

Designing Islamic Religious Education Learning in the Merdeka Curriculum: Teacher Competencies, Contextual Principles, and Value Integration

Roffi Rahmadani

Universitas Islam Negeri Kudus
Email: roffirahma012@gmail.com

Sanusi

Universitas Islam Negeri Kudus
Email: sanusi@uinsuku.ac.id

Abstrak

The implementation of Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum presents both opportunities and challenges for Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in designing learning experiences that are simultaneously flexible, contextually grounded, and spiritually purposeful. This study aims to analyze the conceptual principles of IRE learning planning aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum framework and to identify the multidimensional roles of teachers in ensuring its effective implementation. A qualitative library research design was employed, with data collected from peer-reviewed journal articles, academic textbooks, and official policy documents accessed through Google Scholar, DOAJ, and university repositories between January and March 2025. Content analysis was applied thematically to identify patterns in pedagogical principles, teacher competency frameworks, and implementation strategies. Findings reveal that IRE learning planning under the Merdeka Curriculum must prioritize student-centered, project-based, and value-integrated approaches, incorporating flexible learning sequences aligned with the Learning Outcome Trajectory (ATP) to facilitate authentic achievement of both academic and spiritual competencies. IRE teachers are called upon to serve concurrently as designers, implementers, evaluators, and spiritual mentors (*murabbi*), requiring mastery of pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies. Key challenges include adapting to digital technologies, accommodating diverse student characteristics, and sustaining innovation within Islamic educational values. The study concludes that well-designed, contextually responsive IRE learning planning under the Merdeka Curriculum is essential for integrating Islamic values with the national Pancasila Student Profile, producing adaptive learners who embody faith, moral integrity, and civic responsibility.

Keywords: Islamic religious education, Merdeka Curriculum, learning planning, teacher competence, contextual learning, Pancasila Student Profile

How to cite: Rahmadani, R., & Sanusi, S. (2025). Designing Islamic Religious Education learning in the Merdeka Curriculum: Teacher competencies, contextual principles, and value integration. *Tadibia Islamika*, 6(1), 48-58.

Introduction

Education constitutes the fundamental pillar upon which the development of human capital and national progress is built. Within the Indonesian context, education serves not merely as a mechanism for knowledge transmission but as a transformative force that shapes

individual character, expands intellectual horizons, and equips students to participate meaningfully in a society deeply rooted in both religious and civic principles. The Indonesian educational system, as mandated by the 1945 Constitution and further elaborated through various national education laws, recognizes the inseparable relationship between intellectual development and moral-spiritual formation. This dual mandate positions education as both a cognitive endeavor and a character-building enterprise, wherein the cultivation of virtuous citizens becomes as important as the development of competent professionals.

Islamic Religious Education (IRE), known in Indonesia as Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI), serves as a cornerstone of this national educational system. Its fundamental aim extends far beyond the mere transmission of religious doctrine; rather, it seeks to foster deep spiritual understanding alongside the cultivation of high moral standards that can guide students throughout their lives. In an era marked by rapid technological advancement, cultural globalization, and shifting social values, the role of IRE becomes increasingly vital. Students are constantly exposed to diverse worldviews and value systems through digital media and social platforms, making the grounding in authentic Islamic values more critical than ever. Consequently, IRE instructional design must continually evolve and align with changing national policies, societal needs, and the spiritual requirements of the Muslim community.

The introduction of the Merdeka (Independent) Curriculum represents one of the most significant paradigm shifts in Indonesian educational history. This curriculum framework encourages pedagogical creativity, autonomous thinking, and localized adaptation for both educators and learners. Unlike previous curriculum iterations that emphasized standardized content delivery and uniform assessment procedures, the Merdeka Curriculum introduces a philosophy of learning freedom (*kebebasan belajar*) that fundamentally restructures the relationship between teachers, students, and knowledge. This approach recognizes that meaningful learning occurs when educational experiences are tailored to local contexts, cultural backgrounds, and individual student characteristics.

The Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) initiative, which serves as the philosophical foundation of this curriculum, grants substantial autonomy to schools and teachers in designing learning experiences. Educational institutions are empowered to tailor their pedagogical approaches to local contexts and student characteristics (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022). This represents a deliberate move away from the rigid, uniform structures that characterized the 2013 Curriculum, offering instead a flexible, context-responsive platform that blends national identity with spiritual values. Such flexibility directly complements the core objectives of Islamic schooling, rendering the curriculum more meaningful, relevant, and grounded in the daily realities of students (Bahja et al., 2023). The ability to connect abstract religious teachings with concrete local experiences enhances the authenticity and impact of IRE instruction.

This study addresses a central and timely question: how can the conceptual planning of Islamic Religious Education within the Merdeka Curriculum framework be effectively executed to achieve optimal educational outcomes? To answer this fundamental question, we analyze the core principles of IRE instructional planning aligned with the Merdeka framework and identify the multifaceted responsibilities of teachers in ensuring contextualized, impactful, and spiritually enriching learning experiences. The significance of this inquiry lies in its potential to bridge the gap between curriculum policy and classroom practice, providing practical guidance for IRE educators navigating this new educational landscape.

Under this new curriculum paradigm, designing an IRE syllabus requires instructors to build educational tools that are structured, systematic, and purposeful, ensuring smooth classroom dynamics and optimal learning outcomes. This planning phase encompasses several interconnected components: setting clear and measurable learning objectives, selecting

relevant and age-appropriate content, choosing effective teaching strategies that accommodate diverse learning styles, and establishing comprehensive assessment models centered on formative, summative, and continuous evaluation. Crucially, each of these components must actively reinforce the Profil Pelajar Pancasila (Pancasila Student Profile) alongside core Islamic teachings to cultivate moral integrity in students' daily lives (Rachman, 2018). The integration of national character values with Islamic ethical principles creates a coherent value system that supports holistic student development.

Teacher competence in navigating this framework is paramount and cannot be overstated. Educators must master instructional material design, establish precise learning targets that align with both religious and national educational goals, and select pedagogical methods suited to diverse classroom needs and student backgrounds. During the planning phase, teachers should carefully factor in the socio-cultural backgrounds of their students to make lessons relatable, meaningful, and impactful. Furthermore, assessment practices must shift toward development-focused diagnostics, regular formative check-ins, and comprehensive summative evaluations that offer a holistic picture of student growth across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

Ultimately, a well-executed, Merdeka-compliant IRE lesson plan shifts the classroom focus from mere rote memorization of religious texts to holistic character development rooted in faith and national values. This preparation is foundational for building an inclusive, adaptive, and creative learning environment that nurtures cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions simultaneously (Azmi, 2024). The transformation from teacher-centered to student-centered pedagogy represents not merely a methodological change but a philosophical reorientation that places the learner's holistic development at the center of educational endeavor.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative approach utilizing library research methodology. We examined various digital resources—including e-books, online peer-reviewed journal articles, official education policy documents, government circulars, and curriculum implementation guidelines—pertaining to IRE lesson planning within the Merdeka Curriculum framework. This methodological choice suits our focus on conceptual and theoretical analysis rather than empirical fieldwork, allowing for a deep dive into the underlying principles, philosophical foundations, and emerging trends in modern Islamic pedagogy.

The library research approach was selected because the study aims to construct a comprehensive conceptual framework based on existing scholarly discourse rather than generate new primary data. This approach enables researchers to synthesize diverse perspectives, identify converging themes, and develop nuanced understandings of complex educational phenomena. By examining the accumulated wisdom of the academic community, we can establish a robust theoretical foundation for practical implementation.

Since this is a digital literature review, it involves no human participants or direct fieldwork observations, eliminating concerns related to research ethics involving human subjects. Material was gathered through systematic searches across academic repositories and journal databases such as Google Scholar, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), and various university institutional repositories between January and March 2025. The search strategy employed a combination of keywords including "Islamic religious education," "Merdeka Curriculum," "learning planning," "teacher competence," "contextual learning," "Pancasila Student Profile," and their Indonesian equivalents to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant literature.

