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Improving the Quality of Islamic Religious Education in Indonesian Senior High Schools: A Comparison of KTSP and Kurikulum Merdeka

Abdul Fikri¹, Supriyanto Abdi², Sutrisno³, Lilik Istiqomah⁴

^{1,2}Master of Islamic Sciences, Universitas Islam Indonesia, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

³Postgraduate Program of Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

⁴School of Humanities and Communication Arts Western Sydney, Australia

¹22913046@students.uui.ac.id, ²supriyanto.abdi@uui.ac.id, ³trisno_63@yahoo.com,

⁴l.istiqomah@westernsydney.edu.au

Abstract

Objective: This study aims to explore changes in the quality of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at the high school level in the context of the implementation of KTSP (Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan) and the Independent Curriculum. The focus of the analysis includes the objectives, development foundations, and efforts to improve the quality of IRE in both curricula. **Theoretical framework:** The research framework focuses on the concept of changing and improving the quality of IRE learning through the comparison of the characteristics of KTSP and the Independent Curriculum. The study is directed at the curriculum objectives, the basis for development, and the orientation to improve the quality of education and the character of students. **Literature review:** A literature review uses journals and books relevant to Islamic education, curriculum development, and improvement of IRE learning quality. The literature is used as secondary data to strengthen analysis of changes in curriculum policies and practices. **Method:** The research uses a qualitative approach with a critical analysis method. Primary data is in the form of regulations related to IRE subjects in KTSP and the Independent Curriculum, while secondary data comes from relevant journals and books. **Results:** The improvement in the quality of IRE at the high school level in the Independent Curriculum is especially seen in the addition of several learning topics that are relevant to current conditions. More broadly, improving the quality of education includes changes in learning paradigms, simplification of teaching tools, evaluation, strengthening the role of teachers, and co-curricular activities. **Implications:** The implementation of the Independent Curriculum needs to be understood as a more comprehensive change in improving the quality of education. **Novelty:** The novelty of the research lies in a critical analysis of the transformation of the quality of IRE by comparing the KTSP and the Independent Curriculum directly. The research also places the changes in IRE in the context of improving the quality of education and strengthening character through the Pancasila Student Profile.

Keywords: islamic religious education, ktsp (kurikulum tingkat satuan pendidikan), kurikulum merdeka, education quality, curriculum development.

*Corresponding Author: 22913046@students.uui.ac.id



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INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the strategic efforts in nation-building because one of the indicators of a nation's progress is the quality of its human resources. The quality of human resources will then be determined by the quality of education; this is where the curriculum, as the heart of education, finds its relevance [1]. However, curriculum changes at each inauguration of a new president or education minister often lead to speculation. One of them is the emergence of allegations that the main reason for changing the educational curriculum is more political than an urgent need [2]. The image that is especially seen by education practitioners, in this case teachers, is that every change in curriculum that changes is only RPP and the system of reporting learning tools. In fact, curriculum transformation is not only a change in terms of the bureaucratization of correspondence and archives but a transformation of the learning paradigm that has been perfected. This idea is in line with the decree of the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, which demands the guarantee of equal distribution of educational opportunities, quality improvement, relevance and efficiency of education management to face challenges in accordance with the changing demands of local, national and global life [3].

IRE subjects are compulsory subjects from elementary school to high school. This situation continues in every curriculum transformation that has occurred so far and is an achievement that we should be grateful for. This is due to the establishment of IRE subjects as compulsory subjects, showing the real attention of the government to producing a generation that has not only extensive knowledge but also a noble character [4]. IRE subjects further play an important role, at least as a foundation of religious understanding, as well as forming and developing individual moral character, especially for the younger generation in Indonesia, the majority of whom are followers of Islam [5]. The high school education level was chosen as the scope of this research for the reason that it is a strategic level of education in instilling religious values and forming Islamic identity in students, especially in facing complex societal dynamics while preparing them to be dynamic in the social context.

Several curricula have at least been implemented by the Indonesian government in recent decades to improve the quality of education in this country, and two of them are KTSP (Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan) and Kurikulum Merdeka. As a curriculum that has been implemented for an unrealistic amount of time, KTSP or Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan, is the second curriculum implemented since the enactment of the regulation on regional autonomy [6]. Another fact is that this curriculum is present as a complement to the previous curriculum, namely KBK, so it is not surprising that there are not too many obvious changes between the two curricula. The reason that is quite different, at least, appears from the emergence of the Kurikulum Merdeka. The curriculum, which was originally intended to return learning to normal after the COVID-19 pandemic, was later expanded to include the formation of Pancasila's character and independence in education. Its name has grown since it began to be socialized to the public at the end of 2019. This situation can be understood because through its inaugural introduction, this curriculum carries many missions that previously we could say had never been or had not been realised in previous curricula [7]. The dynamics that occur are what further make this research even more interesting. This research will be directed toward comparative efforts to improve the quality of IRE learning contained in KTSP and the Kurikulum Merdeka at the high school education level. The main focus of this research includes analysis of curriculum objectives and development foundations, learning methods and approaches, learning materials, and evaluation techniques used in both curricula [8].

By examining these aspects, this study seeks to provide a clearer understanding of how curriculum reform contributes to improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education at the senior high school level. In particular, the comparison between KTSP and the Kurikulum Merdeka allows this study to examine whether curriculum reform is limited to administrative and structural changes or also entails substantive changes in IRE teaching and learning [9].

The findings are expected to provide useful insights for teachers and educational institutions in interpreting curriculum reform beyond changes in learning administration, particularly in relation to instructional approaches, learning content, and assessment practices. At the policy level, the findings may also inform evaluations of the direction of Islamic Religious Education development and help identify areas that require further attention in future curriculum development [10].

Despite the significance of these developments, research specifically comparing the direction of quality improvement in Islamic Religious Education between KTSP and the Kurikulum Merdeka at the senior high school level remains limited. Previous studies have primarily focused on curriculum policies, changes in IRE learning outcomes, national education standards, or comparisons of curricula at other levels of education [11]. Accordingly, the novelty of this study lies in its specific comparative analysis of IRE at the senior high school level, focusing on curriculum objectives and foundations, instructional approaches, learning content, and assessment practices. Rather than merely identifying differences between the two curricula, this study examines the direction of Religious Education and the extent to which these changes represent efforts to improve the quality of Islamic Religious Education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Some literature that also examines the study of this curriculum includes: 1) Policy Analysis of Changes in Learning Outcomes (CP) in Islamic Religious Education Subjects and Ethics Historical Elements of Islamic Civilization in the Independent Curriculum written by Ihsan et al; 2) Policy Analysis of Islamic Education Curriculum in Indonesia from Kusmiran et al; 3) Research from Pawero on Critical Analysis of Curriculum Policy Between KBK, KTSP, and K-13; 4) Research from Sari related to Policy Analysis of Free Learning as a Strategy for Improving Education Quality; 5) Research from Solihin and Adil on Analysis of the National Curriculum of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) Subjects at the Elementary School (SD) Level in Developing Moderate Islam (Rahmatan Lil Alamin); 6) Research written by Sunengsih related to Policy Analysis of Graduate Competency Standards and Content Standards of Islamic Religious Education in the National Curriculum; 7) Study on Comparative Analysis of KTSP, K13 and Independent Curriculum in Elementary Schools from Supriatna et al and; 8) article written by Ulinniam et al., related to Policy Analysis of Indonesian Education Curriculum from Time to Time (In the Perspective of Islamic Education and National Education) [12].

