



## **PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES OF *MERDEKA BELAJAR* BASED ARABIC LANGUAGE LEARNING MODEL IN INTEGRATED ISLAMIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

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### ***Abstract***

*This study aims to describe the Merdeka Belajar-based Arabic language learning model at SDIT Gondang Pekalongan, analyze the learning innovations implemented, and identify the problems faced by teachers in its implementation. This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The research subjects included the principal, Arabic language teachers, and learning documents related to the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that the Merdeka Belajar-based Arabic language learning model at SDIT Gondang Pekalongan has not yet been fully aligned with the provisions of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum because its implementation is still relatively new, having started in the second semester of 2023. Learning administration documents still use the lesson plan (RPP) format of the 2013 Curriculum and have not fully adopted teaching modules in accordance with the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum standards. Nevertheless, the learning process has implemented Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and student-centered learning approaches. The learning innovations carried out by the teachers include the use of enjoyable learning methods, project assignments based on learning themes, interactive learning media, Arabic-themed song adaptations, and Arabic-language videos in the learning process. Meanwhile, the problems encountered by teachers include the lack of training on the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum for Arabic language teachers, difficulties in implementing Arabic language learning according to the demands of the curriculum, and challenges in improving students' kitabah (writing) and kalam (speaking) skills. This study concludes that the implementation of Merdeka Belajar-based Arabic language learning at SDIT Gondang Pekalongan has moved toward innovative and student-centered learning. However, it still requires strengthening teacher competencies and developing learning tools that are more compatible with the characteristics of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum.*

**Keyword:** *Arabic Language Learning Model, Student-Centered Learning, Merdeka Belajar, Learning Innovation.*

### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan model pembelajaran bahasa Arab berbasis Merdeka Belajar di SDIT Gondang Pekalongan, menganalisis inovasi pembelajaran yang diterapkan, serta mengidentifikasi problematika yang dihadapi guru dalam implementasinya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian deskriptif. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Sumber data penelitian meliputi kepala sekolah, guru bahasa Arab, serta dokumen pembelajaran yang berkaitan dengan implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka. Analisis data dilakukan melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa model pembelajaran bahasa Arab berbasis Merdeka Belajar di SDIT Gondang Pekalongan masih belum sepenuhnya sesuai dengan ketentuan Kurikulum Merdeka karena implementasinya masih tergolong baru, yaitu mulai diterapkan pada semester genap tahun 2023. Perangkat pembelajaran masih menggunakan format RPP Kurikulum 2013 dan belum sepenuhnya menggunakan modul ajar sesuai ketentuan Kurikulum Merdeka. Namun demikian, proses pembelajaran telah menerapkan pendekatan *Project Based Learning* (PjBL) dan pembelajaran yang berpusat pada peserta didik. Inovasi pembelajaran yang dilakukan guru meliputi penggunaan metode pembelajaran yang menyenangkan, pemberian proyek sesuai tema pembelajaran, penggunaan media pembelajaran interaktif, pembuatan lagu bertema bahasa Arab, serta penggunaan video berbahasa Arab dalam pembelajaran. Adapun problematika yang dihadapi guru meliputi kurangnya pelatihan Kurikulum Merdeka bagi guru bahasa Arab, kesulitan dalam menerapkan pembelajaran sesuai tuntutan Kurikulum Merdeka, serta kesulitan meningkatkan keterampilan kitabah dan kalam peserta didik. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa implementasi pembelajaran bahasa Arab berbasis Merdeka Belajar di SDIT Gondang Pekalongan telah mengarah pada pembelajaran yang inovatif dan berpusat pada peserta didik, meskipun masih memerlukan penguatan kompetensi guru serta pengembangan perangkat pembelajaran yang lebih sesuai dengan karakteristik Kurikulum Merdeka.

**Kata Kunci:** *Model Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab, Student Centered Learning, Merdeka Belajar, Inovasi pembelajaran.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The development of globalization and the modernization of education in the 21st century require students to possess cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication skills. In this context, foreign language learning has become a crucial aspect in developing students' competencies, both in academic and social spheres. One foreign language that holds a strategic position in Islamic education in Indonesia is Arabic. Arabic serves not only as a tool for international communication but also as a religious language that serves as a means of understanding the primary sources of Islamic teachings, namely the Qur'an and the hadith. Therefore, the teaching of Arabic in Islamic

educational institutions is of high urgency in shaping students' linguistic competencies as well as their religious character.

Arabic language learning at the elementary school level plays a crucial role as the foundational basis for mastering language skills. At this stage, students are in a highly productive phase of language development, so Learning must be designed to be contextual, engaging, and aligned with children's developmental characteristics. According to Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, elementary-aged children are in the concrete operational stage a phase in which students more easily grasp concepts through direct experience, visualization, play, and interactive activities.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Lev Vygotsky's constructivist theory emphasizes that learning is more effective when students are actively engaged in the learning process through social interaction and a supportive learning environment.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, Arabic language Learning at the elementary school level must go beyond a focus on memorizing vocabulary and grammar rules; it must instead foster active, creative, and student-centered learning experiences.