Selection criteria mandated a direct focus on IRE instructional design within the Indonesian context, a publication window between 2018 and 2025 to ensure currency and relevance, and established academic credibility as evidenced by peer review processes, institutional affiliations, and citation metrics. Documents were excluded if they focused exclusively on non-Indonesian contexts, lacked academic rigor, or addressed topics only tangentially related to the research focus.

The literature review followed a structured and systematic process. First, we defined the thematic boundaries of IRE planning under the Merdeka Curriculum, establishing clear parameters for inclusion and exclusion. Second, we retrieved relevant documents from digital databases using the aforementioned search strategy. Third, we screened retrieved documents carefully for academic validity, relevance, and quality. Fourth, we performed close, critical readings of the selected texts, identifying key arguments, evidence, and theoretical frameworks. Finally, we categorized our findings into core themes such as teacher roles, planning principles, implementation strategies, and emerging challenges. This protocol ensures transparency, systematicity, and interpretive validity throughout the entire review process.

Content analysis was applied to interpret the collected data. Each digital source was scrutinized to extract core concepts, principles, arguments, and recommendations. The synthesis is presented descriptively and organized thematically to map out conceptual patterns, relationships, and tensions within the literature, providing a systematic overview of contemporary IRE planning scholarship. This analytical approach allows for the identification of consensus areas, contested issues, and gaps in the existing knowledge base that warrant further investigation.

Result and Discussion

Conceptualizing Instructional Planning in Islamic Religious Education

Instructional planning in IRE is a systematic and intentional process designed by educators to ensure that classroom activities foster both spiritual and cognitive growth in ways that are consistent with Islamic values and aligned with national educational targets. This planning process transcends mere administrative preparation; it represents a profound intellectual and spiritual exercise that requires deep reflection on the purposes of education from an Islamic perspective. Frandani et al. (2025) note that effective planning elevates educational quality by deploying strategies that respond to contemporary shifts in society, technology, and student needs. This conceptual framing is reinforced by the autonomy the *Merdeka* Curriculum grants teachers, allowing them to craft innovative, context-specific approaches that accurately mirror social dynamics and address individual student needs (Marsela & Nasution, 2024). Consequently, an IRE lesson plan functions less as a bureaucratic checklist and more as a living roadmap that bridges educational theory and actual classroom practice.

The necessity of a comprehensive understanding of IRE planning stems from the multi-layered nature of religious education, which simultaneously engages cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. Unlike secular subjects that may focus primarily on intellectual development, IRE demands an integrated approach that nurtures the whole person—mind, heart, and body. Teachers must skillfully weave Islamic principles into daily lived experiences through carefully structured learning activities that make abstract religious concepts tangible and applicable. Within the *Merdeka* framework, this means adopting a student-centered ethos where the learner's needs, interests, and contexts guide instructional decisions. Teachers design tasks that stimulate critical thinking alongside spiritual awareness rather than merely passing down static information through traditional lecture methods (Hariani & Kamil, 2024). This

pedagogical shift relies fundamentally on the liberty granted to teachers to innovate with both content and method (Apriansah, n.d.). In this light, strategic planning serves as an essential tool to address modern challenges while remaining firmly anchored to Islamic teachings as the foundational inspiration for all educational endeavors.

Planning also encompasses the development of teaching instruments, the careful mapping of learning objectives, the curation of relevant content, and the creation of instructional media that resonate with students' socio-cultural backgrounds and digital literacy levels. Moreover, it requires embedding continuous formative and summative evaluations to track student progress holistically across all domains of learning. At its core, IRE planning is an intellectual, pedagogical, and spiritual exercise requiring deep reflection and sincere intention. From an Islamic perspective, every educational act is grounded in intention (*niyyah*) and purpose (*maqasid*)—specifically, drawing closer to God and manifesting goodness in society. Thus, a teacher acts simultaneously as a *murabbi* (spiritual mentor who nurtures the soul) and a *mu'allim* (impartor of knowledge who enlightens the mind). Every planning stage, from strategy selection to assessment design, must therefore reflect values like integrity, patience, wisdom, and social responsibility (Ananda et al., 2024).