Reviewing some of the studies above, it is illustrated that studies related to the analysis of the direction of improving the quality of IRE subjects at the high school level still have quite little discussion space, so this research can be said to find its relevance as a filler for the long discussion of studies on this matter. Building on these studies, the present research focuses specifically on the policy direction and quality improvement of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at the senior high school level. Unlike previous studies that predominantly discuss curriculum changes from a general perspective, this study examines how curriculum policies influence the formulation of learning objectives, content, pedagogical approaches, assessment, and expected student competencies. Particular attention is given to the transition from KTSP and the 2013 Curriculum (K-13) to the Independent Curriculum, including its implications for strengthening religious moderation, character formation, critical thinking, and contextual learning. Thus, this research seeks to provide a more focused understanding of curriculum policy development and its contribution to improving the quality of IRE learning in senior high schools within the changing landscape of Indonesian education [12].

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach using critical analysis to compare KTSP and the Kurikulum Merdeka in the context of efforts to improve the quality of Islamic Religious Education at the senior high school level. The primary data were drawn from official regulations and policy documents related to the implementation of both curricula, particularly those governing Islamic Religious Education at the senior high school level. Secondary data were obtained from relevant scholarly literature, including books and journal articles, to support the analysis and interpretation of the primary documents. Based on these sources, the study sought to identify changes and continuities between KTSP and the Kurikulum Merdeka across four key aspects: curriculum objectives and foundations, instructional approaches and methods, learning content, and assessment practices.

These four aspects subsequently served as the analytical framework for examining the data. The analysis involved reviewing relevant provisions, principles, and curriculum components contained in the selected documents and organizing the information according to each area of comparison. Information concerning KTSP and the Kurikulum Merdeka was then compared within each aspect to identify similarities, differences, continuities, and changes between the two curricula. Thus, the comparative process went beyond mapping the characteristics of the two curricula and proceeded to examine the significance of the identified changes in relation to improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education at the senior high school level.

Building on the results of this comparison, critical analysis was used to interpret the direction and substance of the transition from KTSP to the Kurikulum Merdeka. The identified changes were examined by considering their implications for curriculum orientation, teaching and learning processes, learning content, and assessment practices, while relevant scholarly literature was used to support and contextualize the interpretation of the findings. Through this process, the study sought to determine the extent to which the transition from KTSP to the Kurikulum Merdeka represented substantive developments in improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education, rather than merely reflecting broader changes in Indonesia's curriculum policy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The curriculum has a central role in the educational process in schools and cannot be separated from educational practices. This is because, in practice, education always carries a mission to develop the abilities of its students in terms of knowledge, personality, social and work skills. These efforts are then realized through goal setting, teaching materials, learning methods, and evaluation, which are core components of the curriculum [13]. This mission is in line with the role and nature of the curriculum, which is actually structured to teach students [14]. Thus, it is said that the entire educational journey in schools is actually a representation of the mature design of a curriculum that directs, motivates and evaluates every step of learning. Furthermore, the function of a curriculum can at least be explained from several points of view. For students, the curriculum is an organizer of learning experiences that equips them with the ability to live in their time [15]. They can use the curriculum as a study guide so that they can do self-evaluation to assess what knowledge, skills or attitudes they need to have. For educators, the curriculum serves as a working guideline in compiling and organizing student learning experiences and as a guideline for conducting evaluations. For school principals, the curriculum serves as a guideline in carrying out supervision, as well as a guideline for compiling school programs. As for parents, the curriculum serves as a consideration for overcoming their children's learning difficulties at school, as well as a guideline for home study to fit the school program. Meanwhile, according to the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, the function of the curriculum is actually a guideline for the implementation of learning activities to achieve certain educational goals [16].

How comprehensive the function of the curriculum at the level of educational practice is significantly correlated with the dialectic of curriculum improvement or change. Curriculum improvement implies improvements to one or more aspects of the curriculum such as teaching methods and textbooks. In contrast, curriculum change is more about changing the basics, goals, tools or ways to achieve these goals. That is why curriculum changes are often also associated with social change because, in it, there is an agenda to change people, in this case teachers, education coaches and education managers. The curriculum that is made must actually be dynamic because its presence is closely related to the reality of society. There are several reasons for curriculum changes, including: 1) a new paradigm shift in the process of learning; 2) changes in society, as well as; and 3) the exploitation of science [17]. In addition to these three reasons, other considerations include changes in government policies related to national education, the results of analysis and assessment that encourage the ministry to review national education policies, public complaints related to the quality of education graduates, and the discovery of innovations in the learning process that are more effective and efficient, including, in this case, innovations in the field of teaching methods. Some of these circumstances ultimately cause a curriculum to become irrelevant, thus demanding change. Maintaining a curriculum that is no longer relevant to the reality of these three things will actually harm children as "consumers" of education [18].

In response to this, through this study, the author will try to analyze in depth related to the two curricula that have shaped the dynamics of Indonesian education so far. The two curricula are the KTSP and Kurikulum Merdeka. Although the distance between their emergence is quite far, these two curricula have something in common, one of which is that they appeared when the law on regional autonomy was passed. It becomes even more interesting when it is found that the spirit of KTSP is in the Kurikulum Merdeka; this also indicates that the current Kurikulum Merdeka also learns a lot from previous curricula, including in this case KTSP. The author will describe the in-depth analysis of the two curricula as follows.

The Purpose of KTSP and the Independent Curriculum

The Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP) and the Kurikulum Merdeka are present in different time brackets. This situation then has implications for the various reasons for the emergence of each of these curricula. KTSP is actually a refinement of the 2004 Curriculum or Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK). However, technically, the two curricula adhere to different principles. If the central government prepares the KBK, the KTSP is ready to be adapted at the level of each educational unit, in this case, the school concerned. Nevertheless, its development and determination still pay attention to the curriculum preparation guidelines that have been prepared by the National Education Standards Agency or BSNP [19], an independent and independent body tasked with developing, monitoring the implementation, and evaluating national standards of education. This body consists of experts in the fields of psychometrics, educational evaluation, curriculum and education management who have insight, experience and commitment to improving the quality of education. BSNP is tasked with assisting the minister in developing, monitoring and controlling national education standards, so that several authorities are given, such as developing national education standards, organizing national examinations, providing recommendations on education quality assurance and control to the government and formulating graduation criteria for primary and secondary education units [20].

The transition of the curriculum development mechanism, which was originally carried out centrally / centralistically, towards giving authority to several parties / decentralised, KTSP has opened a space for the participation of creativity of teachers and school managers in designing plans, methods and teaching tools. Technically, the centre only compiles content standards, competency standards and basic curriculum competency standards, while the contextualization of the details is left to school managers and teachers. It is hoped that this

kind of mechanism can improve the quality of education through independence and school initiative in developing curriculum, managing and empowering available resources. In addition, this policy also aims to increase the role of school community participation in the community in developing the curriculum through joint decisions. With these two expectations, education units can at least be more motivated to compete healthily with other education units in terms of improving the quality of education [21]. This situation is actually a real embodiment of the decree of the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, which explains that the basic framework and structure of the primary and secondary education curriculum are determined by the government. In addition, the student-centred learning process (student-centred learning) is also one of the things emphasized in this curriculum. With this kind of mechanism, school administrators and teachers can be actively involved in putting into practice their ideal conception of the learning process so that, indirectly, the aspirations of each educational unit, including in this case, teachers can be conveyed through planning, implementing and assessing learning in their respective institutions or classes [22].

