

THE ISSUE OF THE RELEVANCE OF THE ISLAMIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM

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Abstract

Characterized by adaptability, essential content, and the strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile. The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum is conceptually aligned with this framework, particularly in its goal of nurturing faithful, pious, and morally upright individuals. Nevertheless, practical implementation reveals a discrepancy between the aspirational nature of the policy and the actual conditions on the ground. This study seeks to examine the relevance of the PAI curriculum within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum. Employing a qualitative methodology, the investigation uses a bibliographic approach, examining policy documents, scholarly literature, and findings from previous studies. The research findings illustrate three categories of challenges. The first category pertains to planning issues: educators face obstacles in formulating Teaching Modules, Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objectives (TP), and Learning Objective Flows (ATP), alongside an insufficient understanding of diagnostic assessment. The second category addresses implementation challenges: practitioners struggle with applying differentiated instruction, formative-summative assessment techniques, and integrating PAI into the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5). The third category encompasses external factor complications: constraints relating to infrastructure, passive learner characteristics, socio-economic variables in the community, and the limited allocation of 4 teaching hours per week. The study concludes that despite a conceptual alignment between the PAI curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum, the realization of this potential is hampered by implementation challenges. It is essential to enhance teacher competence, ensure infrastructure availability, develop robust evaluation mechanisms, and strengthen the role of educators and the wider community.

Keywords : *Challenges, Curriculum Relevance, Islamic Religious Education, Merdeka Curriculum*

Introduction

The curriculum is a crucial element within the educational framework, serving as a fundamental guide for the implementation of the learning process and as a strategic mechanism to meet national educational goals. Given contemporary developments, the curriculum in Indonesia is undergoing a significant metamorphosis, transitioning from the 1964 curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum, which was formalized in February 2022, as a proactive response to educational deficits exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic (Wiguna & Tristaningrat, 2022; Jojo & Sihotang, 2022).

The Merdeka Curriculum is characterized by three main attributes: (1) enhancement of soft skills and character through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5); (2) concentration on essential content; (3) provision of flexibility for educators to implement

differentiated instructional strategies (Kemendikbudristek, 2022; Manalu et al., 2022). This curriculum underscores the fortification of the Pancasila Student Profile, which encompasses six dimensions, with its primary dimension being faith and devotion to God Almighty, alongside the cultivation of noble morals—serving as a fundamental foundation (Palihah & Andriany, 2024).

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) occupies a vital role in nurturing the aforementioned first dimension. The aim of PAI is to cultivate learners who embody faith, piety, and ethical integrity, while internalizing the values enshrined in the Qur'an and Hadith (Asfiati, 2021; Nasution, 2022). Conceptually, there is a strong correlation between the objectives of PAI and the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. This curricular adaptability facilitates the advancement of a more innovative, contextually relevant, and student-centered PAI educational experience (Marbella et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, a clear discrepancy exists between the aspirational nature of the policy and the pragmatic reality of its implementation. Numerous empirical investigations have elucidated that the enactment of the Merdeka Curriculum in PAI is beset by intricate challenges stemming from internal teacher factors, resource limitations, learner characteristics, socio-economic contexts, and suboptimal evaluation systems (Zulaiha et al., 2023; Indarta et al., 2022; Sukri et al., 2024).

A primary problematic arises from the instructional planning dimension. Educators are mandated to develop various Teaching Modules alongside lesson plans, which must encompass Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objectives (TP), and Learning Objective Flows (ATP). This newly introduced terminology is particularly challenging for veteran teachers accustomed to traditional formats (Zulaiha et al., 2023). Research conducted by Afriani (2024) indicates that PAI educators report confusion regarding the new terminology, resulting in a tendency to produce unoriginal teaching modules.

The subsequent challenge pertains to the pedagogical competence of educators. The Merdeka Curriculum requires teachers to act as facilitators who foster an active, critical, and independent learning environment. Educators are expected to implement differentiated learning strategies based on students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles (Sigalingging, 2023). However, not all educators possess an adequate understanding of these requirements. A portion of the teaching staff remains entrenched in traditional lecture-based methodologies, leading to monotonous educational experiences (Sukri et al., 2024).