The *Merdeka* Curriculum provides IRE educators with unprecedented opportunities to connect Islamic teachings with local contexts, ecological issues, and humanitarian values in ways that were constrained under more rigid curriculum frameworks. Moral lessons (*akhlak*), for instance, can be integrated with environmental conservation themes, social solidarity initiatives, or digital etiquette education, all stemming from the foundational Islamic concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (a mercy to the worlds) (Hayati et al., 2024). This prophetic paradigm of compassionate engagement with the world transforms religious education from passive knowledge acquisition into active social participation. Here, the teacher functions as a spiritual guide facilitating experiential, value-based, and project-based learning that unifies the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains into coherent educational experiences (Tampubolon & Faslah, 2025a). In the digital space, this requires thoughtfully incorporating educational technology—such as Islamic instructional videos, interactive mobile applications, and Learning Management Systems (LMS)—to make lessons engaging and accessible without diluting the spiritual essence of religious instruction (Tampubolon & Faslah, 2025b).

Core Concepts and Principles of IRE Planning under the Merdeka Framework

IRE planning under the *Merdeka* Curriculum prioritizes flexible, adaptive, and contextual models that accommodate character development and respond to local cultural dynamics. The curriculum explicitly grants teachers autonomy to design materials and strategies focused on competence and character building, aligning Islamic values with the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (Hulu, 2024). This marks a significant transition from rigid, one-size-fits-all instructional patterns to holistic, engaging methods that help students apply faith principles to their daily lives in meaningful ways.

This flexibility allows for genuinely tailored instruction that recognizes the diversity of learners. Planning centers on learning trajectories structured through the Learning Outcome Trajectory (*Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran* or ATP), which guides instruction across semesters in a coherent and progressive manner (Gusri et al., 2024). A core principle here is synthesizing Islamic values with civic responsibility, cultivating citizens who are both devout in their religious practice and committed to their national identity. Teachers can deploy diverse methods—including project-based learning, structured discussions, Socratic questioning, and experiential activities—to spur student innovation, analytical skills, and collaborative capacities. Assessment shifts toward continuous formative and summative measures across all learning domains, moving beyond traditional paper-and-pencil tests to more authentic

evaluation methods (Setianingsih, 2024). Inclusivity is maintained by deliberately accounting for student diversity in terms of learning styles, cultural backgrounds, abilities, and interests, as well as teacher readiness, ensuring active participation from all learners.

Student-centered learning remains foundational to the *Merdeka* approach, enabling learners to discover knowledge through methods that suit them best while allowing teachers to differentiate instruction based on individual needs (Matatiana, 2024). This pedagogical orientation empowers teachers as creative, reflective instructional designers rather than mere curriculum implementers. In IRE specifically, this means moving beyond simple content delivery to acting as spiritual facilitators who guide students through authentic experiences of faith, worship, and ethical reasoning (Ahmad Rifa'i et al., 2022). This paradigm matches the *Merdeka Belajar* ethos of intellectual freedom and ethical accountability. Planning shifts its focus from the volume of content covered to the depth of value internalization and behavioral manifestation (Mahani et al., 2024).

Teachers enjoy meaningful autonomy to differentiate learning pathways based on student readiness and interest; advanced students might engage in faith-driven social initiatives or community service projects, while beginners are supported with accessible visual narratives, storytelling, and guided discovery activities. Cultivating the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* must harmonize with Quranic values such as justice (*al-'adl*), honesty (*sidq*), responsibility (*amanah*), and social cooperation (*ta'awun*). Lessons are tied directly to real-world contexts: environmental issues are linked to the Quranic concept of *khalifah fil-ardh* (stewardship of the earth), and tolerance is taught through Quranic passages celebrating human diversity and the equality of all people before God. This approach renders IRE contemporary, relevant, and responsive to the challenges students actually face.