Furthermore, the presence of KTSP is also an effort and a government response. It is said to be an effort because the government, through this curriculum, strives to realize autonomous and democratic education by providing opportunities for each educational unit to develop a curriculum according to their respective needs. It is said to be a form of response because this curriculum was designed after the enactment of Law No. 22 of 1999 concerning Regional Government and PP No. 25 of 2000 concerning Government Authority and Provincial Authority as an Autonomous Region, as well as the 2004 curriculum [23]. This situation is understandable considering that KTSP was actually derived from the 2004 curriculum or KBK.

In Law No. 22 of 1999, it is explained that the government of the Republic of Indonesia provides flexibility to the Regions to carry out Regional Autonomy, namely granting authority for Autonomous Regions to regulate and take care of the interests of local communities according to the initiatives and aspirations of their communities in accordance with laws and regulations. The granting of this kind of authority is also referred to as Decentralization, which is the transfer of government authority by the government to the Autonomous Region. As a result of this policy, the Autonomous Region is obliged to carry out several government functions, one of which is in terms of education and culture [24]. These provisions are then detailed in PP No. 25 of 2000, which indicates the limits of central government interference in terms of education and culture, including the establishment of student competency standards, setting the national curriculum, guidelines for assessing learning outcomes, setting basic subject matter standards, establishing an educational calendar and provisions for the number of effective learning hours each year for primary and secondary education levels [25]. These provisions are actually the background for KTSP development policies which, as previously explained, the government through BSNP only makes basic frameworks and certain standards, so that curriculum development is handed over to local governments and education units while still paying attention to these basic provisions.

Some of the basic standards set by the government are after this referred to as national education standards, which include content standards, process standards, graduate competency standards, educator and education staff standards, and educational assessment standards. The author deliberately limits the five standards, considering that the five standards are directly related to the direction of improving the quality of IRE learning. This is in line with what Asri said: to measure aspects of education quality, several important indicators greatly influence it, including curriculum, educational content, learning process, evaluation and teacher quality [26].

This is in contrast to KTSP, which is present as a complement to the previous curriculum and is a response to regional autonomy policies. The Kurikulum Merdeka appears not only

as an effort to improve previous curricula but also as a response to the reality of education in Indonesia, which shows the learning crisis in recent years. This is based on scores released by PISA, which show that Indonesian students over the past 10-15 years have been below the minimum competence in terms of literacy, mathematics and science skills, which, if not addressed immediately, will further strengthen what Pritchett said, "Go to school but not learn". The learning crisis that has occurred for so long was then exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused problems. Learning loss (loss of competencies that have been learned), which on average is equivalent to 5-6 months of study. The situation is further exacerbated by the occurrence of a Learning Gap (learning gap between learning in the city and learning in the village, which results from the occurrence of Learning loss and also causes this gap to get bigger [27].

Although Indonesia experienced an education gap long before the pandemic, in fact, this situation has strengthened since the pandemic due to the quality of learning that is no longer the same as before the pandemic. Many students receive limited feedback and interaction from their teachers, so this situation ultimately contributes to declining student abilities, learning non-achievements, and widening knowledge inequalities, which may even have implications for decreasing student income later in life [28]. A fairly different situation was found by the SMERU Research Institute, which showed that an analysis of learning inequality in the classroom showed that students who have adaptive teachers, have access to digital devices, have higher socioeconomic conditions and have parents who actively communicate with teachers tend to have above-average abilities. Unfortunately, there needs to be an intervention that encourages teachers to structure learning that takes into account the diversity of students' learning abilities. If not, then students with low skills will fall behind other students. On the other hand, the evaluation results of the Ministry of Education and Culture (currently the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology) show that students who use the emergency curriculum, namely the curriculum which is a simplification of the national curriculum by reducing the burden of basic competencies in each subject except on essential materials and prerequisite competencies for continued learning at an advanced level, get better assessment results than the full use of the 2013 curriculum, regardless of socioeconomic background [29].

The above reality ultimately also causes the presence of the Kurikulum Merdeka as a resolution to other problems that exist in the Indonesian national education system, namely the occurrence of curriculum content that is too ambitious and dense, so that it causes an increase in material or sub-chapters of explanation that are getting longer due to the desire for the curriculum to include contemporary issues that occur in the world today. This is so that teachers continue to move quickly to complete chapter by chapter, concept by concept, without taking into account the ability of students to understand the concepts they learn. Therefore, reducing curriculum material or content is a direction of reform in the Kurikulum Merdeka [30]. This step was taken with careful consideration of the effective results shown by the implementation of the emergency curriculum during the COVID-19 pandemic, where the emergency curriculum at that time was focused on drastically reducing the provision of learning materials and carrying out learning on essential topics only. The Ministry of Education and Culture claims that schools that use the emergency curriculum show reduced learning loss to only 1 month. This is inversely proportional to schools that still use the 2013 curriculum, which shows the occurrence of learning loss for approximately 5 months [31].

Not stopping there, the government's attention is not only focused on curriculum content but also on technical matters. Appearing similar to KTSP, the Kurikulum Merdeka is also designed to be as flexible as possible, where the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology only establishes the basic framework of the curriculum and curriculum structure, so that, in general, the education unit has the authority to develop the curriculum, such as increasing the richness of the subject matter and aligning with the characteristics of students, the vision and mission of the education unit and local culture and wisdom [32]. These various

realities and enthusiasm have further led to new post-pandemic efforts to construct rational arguments related to the urgency of curriculum intervention in overcoming learning crises and compiling alternative curricula that are oriented towards improving learning quality and optimizing learning outcomes while still considering the diversity of characteristics of educational units. These two efforts boil down to efforts to return learning to normal. This is the initial reason for the presence of the current Kurikulum Merdeka, in addition to being an effort to adjust the "heart of education" to the development of science and technology [33]. These efforts were then realized by starting to study curriculum policies that were appropriate and adaptable to the social situation at that time, while giving flexibility to schools within a certain period to choose whether to implement the 2013 curriculum, the Emergency curriculum or the Kurikulum Merdeka in the learning process in their respective institutions.

By paying attention to some of the reasons above, we can understand that the Kurikulum Merdeka focuses on essential content so that students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies. As a result, the learning material presented in the classroom becomes simpler and more in-depth but still relevant and interactive in accordance with the factual issues of the social and cultural environment of students. Responding to the statement "Change Minister, Change Curriculum", the Ministry of Education and Culture emphasized that the pace of change in the curriculum of educators in Indonesia actually slowed down, starting from KBK in 2004, KTSP in 2006 and finally K13 in 2013. The new Kurikulum Merdeka will become the national curriculum in 2024. In other words, the next change will only occur after the previous curriculum has been implemented for 11 years and has passed at least four education ministers. So the statement conveyed earlier became broken.