In the context of national education, the introduction of the Merdeka Curriculum represents a form of educational transformation that emphasizes flexible, differentiated learning focused on the holistic development of students' potential. The concept of *Merdeka Belajar*, conceived by Nadiem Anwar Makarim, places students at the center of the learning process. This curriculum gives teachers the freedom to design learning models according to the needs, characteristics, and context of the school environment.<sup>3</sup> Learning is no longer teacher-centered but has shifted to student-centered learning. This approach aligns with the nature of language learning, which requires active participation, communication, collaboration, creativity, and meaningful learning experiences.

Theoretically, a learning model based on *Merdeka Belajar* in Arabic language Learning can be developed through a communicative approach, project-based learning, differentiated Learning, and the use of interactive media and digital technology. These approaches enable students to learn Arabic in a more natural and contextual manner. Furthermore, Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences reinforces the idea that every student possesses different intelligences and learning

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<sup>1</sup> Muh. Asdar and Clara Anugrah Baru, "Analisis Perbandingan Perkembangan Kognitif Siswa SD Dan SMP Berdasarkan Teori Piaget Selama Pandemi COVID-19," *Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan: Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengembangan Pembelajaran* 8, no. 1 (2023): 148–57.

<sup>2</sup> Istiqomah As Sayfullooh et al., "Relevansi Teori Konstruktivistik Vygotsky Dengan Kurikulum Merdeka: Studi Kepustakaan," *Jurnal Tinta* 5, no. 2 (2023): 73–82.

<sup>3</sup> Rendika Vhalery, Albertus Maria Setyastanto, and Ari Wahyu Leksono, "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka: Sebuah Kajian Literatur," *Research and Development Journal Of Education* 8, no. 1 (2022): 185–201.

styles; therefore, Arabic language Learning must be designed in a varied manner to accommodate students' learning needs.<sup>4</sup>

However, the reality on the ground shows that Arabic language Learning at the elementary school level still faces various challenges. Arabic is often perceived as a difficult, monotonous subject that lacks appeal among students. Learning still tends to focus on grammar and memorization, resulting in a learning experience that is not particularly enjoyable. In addition, curriculum changes also require teachers to be able to adapt their teaching models to the new paradigm of the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers are required to be more creative in selecting strategies, media, and teaching methods that are appropriate for the characteristics of elementary school students.

This phenomenon differs from what is happening at SDIT Gondang Pekalongan. SDIT Gondang is one of the educational institutions under the Gondang Foundation that provides education from kindergarten through vocational high school. This school is unique in that it integrates three curricula: the elementary school curriculum under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology; the Ministry of Religious Affairs curriculum; and the foundation's own curriculum. Arabic is offered as a language competency development subject alongside English, and the school has begun implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in first and fourth grades starting in the 2022/2023 academic year. The Merdeka Curriculum is oriented toward the holistic development of students' competencies, covering spiritual, social-emotional, cognitive, and psychomotor aspects. Hudaya noted that the holistic approach in the Merdeka Curriculum allows students to develop according to their potential and environmental context.

Curriculum changes are also a response to the evolving times and the dynamic needs of education. Syafi'i explained that curriculum changes are implemented to enhance the flexibility of learning and adapt to the needs of 21st-century students. Curriculum changes have implications for the learning models used by teachers. Machali explains that curriculum changes will affect the approaches, strategies, and patterns of classroom interaction. This situation presents a unique challenge for Arabic teachers to develop learning models that are adaptive, creative, and suited to the characteristics of elementary school students.

A study conducted by Moh. Jailani titled "Merdeka Curriculum-Based Arabic Language Learning in Islamic Boarding Schools" explains that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Arabic language Learning requires the use of digital technology as well as a shift away from the previously traditional, teacher-centered teaching approach. The study found that one

<sup>4</sup> Dinda Berliana and Cucu Atikah, "Teori Multiple Intelligences Dan Implikasinya Dalam Pembelajaran," *Jurnal Citra Pendidikan* 3, no. 3 (2023): 1108–17.

of the main obstacles to implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is a lack of creativity among teachers in delivering Arabic language Learning.<sup>5</sup> This study contributes to the understanding of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the context of Islamic boarding schools, but it does not yet discuss Arabic language learning models at the elementary school level or learning characteristics appropriate for the development of young learners.

The next study was conducted by Auladatil Ma'wa et al. and is titled "The Application of Project-Based Differentiated Learning in the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Arabic Language Learning." This study indicates that Arabic language Learning often faces challenges such as low student motivation, monotonous learning, and a lack of attention to students' varying abilities. To address these issues, this study implemented project-based differentiated learning (PBDL), which has been shown to enhance students' understanding of vocabulary.<sup>6</sup> This study is relevant to the research to be conducted because both examine Arabic language learning based on the Merdeka Curriculum. However, the focus of that study places greater emphasis on the application of project-based differentiated learning at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) level and has not yet comprehensively examined Arabic language learning models at the SDIT level, which has students with different characteristics.