An additional challenge arises from the characteristics of the students themselves. The Merdeka Curriculum stipulates that learners must engage critically, be assertive in inquiry, and demonstrate a high level of curiosity. Yet, prevailing conditions in many educational institutions show that students often exhibit passivity, a reluctance to ask questions, and a lack of initiative (Afriani, 2024). PAI educators find themselves in a quandary, negotiating between curricular expectations and the actual state of their students.

Limitations regarding resources and infrastructure present further challenges. The Merdeka Curriculum, with its emphasis on project-based and technology-enhanced learning, requires adequate facilities, including laboratories, projectors, internet connectivity, and teaching aids. Research conducted by Sukri et al. (2024) highlights the disparity in resource availability between urban and rural educational settings.

The socio-economic dimension of the community also acts as a barrier. The successful implementation of P5 necessitates parental involvement. Families belonging to lower-middle economic strata often show reluctance to engage in terms of financial contributions (Afriani,

2024). Moreover, the limited educational attainment of parents significantly influences their understanding of the importance of P5.

Constraints associated with time allocation present an equally consequential issue. The PAI subject within the elementary school framework is allocated only 4 instructional hours per week. (Indarta et al., 2022) have articulated critiques regarding the brevity of this allocation. Consequently, PAI educators frequently face the dilemma of prioritizing the achievement of educational objectives or ensuring comprehensive material comprehension among all students.

Investigations into the compatibility of the PAI curriculum with the Merdeka Curriculum largely consist of theoretical analyses, whereas empirical research addressing implementation challenges remains scarce (Fitrotunnisa et al., 2025). Recognizing the issues related to relevance, nonetheless, serves as a foundational step in devising strategies aimed at enhancing the efficacy of PAI. Given this context, this study seeks to examine the issues surrounding the relevance of the PAI curriculum within the Merdeka Curriculum, identifying the fundamental factors contributing to the discrepancy between ideal implementation and actual practice, and assessing the implications for the prospective evolution of the PAI curriculum

Methods

This study employs a qualitative methodology characterized by library research. The selection of this methodological framework aims to facilitate a profound understanding of the intricate issues associated with the relevance of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum within the Merdeka Curriculum through the analytical interpretation of diverse literary sources and policy documents (Creswell, 2016; Zed, 2018).

The primary data sources consist of official documents related to the Merdeka Curriculum policy, specifically the Decrees of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, numbered 56/M/2022 and 262/M/2022, along with the PAI Learning Outcomes Document and the P5 Development Guide (BSKAP, 2022). Secondary data sources derive from academic textbooks, nationally accredited SINTA journal articles, international scientific journals, as well as dissertations, theses, and findings from previous research. Source selection was conducted through purposive sampling based on established criteria of topical relevance, credibility, and the novelty of the information presented.

The data collection technique involved systematic documentation study, encompassing several steps: source identification, selection and classification, recording of essential information, thematic data organization, and reference management facilitated by Mendeley.

The data analysis technique integrates content analysis conducted in three distinct stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion formulation (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Data integrity was ensured through source triangulation and enhanced persistence in examination (Sugiyono, 2019).

By employing this methodical and rigorous approach, this study aspires to provide a comprehensive, in-depth, and academically accountable examination of the problematics of the relevance of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum within the Merdeka Curriculum, thereby yielding an analysis that aligns with the scholarly standards required for journal publication.

Results and Discussions

Research Findings

Conceptual Relevance of the PAI Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum

Based on an in-depth analysis of Merdeka Curriculum policy documents, scholarly literature, and previous research findings, it was found that conceptually and philosophically, the PAI curriculum possesses a high degree of relevance to the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. This relevance is particularly evident in the alignment between the objectives of PAI and the first dimension of the Pancasila Student Profile, namely "faithful, devoted to God Almighty, and having noble character."

The PAI Learning Outcomes (CP) document in the Merdeka Curriculum explicitly formulates that learners are expected to be able to: (1) read, write, understand, memorize, and practice the Qur'an and Hadith in daily life; (2) believe in, understand, practice, and propagate the pillars of faith and the pillars of Islam; (3) possess noble character towards Allah SWT, fellow human beings, the environment, and the universe; and (4) understand, internalize, and derive wisdom from the history of Islamic civilization to be applied in a contemporary context (BSKAP, 2022).