Furthermore, education under this framework becomes a collaborative ecosystem involving teachers, students, parents, and the wider community. Under the *Merdeka* framework, IRE expands beyond the formal classroom to partner with mosques, religious leaders, local organizations, and community elders. This community-based approach enriches learning by connecting students with living traditions of Islamic practice and social engagement. Evaluation must feature authentic assessments—such as reflective journals, behavioral observations, project portfolios, peer assessments, and spiritual dialogues—to measure moral growth and character development rather than just cognitive retention of religious facts (Nurafianti, 2024). Finally, digital tools like Canva, Google Forms, Padlet, and various educational applications can be used creatively for assessment and instruction, provided that technology serves to reinforce character and spirituality rather than acting merely as entertainment or distraction.

Teacher Roles and Competencies in Merdeka-Based IRE Design

With these planning principles established, the teacher's execution becomes absolutely critical to successful implementation. The IRE teacher serves simultaneously as a designer, implementer, evaluator, and spiritual guide of holistic student development. The *Merdeka* Curriculum demands adaptability to a framework centered on autonomy, creativity, and instructional flexibility. Teachers must fundamentally reconceptualize lesson planning not as technical compliance with administrative requirements, but as a strategic tool for character formation, embedding Islamic values across all learning modules to optimize educational and spiritual outcomes.

The teacher's responsibilities expand considerably under this framework to include acting as a facilitator who creates conditions for learning, a motivator who inspires students to excel, an innovator who develops creative solutions to educational challenges, and a source of inspiration who models the values being taught. During planning, they must carefully map out

instruction based on Learning Achievements (*Capaian Pembelajaran* or CP) and the ATP, integrating Islamic values, differentiated instruction, and student-centered designs into coherent learning experiences (Rahmawati et al., 2024). Given their central position in the educational process, teachers must transcend traditional lecturing roles to become authentic role models for character development. This expanded role demands robust teacher competencies across four primary dimensions: pedagogical, professional, social, and personal.

Pedagogical competence requires designing lessons responsive to diverse student traits, learning preferences, and developmental stages, and deploying innovative models like project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, or differentiated instruction to ensure context-rich, engaging instruction (Mubin et al., 2025). Teachers must understand how students learn, what motivates them, and how to create inclusive classrooms where all learners can thrive. This includes skills in classroom management, questioning techniques, feedback provision, and learning environment design.

Professional competence involves deep mastery of religious content—including Quranic studies, Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and spirituality—and the ability to leverage educational technology such as digital media, online learning platforms, and multimedia resources to enrich student experiences (Reksiana, 2025). Professional competence also encompasses staying current with developments in both Islamic scholarship and educational science, ensuring that instruction is both theologically sound and pedagogically effective.

Social competence entails building clear communication and strong collaborations with students, parents, fellow teachers, school administrators, and community members to support inclusive and adaptive schooling (Insani et al., 2025). This includes conflict resolution skills, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to build trusting relationships that support student wellbeing and learning.

Personal competence demands that teachers embody Islamic virtues and moral integrity in their daily lives, serving as authentic moral exemplars whose behavior aligns with the values they teach. This dimension recognizes that in religious education, the teacher's character is itself a curriculum, and students learn as much from who the teacher is as from what the teacher says.

Evaluation within this framework must be comprehensive and multidimensional, monitoring cognitive, affective, and psychomotor progress through behavioral records, portfolios, reflective dialogues, peer assessments, and self-assessments to gauge how well faith is actually lived in daily practice (Nurafianti, 2024). However, teachers face real and significant hurdles in implementation: adapting to rapidly evolving digital tools, managing highly diverse classrooms with varying abilities and backgrounds, and handling the increased administrative and creative demands of *Merdeka* design. Addressing these challenges requires continuous professional development, mentorship from experienced colleagues, active participation in professional learning communities, and institutional support from school leadership (Setiawan, 2024). Strengthening these competencies ensures that the *Merdeka* Curriculum delivers an IRE experience where students do not just learn about religion cognitively, but internalize, embody, and live its values contextually in their personal, social, and civic lives.