Curriculum Development Model

Curriculum change is not an easy thing because practising the idea of curriculum renewal is not as easy as triggering it. Many obstacles will be faced, ranging from costs, facilities, and infrastructure to clashes of viewpoints between groups who want to maintain old beliefs and groups who want to open themselves to new beliefs [34]. In the reality of Indonesian education, there are two models of curriculum development. First, the Administrative Model or administrative approach. The idea of development according to this model comes from educational administrators, in which two main teams are formed, namely the steering team consisting of officials under the administrator, education experts, curriculum experts, disciplinary experts and leaders of the world of work and companies. The second team is the development team tasked with formulating more operational concepts, from general goals to more operational goals, choosing teaching and evaluation strategies, and developing curriculum implementation guidelines for teachers. This team usually consists of disciplinary experts from universities and senior teachers of the subject area. The results of this commission are then reviewed by the steering team as well as other authorized experts or competent officials. After making several improvements and being judged to be good enough, the administrator then ordered the schools to implement the curriculum. Because of its top-down properties, its development requires careful preparation, especially for teachers. Therefore, it is not uncommon for monitoring, supervision and evaluation activities to be carried out for years to get results that are in accordance with what is expected [35].

Second is the grassroots model or the grassroots approach. Development begins from the bottom up because it comes from teachers or schools. This development or improvement can be related to one component of the curriculum. Still, it can also be connected to one, some or all fields of study and all elements of the curriculum. Of course, this can happen if conditions allow, such as the ability of teachers, costs and facilities. The development of this model is based on the consideration that teachers are planners, implementers and also finishers of lessons in their classes. He is the one who knows the needs of his class best, so he is the most competent in developing the curriculum for his class [36]. If we look at both KTSP and the Kurikulum Merdeka, they have similarities in their development models, which tend to combine both models. In the administrative model, the government regulates national

education standards, which can then be utilized by educational units and teachers in developing curricula according to the needs of students and their respective ideal concepts about learning. This second circumstance is included in the development model, the Grass Roots Model, because curriculum development involves awareness of educational units or teachers according to their respective ability levels.

Foundation for KTSP Development and Independent Curriculum

According to Oemar Hamalik, as quoted by Joko Susilo, national education is actually rooted in a national culture based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. Pancasila is the philosophy of the state, while the 1945 Constitution is the highest source of law in the dialectic of statehood. If Pancasila, as a state ideology in the educational dimension, is used as the main guideline in formulating educational goals and standards of values that are expected to be instilled in students, then the 1945 Constitution provides direction and basic values that must be respected and recognized in every regulation in the education system, including, in this case, the curriculum. This situation shows that Pancasila actually contains values that the community should apply, while the 1945 Constitution is the highest legal order. Thus, it means that the development of the educational curriculum, including educational objectives, material content, learning processes/strategies and educational evaluation, must be directed to the values contained in Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution and must not be separated from the values contained in both. This is in accordance with the concept of national education in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Chapter 1, Article 1, paragraph 2, which explains that "National education is education based on Pancasila and the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia in 1945 which is rooted in religious values, Indonesian national culture and responsive to the demands of changing times" [37]. This affirmation hints to all of us that the educational curriculum, by whatever name, the foundation of its development will still return to the basic hierarchy of curriculum planning. The relationship between Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution with the hierarchy of regulations in the field of education can be shown in Figure 1:

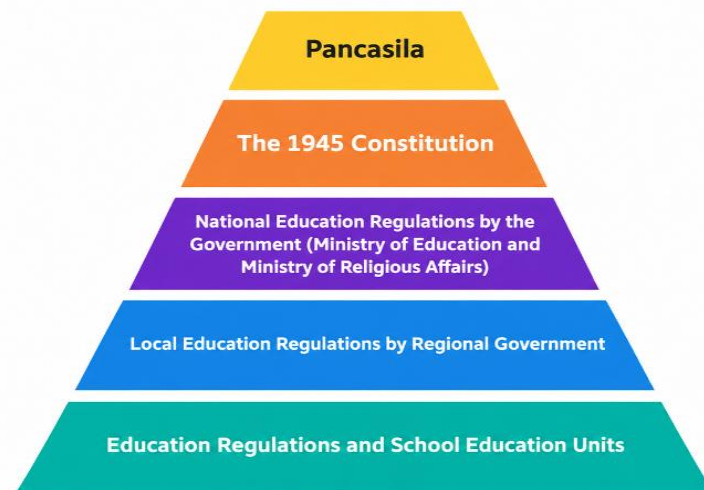


Figure 1. Indonesian Education Planning

Furthermore, in addition to Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, several other foundations also determine the objectives and technical implementation of the curriculum. First, the philosophical foundation. This foundation talks about the formulation of ideas and philosophical positions of education adhered to, such as curriculum concepts, curriculum models used, concepts about content, the position of learners in learning [38], what learners should know, why they should know it, and how to understand it. The philosophical foundation is very important because it forms the basis for the development of various other

curriculum components; at school he became a guiding principle. Without harmony among educators, educational goals can't be achieved. As Pancasila is recognized as the nation's view of life, these principles should also be conveyed to the younger generation through education and teaching. This was later confirmed by the existence of the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, which affirmed that national education was based on Pancasila and the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia in 1945. With this affirmation, it increasingly shows that all curriculum components such as content, process and evaluation of education must be in line with the direction of educational philosophy. Including, in this case, the purpose of education, when we talk about learning objectives, it will certainly not be separated from educational efforts to produce a complete human being whose attitudes and behaviours in life, in society and in the state are imbued with the values of Pancasila [39]. In detail, the content of learning must be in line with educational objectives; the learning process must be in accordance with the content and objectives of education; and the evaluation of learning must be in accordance with the process, content and objectives of education. Hierarchically, further educational goals can be displayed in Figure 2:

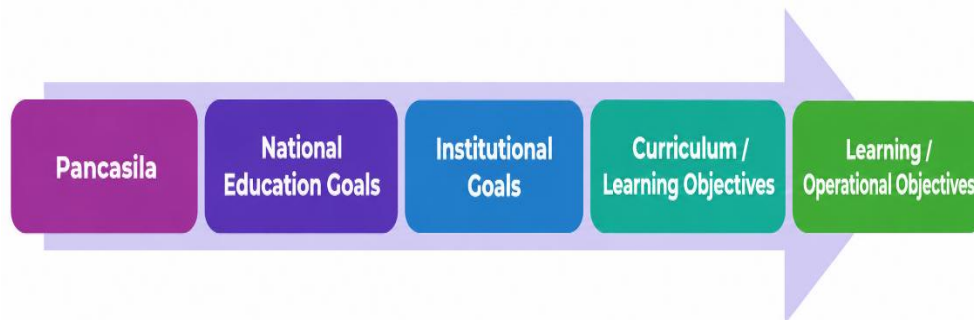


Figure 2. Hierarchy of Education Objectives

Second is the psychological foundation. The psychological foundation includes the science of child development psychology and learning psychology. The existence of this foundation indicates a deep belief that each individual is different, so the interaction that occurs in educational situations must be in accordance with the psychological condition of students. This foundation is then taken into consideration in determining educational objectives, compiling and selecting teaching materials, determining learning methods, and selecting assessment techniques. Third, sociological foundations. Simply put, this foundation makes the community the basis for curriculum development. This situation ultimately requires a curriculum to always pay attention to changes in the lifestyle and socio-political conditions of the community. This is intended as a form of belief that a child will later live in certain situations of community reality, so education must facilitate them to gain sufficient insight so that students can live in a community environment later. Fourth, the foundation of science and technology. This foundation reviews knowledge and skills that must not only be mastered and understood by the community but also provide them with sufficient basic abilities to develop them for the welfare of themselves and their environment. The last foundation is the legal-formal basis, which covers all education policies in force in a country [40].