The flexibility of the Merdeka Curriculum opens opportunities for the development of more innovative and contextual PAI learning. Based on the synthesis of various literature, several forms of innovation that can be implemented include: (1) project-based learning to integrate Islamic values with social humanitarian projects; (2) differentiated instruction that adjusts content, process, product, and learning environment; (3) integration of PAI values into P5 activities; and (4) utilization of digital technology to create engaging and meaningful PAI learning experiences (Marbella et al., 2023; Tajuddin & Amaluddin, 2025).

However, this conceptual relevance has not yet been fully realized optimally in the field. Based on a synthesis of various empirical studies, the problematics of the relevance of the PAI curriculum within the Merdeka Curriculum can be classified into three main categories.

Instructional Planning Problematics

The first problematic relates to the difficulties PAI teachers face in developing Merdeka Curriculum teaching tools. Teachers are required to develop Teaching Modules as a replacement for the Lesson Plans (RPP) used in the 2013 Curriculum. Teaching Modules must be more flexible, contextual, student-centered, and integrally reflect CP, TP, and ATP.

Zulaiha et al. (2023) found that PAI teachers at SDN 17 Rejang Lebong experienced significant difficulty in transitioning from analyzing CP to TP, developing ATP, and incorporating all three into an engaging and contextual Teaching Module. This difficulty was primarily experienced by senior teachers who underwent culture shock due to the paradigm shift in the curriculum. Afriani (2024) confirmed these findings; one PAI teacher stated: "in making Teaching Modules, difficulties certainly exist even though Teaching Modules are actually very similar to RPP, but in this Teaching Module it must look interesting. Moreover, in this Merdeka Curriculum there are many new terms so I am a little confused."

Another problematic in the planning aspect is the lack of PAI teachers' understanding of the concept and procedures of diagnostic assessment. The Merdeka Curriculum obligates teachers to conduct diagnostic assessments at the beginning of learning to identify learners' initial competencies, strengths, weaknesses, interests, talents, and learning styles (Baruta, 2023). However, many PAI teachers do not yet comprehensively understand the purpose, procedures, instruments, and utilization of diagnostic assessment results. As a result, diagnostic assessments are often conducted as a mere formality, using only simple written tests that measure cognitive aspects without considering non-cognitive aspects (Sukri et al., 2024).

Instructional Implementation Problematics

The second problematic encompasses three main sub-categories: the implementation of differentiated instruction, the execution of formative and summative assessments, and the integration of PAI values into P5.

First, the Problematics of Implementing Differentiated Instruction. Differentiated instruction is an approach that meets the learning needs of each individual learner by differentiating four aspects: content, process, product, and learning environment, based on students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles (Sigalingging, 2023).

Indarta et al. (2022) found that not all PAI teachers possess adequate pedagogical competence to effectively implement differentiated instruction. The majority of teachers still use a one-size-fits-all approach, where all learners in a class are treated equally without considering individual differences. Afriani (2024) reported that in grades I and II of elementary school, PAI teachers had not fully implemented differentiated instruction due to limited conceptual understanding and difficulty managing student diversity within the classroom.

Second, the Problematics of Implementing Formative and Summative Assessment. In the Merdeka Curriculum, assessment functions not only to measure learning outcomes (assessment of learning), but also as feedback for teachers (assessment for learning) and as an integral part of the learning process (assessment as learning) (Baruta, 2023). Fitrotunnisa et al. (2025) found that PAI teachers still experience significant difficulties in designing authentic and comprehensive assessment instruments. The prevailing tendency is that teachers are more comfortable with cognitive assessments in the form of written tests, while affective (morals, attitudes) and psychomotor (worship practice) assessments are not yet systematically measured and well-documented.

Third, the Problematics of Implementing P5 (Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project). P5 is a project-based co-curricular activity designed to strengthen competencies and character in accordance with the Pancasila Student Profile, with a time allocation of about 20–30% of the total annual instructional hours. Afriani (2024) found that in the first semester of Merdeka Curriculum implementation, PAI teachers failed to implement P5 due to a fundamental misconception—the teachers assumed that P5 was merely a "harvest of works" (an exhibition of student products), whereas the focus of P5 assessment is on the implementation process, not the final product. The integration of PAI values into P5 themes such as "Sustainable Lifestyle," "Local Wisdom," and "Build Your Soul and Body" was also suboptimal due to the teachers' lack of understanding of how to connect PAI material with these themes.