Implementation Strategies and Practical Applications

Translating the theoretical principles of *Merdeka*-based IRE planning into effective classroom practice requires deliberate and systematic implementation strategies. Teachers must begin by conducting thorough needs assessments that consider the specific characteristics of their students, including their prior knowledge of Islamic teachings, their socio-economic backgrounds, their digital literacy levels, and their cultural contexts. This diagnostic phase

informs all subsequent planning decisions and ensures that instruction is truly responsive to learner needs.

The development of learning modules should follow a backward design approach, beginning with the identification of desired learning outcomes and working backward to determine acceptable evidence of learning and then planning learning experiences and instruction. This approach ensures alignment between objectives, activities, and assessments while maintaining focus on what students should ultimately understand, value, and be able to do.

Project-based learning emerges as a particularly powerful strategy for IRE under the *Merdeka* framework. Students can engage in projects that require them to apply Islamic values to real community issues—such as organizing environmental clean-up campaigns based on the concept of environmental stewardship (*khalifah*), creating digital content that promotes Islamic ethical values for social media consumption, or developing community service initiatives that embody the prophetic spirit of compassion and social justice. These projects develop not only religious knowledge but also critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity—the essential skills for 21st-century citizenship.

Differentiated instruction must be applied thoughtfully, recognizing that students enter IRE classrooms with vastly different levels of religious background knowledge, language proficiency (particularly in Arabic for Quranic studies), and personal faith commitments. Teachers can differentiate by content (adjusting the complexity of religious texts studied), by process (providing varied pathways to understanding), and by product (allowing students to demonstrate learning through different formats). This approach honors the *Merdeka* principle of respecting learner diversity while maintaining high expectations for all.

The integration of technology must be purposeful rather than merely trendy. Educational technology in IRE should enhance access to religious knowledge, facilitate collaboration among learners, provide immersive experiences of Islamic culture and practice, and support authentic assessment. However, technology should never replace the human relationship between teacher and student that is central to spiritual mentoring (*tarbiyah*). The teacher's personal presence, spiritual guidance, and moral example remain irreplaceable elements of effective IRE.

Community partnerships should be cultivated systematically. Schools can establish regular collaboration with local mosques for student participation in congregational prayers and religious lectures, invite religious scholars (*ulama*) and community leaders as guest speakers, organize visits to Islamic social institutions such as orphanages and nursing homes to develop empathy and social responsibility, and engage parents as partners in reinforcing Islamic values at home. These partnerships extend the boundaries of the classroom and demonstrate to students that Islamic education is not confined to school hours but permeates all aspects of life.

Assessment practices must be revolutionized to capture the full range of student development. Beyond traditional written tests of religious knowledge, teachers should employ reflective journals where students articulate their spiritual growth and ethical reasoning, behavioral observation checklists that track the manifestation of Islamic values in daily interactions, project portfolios that document student work over time, peer and self-assessment tools that develop metacognitive awareness, and spiritual dialogue sessions where teachers engage students in conversations about their faith journey. These authentic assessment methods provide richer, more holistic pictures of student development than standardized tests alone can offer.

Challenges and Future Directions

Despite the promising framework provided by the *Merdeka* Curriculum, significant challenges remain in its implementation. Teacher readiness varies considerably across schools and regions, with many educators requiring substantial professional development to effectively navigate the new paradigm. The digital divide continues to limit access to technological resources in rural and under-resourced schools, potentially exacerbating educational inequalities. The tension between curricular flexibility and the need for standardized quality assurance requires careful balancing to ensure that autonomy does not lead to inconsistency or decline in educational standards.

Furthermore, the integration of Islamic values with the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* raises complex questions about the relationship between religious and national identity in a pluralistic society. Teachers must navigate these questions with sensitivity and wisdom, fostering both strong Islamic identity and commitment to national unity and social harmony.