In addition, a study by Ainy Khairun Nisa and Mujahid Al Ghifari titled "Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Arabic Language Learning at MAN 1 Kendari" explains that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Arabic language Learning at the madrasah has been going quite well, although it still requires cooperation between teachers, students, and school administrators for its further development. This study also emphasizes that the Merdeka Curriculum provides students with the freedom to develop their creativity, interests, and talents in the Arabic language learning process.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the study outlines that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Arabic language Learning at madrasahs still faces various challenges, both internal and external. Nevertheless, the study is more focused on the general implementation of the curriculum at the Madrasah Aliyah (MA) level, so it has not yet discussed in depth the Arabic language learning models suitable for the characteristics of elementary school students. In fact,

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<sup>5</sup> Mohammad Jailani, "Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Berbasis Kurikulum Merdeka Di Pondok Pesantren," *Jurnal Praktik Baik Pembelajaran Sekolah Dan Pesantren* 1, no. 1 (2022): 7–14.

<sup>6</sup> Auladatil Ma'wa et al., "Penerapan Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Berbasis Proyek Dalam Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab," *Jurnal Al-Kalim: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab Dan Kebahasaaraban* 2, no. 2 (2023): 172–88.

<sup>7</sup> Ainy Khairun Nisa and Mujahid Al Ghifari, "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Di Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Kendari," *Al Mi'yar: Jurnal Ilmiah Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Dan KebahasaAraban* 6, no. 2 (2023): 627–46.

Arabic language learning at the elementary school level requires an approach that is more contextual, enjoyable, interactive, and oriented toward children's psychological development.

Based on these previous studies, it can be concluded that most research still focuses on: (1) the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in general; (2) differentiated or project-based learning; (3) issues in Arabic language learning; and (4) the context of madrasah or pesantren education at the MTs and MA levels. Meanwhile, research on the *Merdeka Belajar* based Arabic language learning model at the Integrated Islamic Elementary School level remains very limited.

Based on the research focus outlined above, this study aims to describe and analyze the *Merdeka Belajar* based Arabic language learning model at SDIT Gondang Pekalongan. This study also aims to examine various forms of the *Merdeka Belajar* based Arabic language learning model innovations implemented at SDIT Gondang Pekalongan, including the methods, strategies, media, and learning approaches used by teachers in the learning process. Furthermore, this study aims to identify and analyze the problems of implementing *Merdeka Belajar* based Arabic language learning model at SDIT Gondang Pekalongan, including those related to students, teachers, learning resources, and the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Arabic language Learning.

## METHOD

This study employs a field research methodology, which involves studying subjects at a specific location for further investigation. The approach used is qualitative, meaning the study utilizes data in the form of information, words, or phrases, which are then analyzed through inductive descriptive analysis to arrive at conclusions or new findings as the results of the research. The subject of this study is the Gondang Wonopringgo Integrated Islamic Elementary School.

This study employs several data collection techniques, as each technique has its own strengths and weaknesses. By using more than one technique, the hope is to compensate for these weaknesses. To ensure that the collected data is valid, complete, and scientifically sound, the researcher used the following techniques: a) Interviews, which involve the researcher asking informants a series of questions to obtain the desired data. In using this interview technique, the researcher employed a semi-structured interview instrument, which is a combination of unstructured and structured interviews. The interviewer brought an interview guide containing only the main points of the questions. This interview technique was used to obtain information from school principals and classroom teachers who directly implement the *Merdeka Belajar*-based Arabic language learning process, thereby generating valid data related to the research problem

formulation. b) Observation; Observation is the act of observing and recording an event.<sup>8</sup> In other words, observation is a method of data collection through direct observation.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the use of the observation method is very important in qualitative research. Observation is not limited to facts that can be seen but also includes facts that can be heard.<sup>10</sup> In this context, observation techniques are used to uncover field-based facts regarding *Merdeka Belajar*-based Arabic language Learning. These field-based facts can serve as supporting evidence for interview data. c) Documentation refers to written materials.<sup>11</sup> The documentation method involves collecting data such as transcripts, books, newspapers, notes, papers, meeting minutes, ledgers, agendas, inscriptions, and so on.

The data analysis technique used in this study is the Miles and Huberman method, which consists of three stages: first, data reduction: in this stage, the researcher selects or sorts data from interviews, observations, and documentation that are relevant and consistent with *Merdeka Belajar*-based Arabic language Learning; second, data display: in this stage, the researcher organizes the data logically and systematically so that it aligns with the predetermined research question, namely self-directed learning-based Arabic language learning; third, drawing conclusions: in this stage, the researcher interprets the presented data while considering existing theories. This is done to arrive at the desired conclusions that align with the research question established by the researcher.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Merdeka Belajar* Based Arabic Language Learning

A teaching model is a framework or pattern used by every Arabic language teacher as a guide for planning classroom Learning from planning and implementation to evaluation so that learning objectives can be effectively achieved. Arabic language Learning at SDIT Gondang Baru has implemented the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum in the second semester of 2023. The “*Merdeka Belajar*” curriculum is implemented in grades 1 and 4. Arabic is included in the religion curriculum, and its implementation is managed by the Arabic teacher, who refers to materials in the Curriculum 13 textbook modules. While the Arabic learning materials at SDIT Gondang are indeed drawn from the Curriculum 13 modules, only three chapters are covered per semester. Thus, the scope is not as extensive as in the full Curriculum 13.

Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar baru semester ini pak diterapkan jadi masih banyak penjabarkannya itupun tidak semua kelas menerapkannya, masih untuk kelas 1 dan 4 saja. Materi masih tetap pakai buku paket yang kurikulum 13 tapi satu semester hanya 3

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<sup>8</sup> Abdurrahmat Fathoni, *Metodologi Penelitian Dan Teknik Penyusunan Skripsi* (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Sukmadinata, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Burhan Bungin, *Analisis Data Penelitian Kualitatif* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Suharsimi Arikunto, *Prosedur Penelitian Suatu Pendekatan Praktik* (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2006).

## BAB.

Arabic language Learning planning at SDIT Gondang still relies on the old lesson plans (RPP) as outlined in the 2013 curriculum. The Arabic language learning process at SDIT Gondang follows these pre-designed lesson plans; Ustadz Ulum, the fourth-grade Arabic teacher, places greater emphasis on students' ability to memorize vocabulary from the textbook. The teacher delivers the material using an LCD projector because it helps spark students' interest in participating in Arabic language lessons. Moreover, since the motivation of students at SDIT Gondang to participate in Arabic language lessons is still lacking, the teacher adapts the learning process to the students' needs by providing stimulation in the form of showing Arabic-language cartoons with Indonesian subtitles.

RPP yang saya gunakan masih RPP kurikulum 13 yang ada KI, KD, IPK dll, belum menggunakan yang sesuai dengan kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. Dalam proses pembelajarannya saya lebih memperbanyak hafalan kosakata meskipun masih tetap ada percakapannya tetapi tidak seberapa. Selain itu, kadang kala saya juga memutar video berbahasa Arab tapi ada artinya di bawahnya untuk anak-anak ketika anak-anak kelihatan jenuh, kadangkala juga memberikan cerita-cerita pendek.

The Arabic language learning model at SDIT Gondang has implemented a project-based learning approach by assigning projects to students; however, the steps involved do not align with those in the standard model. Teachers simply assign tasks to students tailored to the theme; for example, during Arabic language lessons on the theme of al-Usrah (family), teachers assign a project for students to create a family tree using Arabic vocabulary and their meanings. Teachers also assign tasks to apply memorized vocabulary in daily life, such as using the vocabulary related to al-Usrah or other themes.

Kalo model pembelajarannya memang ada projeknya, namun tidak seperti yang ada di Merdeka Belajar, paling hanya memberikan tugas-tugas yang sesuai dengan temanya pada saat itu. Seperti buat pohon keluarga atau menyebutkan kosakata yang sudah dipelajari di kehidupan sehari-hari

Arabic language Learning in first grade differs from that in fourth grade. First-grade teachers frequently incorporate games into the learning process, such as a speed contest to guess Arabic vocabulary, guessing games using pictures, and coloring activities (the teacher provides a picture, and students color it according to the teacher's Learnings while naming the colors in Arabic). Teachers have not yet assigned specific projects to students since they are still in first grade; instead, they only give assignments such as coloring pictures while writing the corresponding Arabic vocabulary.

Di kelas 1 saya mengajarnya lebih banyak permainan seperti siapa cepat dia menebak, menebak pakai gambar, mewarnai gambar berdasarkan perintah saya dengan menyebutkan mufradat warna, dan lain-lain. Projek-projeknya hanya sebatas tugas mewarnai sesuai

tema pada saat pembelajaran

Arabic teachers at SDIT Gondang typically use picture cards, such as those related to the “al-Bait” theme. The teacher creates picture cards depicting parts of a house for example, windows, doors, the house itself, bedrooms, bathrooms, and so on and then posts them on the whiteboard. The teacher reads out specific vocabulary words corresponding to the pictures, and the students stand in front of the relevant picture card; if they stand in front of the correct card, they get it right.

Kalo media yang sering saya pakai media kartu bergambar, kalo pakai LCD tambah dibuat mainan sama anak-anak. Seperti kemaren pas tema *baitun*, saya memakai kartu bergambar kayak gambar rumah, jendela, pintu, kamar mandi, kamar tidur atau yang lainnya. Anak saya suruh berdiri di depan kartu tersebut setelah saya bacakan mufradatnya

The Arabic language learning process at SDIT Gondang is based on learning achievement phases: Phase A for first grade and Phase B for fourth grade. For example, in terms of speaking skills, first-grade students are only at the stage of imitating words, phrases, and simple sentences on specific topics, and the same applies to fourth-grade students. Therefore, during the learning process, they simply imitate what their teacher says.