Furthermore, the foundation for the development of KTSP is based on the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, PP No. 19 of 2005 concerning National Education Standards, and Permendiknas No. 22 and 23 of 2006 concerning Content Standards and Graduate Competency Standards. The two ministerial decrees then became the main reference for education units in developing the curriculum. However, there is also Permendiknas No. 20 of 2007 concerning Education Assessment Standards and Permendiknas No. 41 of 2007 concerning Process Standards for Primary and Secondary Education Units that complement these curriculum development standards. In addition to these regulations, the vision of independent regional-level education managers and education units and their educators, as an effort to mainstream the education decentralization agenda as

a follow-up to the government's decision on granting regional autonomy, is also the main foundation for the development of this curriculum.

It appears more comprehensive if we examine the development foundation of the Kurikulum Merdeka because of the development of this curriculum based on the vision of Indonesian education, theories and research results related to curriculum design, as well as various good practices obtained from literature reviews and in-depth discussions with curriculum experts [41]. This increasingly comprehensive analysis activity gave birth to a curriculum that made the concept of Merdeka Belajar its main foundation. It is explicitly explained in the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education and Culture (currently the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology) for 2020-2024, where the Freedom to Learn policy is a guideline for human resource development. For this philosophical value, there are several changes brought by this Kurikulum Merdeka policy. These changes relate to the education ecosystem, the role of teachers, pedagogy, curriculum organization, and assessment systems. The description related to this can be explained in Table 1:

Table 1. Paradigm Shift in Learning Curriculum Merdeka

Old Paradigm	New Paradigm
Learning as a burden	Learning as an enjoyable experience
Education is closed off from all communication	Education is open to various collaborative efforts among stakeholders
Teacher acts as a transmitter of knowledge	Teacher acts as a facilitator
Content-bound pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment	Competency- and value-based pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment
One-size-fits-all pedagogy	Pedagogy shifts from standardization to a student-centered heterogeneous approach
Manual learning	Technology-integrated learning
Educational programs controlled by the government	Educational programs relevant to the industry
High administrative burden	Simplified administrative tools and freedom to innovate
Educational ecosystem controlled by the government	Educational ecosystem driven by autonomy and active stakeholder participation
Teacher as the leader of learning	Student as the leader of learning

It does not stop there, since the dissemination of the Kurikulum Merdeka to the public began on December 11, 2019. Four breakthroughs were directly stated by Mas Nadiem Makarim (Minister of Education) and will start to be implemented in the Kurikulum Merdeka. The four objectives are: 1) replacing the National Examination with the National Assessment; 2) abolishing nationally standardized school examinations; 3) simplifying the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) into 3 core components, including learning objectives, learning activities and learning assessment; and 4) adjusting the quota for new student admission achievement pathways based on zoning.

The dense mission carried out by the Kurikulum Merdeka requires careful implementation by educational institutions, including educators. Nasution, in his writing, explained that among several paths that can be taken to carry out curriculum renewal are: pilot projects, fostering cadres, utilizing teachers who have used the new curriculum to teach teachers who

are still using the old curriculum, using the new curriculum in the education process of prospective teachers, and making updates related to textbooks. Of all these steps, the Kurikulum Merdeka uses at least several approaches in an effort to socialize this curriculum to leaders of educational institutions, teachers, parents, and students so that all these parties can understand and understand deeply the spirit brought by this Kurikulum Merdeka. These steps include the procurement of the Mobilizer School scheme, the Mobilizing Teacher, the transformation of Teacher Professional education in the Pre-service PPG program, the provision of the Kurikulum Merdeka and Merdeka Mengajar platforms, as well as the provision of the latest textbooks. Furthermore, the implementation of the Driving School mechanism is part of the pilot project. At least 2500 schools are participating in the Driving School (PSP) program, and 901 SMK Pusat Excellence (SMK PK) have implemented the Kurikulum Merdeka in the 2021/2022 school year. Then, in a larger number in the 2022/2023 school year, there were 142,663 educational institutions ranging from early childhood to secondary school levels that had started or implemented the Kurikulum Merdeka. Through the decision of the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology, this number then increased again to 293,268 educational institutions in the 2023/2024 academic year. If not satisfied with some of the steps taken earlier, the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology also often holds webinars, which can be followed by education practitioners either through a Zoom link or even watched via live streaming on YouTube. The topics presented were also diverse and filled not only with education experts but also with teachers who have implemented the Kurikulum Merdeka directly in learning in their respective places. So that teachers to indirectly exchange experiences to realize effective and efficient curriculum implementation.

The various steps stated earlier are a real transformation of the use of information technology networks appropriately. In the past, curriculum socialization was only through meetings and briefings from the central government to the regions and then continued from the regional government, the education unit, whose activities required leaders of educational institutions, including teachers, to be present in a certain place within a certain time. So now, these parties still have the same opportunity to get information related to the Kurikulum Merdeka, even though they are not present in the same place. This is an effective step as an antidote to information confusion. Unfortunately, this socialization technique still experiences a little obstacle because, in fact, not all teachers, including teachers who are already old and those who are outside the internet network access, can access various information from the central government. So this is where meetings that have been carried out have become important in an effort to accommodate these multiple shortcomings. These different agendas are very important so that each teacher understands the learning objectives and expectations that accompany them, the process of learning activities that must be carried out and how to know the success of these achievements. This is the central role of the teacher; without the teacher, no matter how good and ideal a strategy is, the strategy will not be possible to apply because the teacher is a component that determines the implementation and success of a plan. So the expertise of teachers here is an important thing if we want quality education.

The interesting thing is, through various intense efforts from the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology, it is not mandatory that education units implement the Kurikulum Merdeka in a simultaneous period. The Ministry of Education and Culture reasoned that students should learn according to their stages of learning readiness. So educators and education units also need to know how to implement the Kurikulum Merdeka in accordance with their respective readiness and gradually become proficient in using it. The Ministry of Education and Culture divides the stages of implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka in education units into four stages, including: 1) the initial stage; 2) the stage of development; 3) the ready as well as; 4) Advanced stage. However, this stage is not a standard provision. Each educator and education unit has various capacities, so they have different abilities in implementing this Kurikulum Merdeka. The four stages as mentioned earlier are

only used as material for self-reflection and do not have any impact on educators and education units. So, the application of the Kurikulum Merdeka cannot be used as a tool to measure and compare the quality between educational units.

Despite all the novelty, the author sees the existence of a tendency of the Kurikulum Merdeka that seems to want to bring the spirit of KTSP into the dialectic of education today. This is evidenced by the provision of curriculum development space for each group, education unit, school/madrasah committee and educators. Nevertheless, the government still makes the basic framework and structure of the curriculum to be further developed by the parties mentioned earlier under the coordination and supervision of the education office or the district/city religious department office. In this context, there seems to be a difference between KTSP and the Kurikulum Merdeka. In KTSP, the curriculum is made by each educational unit, whose development is based on the standards set by BSNP in collaboration with the ministry. So, in the context of the Kurikulum Merdeka, the curriculum has been designed by the government but still opens opportunities for each educational unit and teacher to develop a curriculum in accordance with the needs of educational units and students while still adhering to the standards set by the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology through the Education Standard, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency. The next spirit brought by the Kurikulum Merdeka is the provision of various guidelines for implementing multiple components in the Kurikulum Merdeka that can be easily accessed by leaders of educational units, including educators. This spirit is likely in line with the background of the birth of KTSP. One of them is as a complement to KBK (Competency-Based Curriculum), which, due to the lack of guidelines, makes this curriculum often confused with a Confusion-Based Curriculum [42].

