and debates, adds a new dimension to the discourse on Islamic education by highlighting the role of student-centered approaches in enhancing creativity.

Third, the research underscores the importance of educators as role models in shaping students' moral behavior, a perspective that is often overlooked in studies on curriculum implementation. By demonstrating how educators' punctuality, discipline, and ethical conduct influence students, the study provides a nuanced understanding of the teacher-student dynamic in Islamic education.

Finally, the study's focus on post-learning assessment and the internalization of moral values offers a fresh perspective on evaluation in Islamic education. While traditional approaches often prioritize cognitive assessment, this research highlights the need for evaluating emotional and psychomotor domains to ensure that students not only understand but also practice the principles of Aqidah Akhlak in their daily lives.

This research bridges the gap between theory and practice by demonstrating how the principles of holistic education, constructivism, and social learning can be applied in the context of Aqidah Akhlak education. It builds on previous studies while introducing

new insights into the role of planning, implementation, and evaluation in fostering student creativity and moral development. The findings have significant implications for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers, offering a comprehensive framework for enhancing the quality of Islamic education in the era of independent learning.

CONCLUSIONS

This research provides a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar (Independent Learning) curriculum in Aqidah Akhlak education at MAN Kota Solok, focusing on enhancing student creativity and moral development. The study successfully addresses its research objectives by highlighting the critical role of planning, implementation, and evaluation in achieving these goals. Below is a summary of the findings and recommendations for future research: *Planning*: Effective planning in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains is essential for fostering student creativity and moral development. The study demonstrates that structured planning, aligned with national competency standards, ensures a holistic approach to Aqidah Akhlak education. Collaborative learning strategies, tailored teaching materials, and the integration of moral values into daily lessons are key components of successful planning. *Implementation*: The implementation of Aqidah Akhlak education relies heavily on educators' roles as mentors and role models. The use of diverse teaching methods, interactive strategies, and the integration of lessons with extracurricular activities enhance student engagement and creativity. Classroom management, punctuality, and the cultivation of good habits further contribute to a positive learning environment. *Evaluation*: The evaluation process, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor domains, is crucial for assessing students' understanding and application of Aqidah Akhlak principles. Behavioral observations, assignment-based evaluations, and post-learning assessments ensure that students internalize moral values and apply them in their daily lives.

Recommendations for Future Research, *Longitudinal Studies*: Future research should conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum on students' moral development and creativity. This would provide deeper insights into the sustainability of the observed outcomes. *Comparative Studies*: Comparative studies across different Islamic educational institutions could identify best practices and challenges in implementing the independent learning curriculum. This would help refine strategies for broader application. *Teacher Training Programs*: Research should explore the effectiveness of professional development programs for educators in Aqidah Akhlak education. This includes training on holistic planning, interactive teaching methods, and evaluation techniques. *Parental and Community Involvement*: Future studies could investigate the role of parents and the community in supporting Aqidah Akhlak education. Understanding their contributions could enhance the holistic development of students.

This study contributes to the field of Islamic education by providing a detailed framework for implementing the Merdeka Belajar curriculum in Aqidah Akhlak subjects. It bridges the gap between theory and practice by demonstrating how holistic planning, student-centered teaching strategies, and comprehensive evaluation can foster creativity and moral development. The findings align with established educational

theories, such as constructivism, Bloom's Taxonomy, and social learning theory, while offering practical insights for educators and policymakers. In conclusion, this research underscores the importance of a well-structured and holistic approach to Aqidah Akhlak education in the context of independent learning. By addressing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, educators can cultivate well-rounded individuals who are not only academically competent but also morally and ethically grounded. Future research should build on these findings to further enhance the quality and effectiveness of Islamic education.

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