Iya, saya dalam menentukan kemampuan siswa memperhatikan pada fase-fase capaian pembelajaran dan proses pembelajarannya mengarah pada fase tersebut. Meskipun belum bisa full sesuai yang ada di Merdeka Belajar Seperti mengenal huruf, kata, dan harokat. Rata-rata siswa sudah mengenal huruf dan harokat. Jadi lebih mudah

The term for Arabic language assessment at SDIT Gondang has been adapted to the “*Merdeka Belajar*” curriculum, specifically “assessment.” When implementing the “*Merdeka Belajar*” curriculum, assessments are conducted three times: an initial assessment at the start of each chapter, a mid-semester assessment, and a final-semester assessment. Arabic teachers at SDIT Gondang conduct assessments by first creating assessment tools such as rubrics, exam questions, and scoring guides; however, the assessments still use the minimum passing score (KKM). If a student does not meet the KKM, remedial Learning is provided.

Penilaiannya sekarang sudah berubah dengan memakai istilah asesmen. Biasanya 3 kali penilaian di awal pelajaran ujian formatif disetiap BABnya, tengah semester, dan akhir semester. Kami juga membuat instrumen penilaian seperti rubrik sebagai acuan dalam menilai. Dalam penilaian kami masih menggunakan KKM padahal di kurikulum Merdeka Belajar tidak ada istilah itu. Jadi masih ada remedial

Arabic teachers at SDIT Gondang also use observation to assess their students’ progress and abilities, but this has not yet led to skills that align with the Pancasila profile. It still focuses on students’ progress in terms of understanding the material.

Untuk melihat perkembangan siswa dari aspek profil pancasilanya masih belum, hanya observasi yang biasa diterapkan di kurikulum 13 seperti observasi perkembangan pemahaman siswa terhadap materi pembelajaran.

Based on the findings above, this study has described data regarding Arabic language learning model based on the *Merdeka Belajar* at the Gondang Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SD IT). The researcher first discusses the findings regarding *Merdeka Belajar*-based Arabic language learning model at the Gondang Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SD IT). The researcher identified five key points related to the student-centered Arabic language learning model at SD IT Gondang: first, the student-centered curriculum at SD IT Gondang has only recently been implemented; second, lesson planning still follows the format of the Curriculum 13 Lesson Plan (RPP); third, the learning model already incorporates project-based learning, though not yet to its full potential; fourth, the learning strategies employ engaging methods; fifth, the learning evaluation is already moving toward the *Merdeka Belajar* evaluation model.

The “*Merdeka Belajar*” curriculum at SDIT Gondang was indeed only recently implemented in the second semester of 2023, meaning it has been in effect for just one semester. The “*Merdeka Belajar*” curriculum is currently applied only in first and fourth grades; the other grades still use the old curriculum. Arabic teachers at SDIT Gondang have also never attended specialized training on implementing the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum in madrasahs, so their knowledge regarding its implementation remains limited; consequently, teachers are learning independently through YouTube. As the primary pillars of the school, teachers should possess the ability to implement the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum in their lessons, and this presents a unique challenge. This challenge is also faced by teachers at pilot schools in the Bandung region, where teachers must dedicate significant personal time to prepare their lessons so that Learning can be creative, innovative, and challenging.<sup>12</sup> Teachers must be involved in the curriculum development process to align the curriculum content with the needs of students in the classroom.<sup>13</sup>

To foster creative, innovative, and engaging teachers, schools need to provide training programs or workshops for teachers so that their teaching skills can develop effectively. Schools can also send teachers to training events or workshops organized by other educational institutions. Arabic language lesson planning at SDIT Gondang still relies on lesson plans based on the 2013 curriculum, meaning that teaching modules which should be integral to the *Merdeka Belajar* process have not yet been implemented. This situation arises because Arabic teachers at SDIT Gondang are still unfamiliar with teaching methods that utilize the *Merdeka Belajar* system. Consequently, although SDIT Gondang has adopted the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, not all

<sup>12</sup> Restu Rahayu and T. Muhtar, “Urgensi Kompetensi Pedagogik Guru Dalam Menghadapi Transformasi Pendidikan Abad 21,” *Jurnal Basicedu* 6, no. 4 (2022): 5708–13.

<sup>13</sup> Merfat Ayesah Alsubaie, “Curriculum Development: Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Development,” *Journal of Education and Practice* 7, no. 9 (2016): 106–7.

Learningal materials have been adapted to comply with its guidelines. Research conducted by Pipih Nurhayati et al. shows that 67.65% of madrasah teachers do not prepare lesson plans or teaching modules in accordance with the provisions of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, meaning that only 32.35% of madrasah teachers have teaching modules that comply with the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum guidelines.<sup>14</sup> This indicates that teachers in schools have not yet fully grasped the independent curriculum, resulting in its implementation appearing forced and hindering the learning process from reaching its full potential.