Not only that, but the breadth of KTSP is also seen in the Kurikulum Merdeka through its characteristics. Some of these characteristics include: 1) Oriented to the achievement of competencies, learning outcomes (Learning outcomes) and diversity (ability and speed of learning and socio-cultural context); 2) Delivery of learning using varied approaches and methods; 3) learning in schools emphasises understanding, abilities or certain competencies related to work in the community; 4) Learning resources are not only teachers but also come from other learning resources that meet the educative element; 5) Assessment that emphasises learning processes and outcomes in an effort to master or achieve a competency; 6) The teacher acts only as a facilitator in charge of conditioning the environment to provide ease of learning to students; 7) Directing learners to become lifelong learners. Although what is expected in the KTSP is not fully realized, textually the things above were expected to be in the KTSP, so we can say that some of the "lives" of the KTSP are also present in the Kurikulum Merdeka, because these are points that are also emphasized in this curriculum. Call it connecting learning with the real conditions of students, a student-centred learning process approach, multi-stakeholder engagement, focusing on improving the competence of learners, differentiated learning design by considering the stage of development and suitability of student learning needs, building capacity to become lifelong learners, learning processes that support the development of competencies and characters holistically, learning is designed according to the context, environment and culture of students, and sustainable future-oriented learning [43].

The Role of Teachers in the Independent Curriculum

Teachers play an important role in contextualizing the curriculum into learning in their classrooms, and it is on their shoulders that the effectiveness of the learning process is determined. Such is the importance of the teacher's position; he is not only a thinker, planner, compiler and developer of a curriculum, but also an important actor in the agenda of realizing the content of a curriculum into the learning he has. Therefore, the role of teachers is increasingly central in the dialectic of decentralization of educational curriculum in Indonesia today because the implementation of the curriculum almost entirely depends on the creativity,

skills, sincerity and perseverance of teachers. Teachers are expected to be able to choose and create learning situations that motivate students, use teaching methods that are in accordance with student capture, and involve diverse learning resources. Teachers must be able to select, compile and carry out evaluations to measure student development and learning outcomes to assess the efficiency of learning itself [44].

By elaborating various educational concepts, Nana stated several roles of teachers, namely: 1) Successors and conveyors of knowledge as in the concept of classical education; 2) Ability trainers as in the concept of educational technology; 3) As a learning partner as in the concept of interactional education; 4) As a guide, encouragement and guide as in the concept of personal education. According to Nana, these roles are caused by educational practices in schools, which are very rarely used as a whole concept of education. In general, the implementation of education is eclectic, such as mixing two, three or even four models. This is because these models are not seen as exclusive educational models but can be combined or connected with others.

What Nana said was also agreed with by Sudrajat. He further divided the four roles of teachers in learning, including: 1) As learning managers (planners, implementers, and assessors of learning); 2) As a motivator; 3) As a guide, where the teacher tries to direct students to discover their various potentials, guide them to achieve and carry out developmental tasks so that individuals can grow independently and productively. He likened a farmer who does not force a fruiting plant by pulling it up. But he sows, waters, fertilizes, and gives repellent so that it can grow into a healthy and fresh plant. 4) As a facilitator, the term is generally used for the benefit of andragogy education and non-formal environments. However, in its development, lately, Indonesian education has also used the term facilitator, which refers to the role of teachers as learning companions for students, resulting in a partnership between teachers and students. This relationship can be realized by the teacher's attitude that does not dominate, listens to his students, is patient, respects opinions, is equal, familiar and merged, does not try to lecture (no need to show himself as an all-knowing person), and is open and positive [45]. From the two opinions above, there is a role of teachers that has not been mentioned, namely the role of teachers as demonstrators. This role contains two contexts: 1) Acting as an ideal figure who is an example for students, and 2) As a delivery of learning so that it can be better understood and lived by students.

Follow up on the characteristics of andragogy education that appear in the determination of the role of teachers as facilitators. In fact, it is only one of the characteristics that show the use of the andragogy approach in the Indonesian education curriculum. The other characteristics of the andragogy learning approach that are actually also accepted in the current Kurikulum Merdeka are: 1) There is a necessity for educators to convey the urgency of the content being studied; 2) Creation of a meaningful teaching atmosphere and not just memorisation; 3) Teaching that considers various backgrounds of learners; 4) Giving learners space to find things for themselves, educators only provide guidance and assistance when any mistakes are made; 5) Learners are called "learners" or "learning citizens"; 6) Learner engagement is crucial, as well as; 7) Real-life problem-centered learning.

Furthermore, suppose we refer to government regulations regarding the role of a teacher. In that case, there is Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, which expressly states in Chapter 1, Article 1, paragraph 1, "Teachers are professional educators with the main task of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students in early childhood education formal education pathways, primary education, and secondary education" [46]. Thus, limiting the role of teachers only to facilitators in the learning process, which many teachers believe today, is a misconception. According to the author, this can happen because the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology, in various opportunities to socialize the Kurikulum Merdeka, often emphasizes the role of teachers as facilitators, even though other roles are no less important, such as the role of educators, knowledge conveyors, learning managers, motivators and learning evaluators.

However, on several occasions of socialization, the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology also had time to provide highlights about the role of this teacher. As in the national seminar "Preparing Professional Education in the Era of Society" in February 2021. In the workshop, it was explained that teachers are not only facilitators but also tutors, inspirations, and true learners who motivate students. In addition, the Inspector General of the Ministry of Education and Culture also stated on the website that the role of teachers in the Kurikulum Merdeka includes: 1) Exploring students' potential; 2) Developing personalized learning; 3) Developing active learning; 4) Strengthening character and ethics; 5) Linking learning in local contexts; and 6) Developing student independence. More clearly, in the Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 57 of 2021 concerning National Education Standards, it is also explained that the role of teachers in the implementation of learning is as an example, companion and facilitator [47]. Therefore, following up on this problem, according to the author, at least the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology must socialize the role of teachers more precisely, especially regarding the role of teachers in extracurricular and co-curricular activities, which in this case is represented by the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5).