External Factor Problematics

In addition to internal and pedagogical problematics, this study identifies four problematics originating from external factors.

First, Limitations of Supporting Facilities and Infrastructure. The Merdeka Curriculum requires more adequate facilities and infrastructure, such as computer laboratories, stable internet access, projectors, and various PAI teaching aids. Sukri et al. (2024) demonstrated that the gap in facility availability between urban and rural schools is very significant. Afriani (2024) reported a concrete finding: at SD Negeri 200402 Sabungan Jae, the electricity often went out when the teacher was about to use the projector, and the PAI teacher had difficulty obtaining teaching aids for Hajj material, such as ihram cloth.

Second, Diverse Student Characteristics and Learning Styles. The Merdeka Curriculum desires learners who are active, critical, and capable of developing 21st-century skills (4C: Critical thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, Communication). However, reality shows that not all learners possess these characteristics. Afriani (2024) found that in grades I and II of elementary school, learners tended to be passive and shy about asking questions. A PAI teacher expressed: "in the Merdeka Curriculum, students must be quick to reason, brave to ask questions, and think critically, but this is in stark contrast to the character of the children I teach in grades I and II."

Third, Socio-Economic Aspects of the Community. The implementation of P5 often requires the active participation of students' parents. However, for families with lower-middle economic conditions, participation in material form becomes an additional burden. Afriani (2024) found that a principal stated: "parents are very difficult to participate when it is linked to money or funds." The low level of parental education also influences their understanding of the importance of P5 for their children's character development.

Fourth, Limited Instructional Time Allocation. The PAI subject at the elementary level has an allocation of 4 instructional hours (JP) per week, equivalent to 140 minutes or about 2 hours and 20 minutes. Indarta et al. (2022) criticize this allocation as being too short compared to the demands of the learning outcomes that must be met. This condition is exacerbated by the demands of implementing diagnostic, formative, summative assessments, and differentiated instruction, all of which require considerable time, causing learning to often proceed in a rushed manner (Afriani, 2024).

Discussion

The research findings presented in detail above confirm a fairly sharp and significant gap between the ideality of the Merdeka Curriculum policy (*das Sollen*) and the reality of PAI curriculum implementation in the field (*das Sein*). Conceptually and philosophically, the PAI curriculum has a very high relevance to the spirit, objectives, and principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. However, this conceptual relevance has not fully materialized into actual relevance due to various implementation problematics that are multidimensional, systemic, and interconnected. This gap needs to be analyzed more deeply using relevant theoretical frameworks from various scientific perspectives.

Conceptual Relevance of the PAI Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum

The alignment between the objectives of PAI and the Merdeka Curriculum is actually not coincidental or accidental. Historically, Islamic religious education in Indonesia has always been positioned as a subject that bears a great moral responsibility in shaping the character, morals, and spirituality of learners. The Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System explicitly states that national education functions to develop abilities and shape the dignified character and civilization of the nation in order to educate the life of the nation (UU SISDIKNAS, 2003). PAI, with its normative sources derived from the Qur'an and Hadith, possesses a treasury of values that is very rich, complete, and comprehensive for shaping the noble character of learners.

The noble values in Islamic teachings such as honesty (*sidq*), trustworthiness, responsibility (*tanggung jawab*), mutual assistance (*ta'awun*), justice (*'adl*), moderation (*qana'ah*), patience (*sabr*), gratitude (*syukr*), sincerity (*ikhlas*), humility (*tawadhu'*), tolerance

(tasamuh), and consultation (syura) are inherently contained in Islamic teachings and are in line with the noble values of Pancasila. The Merdeka Curriculum, through the Pancasila Student Profile, formulates six character dimensions to be built within every Indonesian learner. The first dimension, "faithful, devoted to God Almighty, and having noble character," substantially and essentially shares a very fundamental similarity with the main objective of PAI. In fact, it can be firmly stated that PAI holds the most central, strategic, and irreplaceable position in realizing this first dimension of the Pancasila Student Profile. This is because PAI is specifically and structurally designed to build faith, piety, and noble character based on Islamic teachings sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith.