Future research should investigate the empirical efficacy of specific IRE strategies in building spiritual character across different school types and regions. Longitudinal studies tracking student outcomes over time would provide valuable evidence of the long-term impact of *Merdeka*-based IRE. Comparative studies examining implementation variations across different socio-cultural contexts would illuminate best practices and common pitfalls. Action research conducted by teachers in their own classrooms would generate practitioner knowledge that complements academic research.

Conclusion

Planning and implementing Islamic Religious Education (IRE) within the *Merdeka* Curriculum framework underlines the absolute necessity of flexible, contextual, and innovative approaches to nurture students' spiritual, moral, and academic growth in an integrated manner. This study highlights that IRE teachers occupy a central and irreplaceable position as instructional designers, implementers, evaluators, and spiritual mentors. Successfully executing these multifaceted roles requires a balanced and continuous mastery of pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies to ensure that learning remains meaningful, engaging, and grounded in local socio-cultural realities. Consequently, the ultimate success of the *Merdeka* Curriculum in achieving its transformative vision relies heavily on the teacher's capacity and commitment to translate broad policy frameworks into adaptive, value-driven, and spiritually enriching classroom practices.

Optimizing teacher performance through project-based methods, thoughtful educational technology integration, and meaningful community collaboration is vital for raising a generation that lives Islamic values contextually, humanely, and adaptively in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. Future research should investigate the empirical efficacy of specific IRE strategies in building spiritual character and evaluate implementation challenges across varied socio-cultural landscapes, acknowledging that outcomes are heavily shaped by local variables, institutional readiness, teacher quality, and the rich diversity of student backgrounds and needs. The journey toward excellent Islamic religious education under the *Merdeka* Curriculum is ongoing, requiring sustained commitment, collaborative effort, and continuous reflection from all stakeholders in the educational ecosystem.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study.

Reference

- Ahmad Rifa'i, N. E. K., & Dewi, F. (2022). Peran guru PAI dalam pembelajaran kontekstual di era Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer*, 4(1), 55-68.
- Ananda, I., Indriani, A., & Sari, R. (2024). Integrasi nilai-nilai Islam dalam perencanaan pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam. *Jurnal Tarbawi*, 5(2), 88-97.
- Apriansah. (t.t.). Inovasi pembelajaran agama Islam di era digital. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Modern*, 3(2), 45--57.
- Azmi, M. (2024). Pengembangan karakter siswa melalui pembelajaran PAI di Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Indonesia*, 3(1), 12-25.
- Bahja, A., Mulyani, R., & Sari, D. (2023). Efektivitas perencanaan pembelajaran dalam meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran PAI. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Keislaman*, 7(1), 101-112.
- Fitriah, Abdillah Mattinetta, A., Kholida, L., & Nirmala. (2025). Evaluasi formatif dan sumatif dalam pembelajaran PAI serta relevansinya dalam Surah Al-Ankabut ayat 2-3. *Religi: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.51454/religi.v2i2.1120>
- Frاندani, M., Putra, R., & Hasanah, U. (2025). Perencanaan pembelajaran PAI dalam meningkatkan mutu pendidikan Islam. *Jurnal Studi Pendidikan Islam*, 6(1), 20-33.
- Gusri, M., Mulyadi, S., & Rani, T. (2024). Alur tujuan pembelajaran dalam implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka di sekolah dasar Islam. *Jurnal Edukasi Islam*, 4(2), 33-45.
- Hariani, N., & Kamil, A. (2024). Pendekatan reflektif dalam pembelajaran PAI berbasis Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan Islam*, 8(1), 55-67.
- Hayati, N., Salsabila, R., & Fikri, H. (2024). Integrasi nilai akhlak dalam pembelajaran kontekstual di era digital. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Rahmatan lil 'Alamin*, 3(1), 14-26.
- Hulu, D. (2024). Prinsip fleksibilitas dalam Kurikulum Merdeka untuk pendidikan Islam. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Islam*, 2(3), 40-52.
- Insani, L., Widodo, P., & Aisyah, D. (2025). Kolaborasi guru dan masyarakat dalam pembelajaran inklusif PAI. *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Islam*, 9(2), 110-122.
- Mahani, F., Rahma, N., & Lestari, R. (2024). Nilai-nilai Islam dalam Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Terpadu*, 2(1), 73-85.
- Marsela, N., & Nasution, S. (2024). Otonomi guru PAI dalam Kurikulum Merdeka: Tantangan dan peluang. *Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan Islam*, 6(2), 120-132.
- Matatiana, A. (2024). Student-centered learning dalam pembelajaran agama Islam di Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan Islam*, 7(1), 40-51.
- Mubin, R., Suryana, E., & Fauzi, M. (2025). Kompetensi pedagogik guru PAI di era Merdeka Belajar. *Jurnal Tarbiyah dan Keislaman*, 5(2), 89-102.
- Nurafianti, N. R., Hidayah, A., Barhoya, M., & Nazib, F. M. (2025). Konsep Kurikulum Merdeka pada Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam di tingkat SMA. *Al-Afif: Journal of Islamic Education*, 1(1). <https://journal.al-afif.org/index.php/aej/article/view/17>
- Nurafianti, S. (2024). Evaluasi pembelajaran berbasis karakter dalam Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Asesmen Pendidikan Islam*, 3(1), 60-71.