Guidelines and Programs Not Previously Available in KTSP

First, the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project. The program is included in the co-curricular and is designed separately from the intracurricular. The Pancasila Student Profile consists of six dimensions, including: 1) Faith, fear of God Almighty, and a noble character, 2) Independence, 3) Working together, 4) Global diversity, 5) Critical reasoning, and 6) Creativity. This program is co-curricular and is carried out at least 3-4 times for grades X-XI and 2-3 times for grade XIII. This project is further carried out according to the guidelines for the flow of the student development phase dimension that the government has designed. However, the author has not found a complete reason for naming this program as Strengthening the Profile of Pancasila Students [48]. According to the author, if the basis of this project is indeed Pancasila, the overall dimensions should describe Pancasila. Unfortunately, only one dimension is seen to take value from Pancasila. Related to this, the author only finds the reason for naming the Pancasila Student Profile as a form of translation of national education goals and the vision of education by the founding fathers, no less and no more. Second, Learning Outcomes are adjusted to the phase of student development. These phases can be shown in the following Table 2:

Table 2. Phases of Student Development

Phase	Class/Level in General
Foundation	ECCE
A	Class I-II SD/MI
B	Class III-IV SD/MI
C	Class V-VI SD/MI
D	Class VII-IX SMP/MTs
E	Class X SMA/SMK/MA/MAK
F	Class XI-XII SMA/MA/MAK Class XI-XII SMK Program 3 years Class XI-XII HIGH SCHOOL program

Third, as a follow-up to the creation of differentiated learning, the government has also made several guidelines that can be taken into consideration by education units, including educators. Some of these guidelines include procedures for the implementation of inclusive

education, an individualized education program guide, Guide to Subject Selection in High School / MA / Equivalent, implementation guide for Guidance and Counselling for Primary and Secondary Education levels; guidelines for developing operational curriculum in Education Units, study guides and assessments, as well as Guidelines for the development of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project. Even so, with the dense programs in the Kurikulum Merdeka, it must also make the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology introspective, considering that one of the causes of the failure to implement the education curriculum is due to most programs. In addition, other causes such as: 1) The program does not reach the target area; 2) Some programs are declared "disappeared"; 3) Most success is based not on data (the amount of data manipulation), which, when evaluated, found many programs to be ineffective; as well as 4) Low educator participation are also crucial reasons for the smooth implementation of a curriculum [49].

Analysis of the Direction of IRE Quality Improvement in KTSP and the Independent Curriculum

As stated above, there are several important indicators that greatly influence the measurement of aspects of education quality, including curriculum, educational content, learning process, evaluation, and teacher quality. Similar to KTSP, the Kurikulum Merdeka also has National Education Standards, which regulate Graduate Competency Standards, Content Standards, Process Standards, and Education Assessment Standards. The Graduate Competency Standard (SKL: Surat Keterangan Lulus) is a manifestation of the unification of elements of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that are reflected in the ability of students to think and act. Therefore, the essence of the competencies expected of students needs to be clearly mapped so that they can be investigated as explicit manifestations of the achievement of their learning outcomes, while making it easier to provide an objective and comprehensive assessment of students' abilities. This SKL is then used as an assessment guideline in determining the graduation of students from educational units, which includes assessment of attitudes, knowledge, and skills. In KTSP, these graduation standards are developed by BSNP and set by ministerial regulation. Students are declared graduated from primary and secondary education units if: 1) have completed the entire learning program; 2) obtain minimum marks in the final assessment of all subjects; 3) pass the school/madrasah examination; 4) are graduates of the National Examination. Especially for SMA/MA/SMALB and equivalent levels, the National Examination covers Indonesian, English, Mathematics and subjects that characterize educational programs. Slightly different in the Kurikulum Merdeka, students are declared to have graduated from the education unit if they have completed all learning programs and participated in summative assessments organized by the education unit. The graduation of students is determined by the educational unit/program itself [50].

Second, content standards. Content standards include the scope of material and the level of competence to achieve graduate competence at certain levels and types of education. In this section, the author will focus on IRE subjects. If we review the KTSP and the Kurikulum Merdeka, both make religious subjects compulsory to be taught starting from elementary to high school. The difference is that in KTSP, IRE subjects are included in the group of religious subjects and noble morals, whereas in the Kurikulum Merdeka, IRE subjects are included in the group of religious education subjects. In terms of time allocation, there is no difference; both adhere to the same time allocation, namely 1 JP = 45 minutes, as well as the time allocation for IRE subjects. IRE subjects in the religious education group at KTSP allocate 2 JP per meeting, with an effective week forecast of one school year of 34-38 weeks. This applies to classes X-XII. As for the Kurikulum Merdeka, IRE subjects are still allocated 2 JP per meeting, with effective weeks in classes X-XI as many as 36 weeks and in class XII as many as 32 weeks. Finally, in terms of material coverage, in KTSP the scope of IRE includes aspects of the Qur'an and Hadith, Aqidah, Morals, Fiqh, and Islamic Date and Culture. As for their curriculum, the scope of IRE includes; 1) The value of monotheism in

creed and piety to Allah Subhanahu Wata'ala; 2) Qur'an and Hadith with valid scholarly understanding; 3) Adab, morals, and techniques for reading the Qur'an in accordance with the rules of tajweed; 4) Diversity of meanings and interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith; 5) Differences of views in Islamic law; 6) Dignity, human values and equality; 7) The value of fraternal teaching (ukhuwah) in Islam; 8) Law Fiqh Mu'amalah and Fiqh Munakahat; 9) Responsibility for the sustainability of nature; 10) Safeguarding democratic principles; 11) The history of the development of Muslim civilisation in religious, social, cultural and scientific practice; 12) The history of the entry and development of Islam in Indonesia; 13) Interaction and collaboration between religions and beliefs [51].

Reviewing the scope of the material above, the author sees that the scope of IRE material in KTSP for the high school level is also contained in the Kurikulum Merdeka. However, the author found that some materials were not previously available in the KTSP. Some of these topics include: 1) Getting used to critical thinking and the spirit of loving science and technology; 2) Strengthening harmony through tolerance; 3) Adab in using social media; 4) The Role of Islamic Organizations in Indonesia; 5) Innovative attitude and ethics in organizations; 6) Love of homeland and religious moderation. So we can say that, in the context of the scope of IRE material, there is development in the Kurikulum Merdeka. In addition, the existence of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) program also opens a new space for collaboration between educators with different scientific scopes to shape the character of students in accordance with this P5 program.

Third, Process Standards. This standard relates to national standards for the implementation of learning in educational units to achieve graduate competence. It consists of planning, implementing, assessing, and supervising the learning process. The planning stage is closely related to the syllabus and lesson plans. An RPP at KTSP must contain at least 11 main components, including subject identity, competency standards, basic competencies, indicators of competency achievement, learning objectives, teaching materials, time allocation, learning methods, learning activities, assessment of learning outcomes and learning resources. The implementation of learning as one component of this process standard is the government's concern, which is realized by making learning implementation standards consisting of preliminary activities, core activities and closing activities. The government hopes that, in the core activities, a teacher is able to use methods that are in accordance with the characteristics of students and subjects, with at least a process of exploration, elaboration and confirmation [52]. As for making government learning plans through the Kurikulum Merdeka, it allows educators to choose between making lesson plans or teaching modules, and of course examples of both have been made by the government. Especially for RPP, the government only requires three core components, namely the existence of learning objectives, learning steps and learning assessment. This is in accordance with the purpose of the process standards in the Kurikulum Merdeka, which only include learning planning, learning implementation and assessment of the learning process.

Furthermore, in the Kurikulum Merdeka, there is an emphasis on learning strategies that focus on differences in student characteristics such as age and level of development, previous ability levels, physical and psychological conditions, and family backgrounds of participants [53]. This emphasis can be understood because, in the Kurikulum Merdeka, differentiated learning is one of the things that is highly emphasized. As for the process of learning activities, the government has made a teacher guidebook for IRE subjects at the high school level starting from grades X-XII. In the book, the government has outlined learning steps and strategies. Teachers can carry out learning following these guidelines or develop them according to class needs.