Furthermore, the Merdeka Curriculum provides flexibility and autonomy that previous curricula did not possess. In the 2013 Curriculum, for instance, PAI teachers often felt constrained by a curriculum structure that was very dense, rigid, and uniform for all schools in Indonesia without considering local context, learner characteristics, and teacher readiness. The very heavy material load caused the PAI learning process to often be superficial, rushed, and oriented only towards the completion of curriculum targets (curriculum-oriented) rather than understanding and internalization of values (learning-oriented). The Merdeka Curriculum, with its focus on essential material, provides more space for PAI teachers to delve deeper into key materials, conduct repetition for slow learners, and provide enrichment for fast learners. This flexibility is highly beneficial for PAI, which has many materials that are applicative, practical, and require direct demonstration and practice, such as procedures for wudhu (ablution), tayamum (dry ablution), salat, fasting, zakat, and haji.

Implementation Problematics as Factors Inhibiting Relevance

Although the conceptual relevance between the PAI curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum is very strong, the implementation problematics found in this study indicate that this relevance is still potential and has not yet become actual. Using a simple analogy, the PAI curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum are like two puzzle pieces that, in shape and design, are very compatible to be joined. However, due to various inhibiting factors, these two puzzle pieces have not yet been perfectly connected. An analysis of these implementation problematics can be explained through several relevant theoretical perspectives from various disciplines.

First, from the perspective of change management. The implementation of a new curriculum is fundamentally a complex, non-linear process of change, fraught with challenges. The diffusion of innovation theory developed by Rogers (2003) explains that the adoption of an innovation (in this case, the Merdeka Curriculum) by its users (in this case, PAI teachers) goes through stages that are not always smooth and are influenced by various factors. These factors include: the characteristics of the innovation itself (encompassing relative advantage, compatibility with existing values and practices, complexity, trialability, and observability), the characteristics of the adopters (attitude towards change, level of education, experience, and motivation), and the characteristics of the social system (prevailing norms, communication structure, and support from leadership).

The Merdeka Curriculum, with all its novelty and differences from previous curricula, possesses a relatively high level of complexity. This complexity is reflected in the emergence of various new terms previously unknown in the K-13 curriculum, such as CP, TP, ATP, Teaching Modules, diagnostic assessment, differentiated instruction, P5, and so forth. For senior teachers who have been accustomed to the old paradigm for decades and may have resistance to change, this level of complexity becomes a very serious obstacle. They experience confusion,

uncertainty, and even anxiety in facing the new curriculum, which ultimately impacts the suboptimal implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the PAI subject.

Second, from the perspective of teacher efficacy. The concept of self-efficacy proposed by Bandura (1997) refers to an individual's belief in their capability to successfully perform a task or achieve a goal. In the context of curriculum implementation, teachers with high self-efficacy tend to be more confident, more persistent in facing challenges, more open to innovation, and better able to overcome emerging obstacles. Conversely, teachers with low self-efficacy tend to doubt their own abilities, give up easily when encountering difficulties, and tend to avoid innovation by reverting to familiar and safe teaching methods.

This study indicates that the low self-efficacy of PAI teachers in facing the Merdeka Curriculum significantly contributes to the suboptimal implementation of the curriculum. Teachers who are not confident in their ability to develop Teaching Modules, implement differentiated instruction, or conduct diagnostic assessments correctly tend to avoid these tasks or perform them in a perfunctory manner merely to meet administrative demands. The tendency to return to a comfort zone is evident in the fact that many PAI teachers continue to use lecturing as the main method, a teacher-centered approach, and monotonous instructional media, even though the Merdeka Curriculum explicitly encourages student-centered learning with a variety of methods and media.

Third, from the perspective of the sociocultural theory developed by Vygotsky (1978). Vygotsky emphasizes that effective learning processes occur within what is called the zone of proximal development, the distance between the learner's actual developmental level (what they can do independently) and their potential developmental level (what they can do with the assistance of an adult or a more capable peer). The learning process within this zone is greatly influenced by the social interactions that occur in the learning environment as well as the scaffolding provided by the teacher, peers, and the surrounding environment.