Teaching modules, or what were known as lesson plans (RPP) at the time, are a type of Learningal resource that includes a comprehensive set of components and comes in various formats tailored to the characteristics and needs of students. Generally, teaching modules consist of the following components: first, general information, which includes the module author's identification, prior competencies, the Pancasila Student Profile, facilities and infrastructure, target students, and the Learningal model used; second, core components consisting of learning objectives, assessment, meaningful understanding, guiding questions, learning activities, and reflections by students and educators; third, appendices consisting of student worksheets, enrichment and remedial materials, reading materials for educators and students, a glossary, and a bibliography.<sup>15</sup>

Based on the components above, teaching modules have characteristics and a structure that differ significantly from lesson plans in the previous curriculum. Teaching modules appear to have more comprehensive components; however, it should be noted that not all of the above components are required to be included in the teaching modules developed by educators. Educators at educational institutions are given the freedom to develop components within teaching modules in accordance with the context of the environment and the learning needs of students. In fact, teachers simply need to follow the learning and assessment guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) when implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in the Arabic language learning process.

The next research finding concerns the teaching model implemented by Arabic teachers at SDIT Gondang. The research findings indicate that the Arabic language teaching model implemented at SDIT Gondang already utilizes project-based learning (PBL), although its application is limited to assigning students the task of creating a family tree using Arabic

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<sup>14</sup> Pipih Nurhayati, Mario Emilzoli, and Dzikra Fu'adiyah, "Peningkatan Keterampilan Penyusunan Modul Ajar Dan Modul Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.," *JMM (Jurnal Masyarakat Mandiri)* 6, no. 5 (2022).

<sup>15</sup> Susanti Sufyadi et al., "Panduan Pengembangan Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila Jenjang Pendidikan Dasar Dan Menengah (SD/MI, SMP/MTs, SMA/MA)," *Pusat Kurikulum Dan Pembelajaran Badan Standar, Kurikulum, Dan Asesmen Pendidikan Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset Dan Teknologi*, 2021.

vocabulary accompanied by their meanings. Teachers also assign tasks to apply the memorized vocabulary in daily life. Additionally, PJBL is implemented by assigning coloring projects on specific objects aligned with the theme during Arabic language lessons. However, Arabic teachers at SDIT Gondang have not yet designed or planned the PJBL to be implemented in their lessons; this means that the application of PJBL occurs naturally without any specific planning in accordance with the PJBL stages, such as problem identification, exploration of the causes of the problem, analysis of the problem determinants, determination of solutions, and the formulation of an action plan for problem-solving.

The learning model in the Merdeka Curriculum does indeed incorporate project-based learning (PBL) to strengthen efforts to develop competencies and character in line with the Pancasila profile. The reinforcement of the Pancasila profile is structured based on graduate competency standards (SKL) and implemented flexibly in terms of content, activities, and timing.<sup>16</sup> When viewed from the perspective of its benefits, as cited by Badruli Martati from Sampurno, the PJBL learning model can maximize student engagement in learning, enhance creativity, improve critical thinking skills and academic performance, and encourage students to develop long-term learning skills. Meanwhile, according to Yalcin et al., the benefits are as follows: (1) creating a varied learning atmosphere, (2) avoiding the atmosphere of boredom commonly found in schools, and (3) making the learning environment more interesting, enjoyable, exciting, and rewarding for students.<sup>17</sup>

Based on the benefits of PJBL described above, the Project-Based Learning (PJBL) model is highly suitable for use in Arabic language Learning, which prioritizes student engagement so that learning is more meaningful, enjoyable, engaging, and does not bore students. Arabic language Learning at SDIT Gondang is considered to still require improvement in implementing the Project-Based Learning (PJBL) model in the classroom, particularly regarding well-planned Learningal design so that the flow of learning activities using Project-Based Learning (PJBL) is more organized and measurable.

### **Innovations of *Merdeka Belajar* Based Arabic Language Learning.**

Arabic teachers at SDIT Gondang have implemented various innovations in their teaching methods, including the following: First, the use of student-centered learning methods. Arabic teachers at SDIT Gondang consistently employ student-centered teaching methods, meaning they regularly create games designed to boost students' motivation in learning Arabic. As demonstrated

<sup>16</sup> Badruli Martati, "Penerapan Project Based Learning Dalam Pembelajaran Di Sekolah Dasar," 2022.