Fourth, Assessment Standards (education). It is a national standard of education related to mechanisms, procedures, and instruments for assessing student learning outcomes. In KTSP, there is a repeat, which is a process carried out to measure the achievement of student

competencies sustainably in the learning process to monitor learning progress, consider learning improvements and determine student learning success. The test consists of daily tests (UH), midterm tests (UTS), end-of-semester tests (UAS) and class increase tests. The tests are carried out by educators under the coordination of education units. There are also school/madrasah examinations that are useful for measuring the achievement of student competencies, carried out by education units and are graduation requirements from education units. The subjects tested are the group of science and technology subjects that are not tested in the National Examination and the group of subjects of religion, noble character, citizenship and personality regulated in the Standard Operating Procedures (POS) of school/madrasah examinations. The last is the National Examination (UN), which is an activity to measure the achievement of student competence in several subjects in the science and technology subject group in order to assess the achievement of National Education Standards. BSNP organizes UN activities in collaboration with relevant agencies. Apart from being a graduation requirement, the UN is also used as one of the considerations in the selection to enter the next level of education. Furthermore, assessment of learning outcomes by educators in KTSP can use evaluations in the form of tests (oral, written, practice/performance tests), observation, individual/group assignments, and forms in accordance with competency characteristics.

The situation is quite different if we discuss the Assessment Standards in the Kurikulum Merdeka. In the curriculum, assessment of student learning outcomes is only available in two forms, namely formative and summative. Formative assessment aims to monitor and improve the learning process and evaluate the achievement of learning objectives. With formative assessment, educators can observe the development of students, including helping those who experience learning obstacles or difficulties [54]. Furthermore, this formative assessment can be carried out at the beginning of learning or during learning. Assessment at the beginning of learning is used to support differentiated learning so that students learn according to what they need. This assessment is also useful to determine the readiness of students to learn the material and achieve planned learning objectives, so this assessment is very useful for teachers in designing learning. The assessment during learning is used as a basis for reflection on the entire learning process. In comparison, summative assessment aims to assess the achievement of student learning outcomes as a basis for class advancement and graduation from educational units. However, this summative assessment is also part of the assessment calculation at the end of the semester. It does not rule out the possibility of being carried out at the end of one scope of material in which there are one or more learning objectives. The functions of assessment in general are: 1) Provision of holistic information, as feedback for educators, students and parents/guardians to guide them in determining the next learning strategy; 2) Provision of information related to the learning progress of students, which can then be used as a basis for the preparation of the next learning program; 3) Provision of information about the character and competencies that students have achieved and follow-up strategies. Furthermore, in the Kurikulum Merdeka, there are several assessment instruments that can be used by teachers, such as rubrics, checklists, anecdotal notes, progress charts (continuum), observations, performance, projects, written/oral tests, assignments and portfolios [55].

The comparison indicates that both KTSP and Kurikulum Merdeka seek to improve the quality of Islamic Religious Education through curriculum flexibility, student-centered learning, and teacher involvement. However, Kurikulum Merdeka provides a stronger orientation toward differentiated learning, essential content, competency development, contextual learning, and formative assessment. It also expands IRE content by incorporating critical thinking, science and technology, social media ethics, tolerance, religious moderation, and national identity. Meanwhile, KTSP emphasizes school-level autonomy within nationally determined standards. Therefore, Kurikulum Merdeka can be viewed as a continuation and refinement of KTSP's decentralization spirit, while offering more adaptive mechanisms for addressing contemporary learning needs.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that KTSP was born as a completion of the previous curriculum, namely KBK. However, other reasons support the emergence of this KTSP, such as the government's efforts to realize autonomous and democratic education. The existence of laws and regulations on regional autonomy further emphasizes this effort. Unlike KTSP, the Kurikulum Merdeka was not only born as a complement to previous curricula but also as a resolution to the reality of Indonesian education, which has shown a learning crisis in recent years. The low quality of literacy, mathematics and science; the occurrence of learning loss and learning gaps that are getting worse due to COVID-19; and the density of learning materials that make teachers continue to move quickly to complete chapter by chapter, concept by concept, without paying attention to the ability of students to understand the concepts they learn and the positive results found by the Ministry of Education and Culture for students who use the Emergency curriculum are the reasons for the emergence of this curriculum. The foundation for the development of KTSP is not only based on Pancasila, which is an educational philosophy and the 1945 Constitution, but also leads to the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, PP No. 19 of 2005, Permendiknas No. 22 and 23 of 2006, Law No. 22 of 1999 and PP No. 25 of 2000. All of these regulations eventually gave rise to a new vision of education in mainstreaming the education decentralization agenda as a follow-up to the government's decision on regional autonomy. The foundation for the development of the Kurikulum Merdeka is based on the vision of Indonesian education, research theories related to curriculum design, as well as various good practices obtained from literature reviews and in-depth discussions with curriculum experts. For this increasingly comprehensive analysis activity, the concept of Merdeka Belajar was born, which became the main foundation in every component of education in the Kurikulum Merdeka. In terms of learning approach, the author sees that there is a spirit of KTSP, which is also present in the Kurikulum Merdeka, which is oriented towards achieving competencies, student-centred, involving various stakeholders, designing differentiated learning, and expanding the role of teachers from being a learning resource to educators, guides, motivators, demonstrators and facilitators. In relation to learning materials, the author found the development of several topics that had not previously been mentioned in the IRE material in KTSP but were in the Kurikulum Merdeka, including: 1) Getting used to critical thinking and the spirit of loving science and technology; 2) Strengthening harmony through tolerance; 3) Adab uses social media; 4) The Role of Islamic Organizations in Indonesia; 5) Innovative attitude and ethics in organization; and 6) Love of homeland and religious moderation. However, there was no change in the allocation of class hours; namely, IRE subjects only became 2 JP starting from classes X-XII. Regarding the learning process, if teachers are required to make RPPs with 11 mandatory components in KTSP, then in the Kurikulum Merdeka, teachers have the right to choose to use RPPs and teaching modules as a guide for learning implementation. Several RPPs and modules have been made by the Ministry of Education and Culture so that they can be emulated and developed as needed. Not only that, the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology has also created a IRE teacher guidebook in which there are learning steps that can be used as a teaching guide. Finally, in relation to educational evaluation, there is a shift in mechanisms. At KTSP, the graduation of students is determined by several conditions, including completing the entire learning program, passing school exams, and passing national exams. So, in the Kurikulum Merdeka, this is slightly changed by making only two requirements, including having completed all learning programs and participating in summative assessments organized by education units. The organizer of the education unit then determines the students' graduation. In addition, the concept of daily tests, midterm tests, end-of-semester tests and class increase tests in the Kurikulum Merdeka is replaced with the concept of formative assessment that can be done at the beginning and throughout learning and summative assessment carried out at the end of learning. If you digest the explanation above, it can be understood that, in particular, there is not much significant effort in improving the quality of IRE subjects other than by adding

some topics that are relevant to current conditions. Even so, in general, we can find several government efforts in improving the quality of education globally, starting from a paradigm shift in liberating learning, simplifying lesson plans, improving educational evaluation techniques, emphasizing the essential role of teachers in learning, and co-curricular procurement as a basis for improving the quality of student character through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project.

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Author Contribution

All authors contributed to the conceptualization, methodology, data analysis, investigation, writing, critical revision, and final approval of the manuscript, and agreed to be accountable for its content and accuracy.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest related to this research or its publication. All authors confirm that there are no personal, institutional, or financial interests influencing the study.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

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