- Putri, D. Y., Sari, F. A., Pandiangan, A. P. B., & Kullah, N. M. I. (2025). Implementasi differentiated learning dalam pembelajaran PAI pada Kurikulum Merdeka SD. *Juperan: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 3(1). <https://ojs.smkmerahputih.com/index.php/juperan/article/view/853>
- Rachman, A. (2018). Pendidikan karakter berbasis nilai-nilai Pancasila dan Islam. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 8(2), 145-158.
- Rahmadayanti, D., & Hartoyo, S. (2022). Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka dalam pembelajaran PAI. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 10(1), 33-48.
- Rahmawati, F., Hidayat, M., & Wulandari, S. (2024). Pendekatan diferensiasi dalam pembelajaran PAI. *Jurnal Pembelajaran Islam*, 4(1), 20-33.
- Reksiana, D. (2025). Pemanfaatan teknologi edukasi dalam pembelajaran PAI Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan Islam*, 8(1), 45-58.
- Rizqi, D. I. (2025). Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka dalam meningkatkan hasil belajar: Optimalisasi dan tantangan. *Jurnal Intelektualita: Keislaman, Sosial, dan Sains*, 14(1). <https://jurnal.radenfatah.ac.id/index.php/intelektualita/article/download/27097/8537/97794>
- Sari, A., & Hakim, L. (2023). Kesiapan guru menghadapi transformasi Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Inovatif*, 2(2), 78-89.
- Setiawan, S. A., & M. Pd. (2024). Peran pelatihan profesional guru PAI dalam implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Pengembangan Profesi Pendidikan*, 4(2), 90-103.
- Setianingsih, I. T. (2024). Evaluasi formatif dan sumatif dalam pembelajaran PAI Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Penilaian Pendidikan Islam*, 5(1), 33-44.
- Taqiyuddin, T., Supardi, S., & Lubna, L. (2024). Evaluasi formatif dan sumatif dalam pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam. *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan*, 9(3), 1936-1942. <https://doi.org/10.29303/jipp.v9i3.2392>
- Tampubolon, M., & Faslah, R. (2025a). Value-based learning dalam pendidikan Islam kontemporer. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Humanis*, 3(2), 99-111.
- Tampubolon, M., & Faslah, R. (2025b). Integrasi teknologi digital dalam pembelajaran agama Islam. *Jurnal Teknologi dan Dakwah*, 2(1), 25--39.
- Armini, N. K. (2024). Evaluasi metode penilaian perkembangan siswa dan pendidikan karakter dalam Kurikulum Merdeka pada sekolah dasar. *Metta: Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.37329/metta.v4i1.2990>