<sup>17</sup> Badruli Martati.

by Ustadzah Lia, who created a “who can guess the picture first” game on the learning theme of al-Laun (colors); second, assigning specific projects to students based on the theme; Arabic language teachers at SDIT Gondang assign projects to students during lessons, such as creating a family tree for the *al-Ussrah* (family) theme and coloring while writing the vocabulary words for the *al-Laun* (colors) theme. These projects are intended to reinforce students’ understanding of the vocabulary material that has been taught. Additionally, they help strengthen students’ writing skills; Third, creating engaging learning materials. The materials used by Arabic teachers at SDIT Gondang primarily involve the creation of educational aids (APE), such as flashcards and pictures. This approach has been implemented throughout the Arabic language learning process, and students are able to participate enthusiastically; fourth, composing songs based on the lesson themes. Arabic teachers at SDIT Gondang also use singing as a method in the Arabic language learning process. Therefore, teachers compose songs by taking the rhythm from a specific song and then adapting it to the theme during Arabic language lessons. Additionally, teachers often select songs from YouTube if the songs align with the theme; fifth, Providing Arabic-language videos. Arabic teachers at SDIT Gondang also play Arabic-language cartoon videos with Indonesian subtitles, such as Upin Ipin and others. Teachers usually download the videos directly from YouTube. The process involves playing the video in stages, pausing at each dialogue in the video. During the pause, the teacher explains the meaning or interpretation of the dialogue in the video. Students are then instructed to repeat it over and over.

The innovation implemented by the Arabic teacher at SDIT Gondang is the use of a student-centered learning method. This method is used to increase student motivation in the learning process. One method implemented by the Arabic teacher at SDIT Gondang is a guessing game centered on the learning theme of al-Laun (colors). The positive impact is that students appear more active and enthusiastic in the Arabic learning process. One indicator of learning based on *Merdeka Belajar* is student-centered learning. This means students are expected to be more active in the learning process; therefore, teachers must be able to act as facilitators who are creative, meaningful, critical, and engaging though this is not an easy concept to implement.<sup>18</sup> The concept of “merdeka” as it applies to teachers means that teachers have the freedom to develop the learning materials needed for the teaching and learning process, and these must, of course, be tailored to the students’ abilities.

Furthermore, one innovation implemented by Arabic teachers at SDIT Gondang in applying

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<sup>18</sup> Sri Susanti, “The Implementation Model of Character Building Based on Honesty Canteen in A Basic Education Institutions (A Review of Behaviouristics Theory, on Islamic and West Perspective).” in *International Seminar : Education Trends for Future Society*, 2016.

the *Merdeka Belajar* approach is the assignment of projects during the teaching and learning process that are tailored to specific themes. Research data indicates that teachers have assigned projects such as creating family trees for the *al-Usrah* theme and coloring activities for the “al-Laun” theme. Assigning these projects to students demonstrates the characteristics of *Merdeka Belajar* based learning, which utilizes the project-based learning model. This represents a new experience for Arabic language teachers, as prior to the implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, teachers more frequently employed conventional teaching models specifically, those centered on lecture-based Learning.

According to research conducted by Andik Purwanto, learning through the application of the project based learning model can improve students’ scientific attitudes and learning outcomes. These scientific attitudes include curiosity, honesty, critical thinking, a desire to discover new things, openness, cooperation, and perseverance. These seven attitudes were measured, and the results fell into the “good” category. Similarly, student learning outcomes showed that 80.66% had achieved mastery.<sup>19</sup> These results serve as evidence that the project-based learning model is highly effective and relevant for use in the learning process. Therefore, this model is employed in learning based on the *Merdeka Belajar* framework; however, implementing the project-based learning model requires teachers with a high level of creativity, ensuring that the learning process yields outcomes aligned with learning objectives. In this context, teachers are essentially granted the freedom to design the most effective learning approaches.

Arabic teachers at SDIT Gondang have also made their best efforts to innovate, such as creating learning materials, composing songs on specific themes, and showing Arabic language cartoons. All of this is done by the teachers at SDIT Gondang to create a more enjoyable and engaging Arabic learning environment. Learning materials certainly add a unique dimension to the learning process. Engaging materials can boost students’ motivation to fully participate in the learning process and also make it easier for teachers to deliver lesson content. Meanwhile, learning through songs or singing can enhance students’ enthusiasm and understanding; for instance, memorizing vocabulary through conventional methods feels quite different from memorizing it through singing.

Essentially, elementary school students or children truly enjoy singing and songs.<sup>20</sup> For this reason, elementary level Learning more frequently employs singing methods rather than lectures; in

<sup>19</sup> Andik Purwanto, “Penerapan Project Based Learning Model Untuk Meningkatkan Sikap Ilmiah Mahasiswa Dalam Rangka Menghadapi Era Merdeka Belajar,” *Jurnal Kumparan Fisika*, 4, no. 1 (2021): 25–34.

<sup>20</sup> Ridwan and A. Fajar Awaluddin, “Penerapan Metode Bernyanyi Dalam Meningkatkan Penguasaan Mufradat Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Di Raodhatul Athfal,” *Didaktika: Jurnal Kependidikan* 13, no. 1 (2019): 56–67.

fact, research indicates that the singing method is highly effective in the process of teaching vocabulary (*mufradat*). This is evidenced by students being more enthusiastic and interested in participating in lessons because, through the process, they indirectly learn to pronounce, read, and memorize vocabulary (*mufradat*). Teachers also find it easier to convey the material through singing.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to singing, the Arabic teachers at SDIT Gondang have provided Arabic-language cartoons with Indonesian subtitles. This is done to help students develop their listening skills. Students should be accustomed to listening to Arabic conversations through audiovisual materials so that they can practice understanding what they have heard. If students frequently listen to Arabic speech, they will become accustomed to understanding it as well. Showing cartoon or animated videos to students does indeed have many benefits, including the ability to create an engaging, creative, and enjoyable learning process, even if the animated videos are taken directly from YouTube. Of course, showing animated videos will have a positive impact on students, such as preventing them from becoming bored and keeping them enthusiastic about participating in the learning process. Students can develop communication skills through what they hear in the animated videos, and they will certainly acquire new vocabulary. Given these various benefits, teachers should further develop their innovation in every learning process by providing more varied and dynamic Learningal designs.

### **Problems of *Merdeka Belajar* Based Arabic Language Learning.**

The problems of Arabic language teachers at SDIT Gondang in implementing *Merdeka Belajar* based Learning, as revealed by the interviews conducted by the researcher, are as follows: First, Arabic language teachers have never participated in training on the “*Merdeka Belajar*” curriculum or its implementation. Instead, they have relied solely on self-directed and self-taught learning. Given this issue, it is clear that teachers’ understanding of how to implement *Merdeka Belajar* based Arabic language Learning is very limited, resulting in suboptimal learning outcomes. Second: Arabic teachers at SDIT Gondang still find it difficult to implement Arabic language Learning in accordance with the requirements of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum. This second problem is actually a consequence of the first problem, namely that teachers have not received guidance regarding the implementation of *Merdeka Belajar*, so their lesson plans do not yet align with the provisions in the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum for instance, the ‘RPP’ (Lesson Plan) should

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<sup>21</sup> A. Barzan Lutfi and Mochamad Afroni, “Efektivitas Metode Bernyanyi Dalam Penguasaan Mufradat Bahasa Arab Di Kelas VII A Mambaul Ulum Tegal Tahun Pelajaran 2020/2021.,” *Bashrah* 1, no. 2 (2021): 118–28.

be replaced with the term “teaching module,” which no longer uses the terms “Core Competencies (KI)” or “Basic Competencies (KD),” but instead employs “Learning Outcomes (CP)” and “Learning Objectives (TP).” Another difference lies in the “Pancasila Student Profile” and the “Rahmatan lil Alamin Student Profile”.<sup>22</sup> Essentially, when viewed from the perspective of the terminology used and their structure, there are significant differences between the RPP and the Teaching Module. Arabic language teachers at SDIT Gondang are still using terminology from the 2013 curriculum.

Third, Arabic teachers at SDIT Gondang still face challenges in improving students’ writing and speaking skills. This is because students in grades 1 and 4 are not yet very familiar with sentence structure, making it difficult for them to construct sentences in writing, let alone speak Arabic. Therefore, students in grades 1 and 4 are focused on memorizing vocabulary. However, according to existing regulations, the Arabic language curriculum in Phase A (grades 1 and 2) requires students to master four elements: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The results of the above study indicate that Arabic language learning outcomes in grades 1 and 4 have not yet met the established learning standards. Many students still struggle with speaking and writing skills. The failure to achieve the desired outcomes in Arabic language learning at SDIT Gondang necessitates an evaluation by the Arabic language teacher to determine why students still struggle with speaking and writing Arabic. Once the reasons are identified, the teacher must implement strategic measures to improve the Arabic language learning process in the next semester, particularly by continuously adapting and developing the learning materials so that learning outcomes can be more effectively measured.

## CONCLUSION

The *Merdeka Belajar* based Arabic language learning model at SDIT Gondang Pekalongan still has many aspects that are not yet fully aligned with the provisions of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum. This is because the curriculum was only implemented in the even semester of 2023, meaning that it has only been applied for one semester, so further exploration and deeper understanding are still needed. In addition, the lesson plans (RPP) still use the 2013 Curriculum format, indicating that teachers have not yet developed teaching modules in accordance with the new curriculum requirements. Nevertheless, the learning process has already applied Project-Based Learning (PBL), although it still requires further improvement and refinement. Arabic language teachers at SDIT have also implemented enjoyable learning activities by using singing methods and

<sup>22</sup> Siti Zulaiha, Tika Meldina, and Meisin, “Problematika Guru Dalam Menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Pada Siswa Kelas I Dan IV Di Sdn 17 Rejang Lebong” (2022).

educational games. Meanwhile, the evaluation system has generally followed the provisions outlined in the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum. The innovations implemented by Arabic teachers at SDIT Gondang include: the use of student-centered learning methods; assigning specific projects to students based on the theme; creating engaging learning materials; composing songs based on the learning theme; and showing Arabic-language videos. The problems faced by Arabic language teachers at SDIT Gondang in implementing *Merdeka Belajar*-based learning are as follows: first, the Arabic language teachers at SDIT Gondang have never participated in training related to the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum; second, teachers still experience difficulties in implementing Arabic language learning in accordance with the demands of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum; and third, teachers still find it difficult to improve students' *kitabah* (writing) and *kalam* (speaking) skills.

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