In the context of Merdeka Curriculum implementation in the PAI subject, Vygotsky's theory is relevant for explaining why external factors such as limited facilities, low parental support, and unfavorable socio-economic conditions become significant barriers. Schools with limited facilities will find it difficult to provide optimal scaffolding to learners. Parents with low levels of education and strained economic conditions tend to be unable to provide adequate learning support at home. These external conditions directly and indirectly affect the quality of the PAI learning process in the classroom and hinder the achievement of the predetermined curriculum goals.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings of this study have several important implications, both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study enriches the body of knowledge in the field of curriculum development, particularly the Islamic religious education curriculum. It demonstrates that the relevance of a curriculum is determined not only by the alignment between its content, objectives, and underlying philosophy (which is conceptual) but is also greatly determined by the readiness of the implementers in the field (teachers), the availability of supporting resources (facilities and infrastructure), the condition of the learners, and the support from the socio-economic environment of the community. In other words, curriculum relevance is contextual, situational, and dynamic, not absolute, universal, and static. A curriculum that is highly relevant conceptually at the central level (macro level) can become less relevant or even completely irrelevant when implemented at the school level (meso level) and classroom level (micro level) if not supported by adequate conditions.

Furthermore, this study implicitly critiques the top-down approach that has been dominantly used in every curriculum change in Indonesia. The top-down approach is one where curriculum policy is formulated at the central level by experts and bureaucrats, and then implemented downwards to educational units, teachers, and learners. This approach often ignores the real conditions, the diversity of contexts, and the readiness of implementers in the field. As a result, curriculum policies that are good, sophisticated, and ideal on paper often fail or are less successful when implemented. This study demonstrates that the Merdeka Curriculum policy, which is conceptually excellent and relevant to 21st-century needs, has not yet been matched by adequate readiness from its teachers, supported by equitable infrastructure across all schools, or accompanied by a shift in the mindset and learning culture of learners and parents.

Practically, the findings of this study indicate the need for several strategic, concrete, and measurable steps to address the problematics of PAI curriculum relevance within the Merdeka Curriculum. These steps include: (1) continuous professional development for teachers through various forms of training that are not merely ceremonial or one-off, but also direct in-class mentoring, coaching, and supervisory visits by supervisors, principals, or more experienced senior teachers; (2) provision of more adequate and equitable facilities and infrastructure, especially for schools in underdeveloped, frontier, and outermost (3T) regions, with special budget allocations from central and local governments; (3) development of a more flexible, comprehensive, and adaptive evaluation system for PAI learning, which measures not only final outcomes (summative) but also processes (formative), and not only cognitive aspects but also affective and psychomotor aspects; and (4) enhancing community participation, especially from parents, through intensive and continuous socialization, communication, and education involving various stakeholders about the importance of the Merdeka Curriculum, the essence of P5, and how they can contribute positively without always being in material form.

Conclusions

This study concludes that the PAI curriculum conceptually has a high relevance to the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly in the alignment of objectives to shape faithful, pious, and morally upright character. However, this relevance has not been actualized in practice due to three main problematics: (1) instructional planning problematics, encompassing difficulties in developing Teaching Modules, CP, TP, ATP, and a lack of understanding of diagnostic assessment; (2) instructional implementation problematics, encompassing difficulties in implementing differentiated instruction, formative-summative assessment, and integrating PAI into P5; and (3) external factor problematics, encompassing limited facilities and infrastructure, passive student characteristics, the socio-economic conditions of the community, and the limited time allocation of 4 JP per week.

The gap between *das Sollen* (policy ideality) and *das Sein* (implementation reality) indicates that the relevance of the PAI curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum is still potential. Based on these findings, it is recommended that: (1) madrasah/school principals facilitate teacher learning communities, conduct developmental supervision, allocate budgets for infrastructure, build partnerships with parents, and evaluate implementation periodically; (2) PAI teachers enhance their competence through training, collaborate with colleagues, utilize digital learning resources, and build active communication with parents; and (3) future researchers conduct comparative studies across regions or educational levels, as well as classroom action research to test strategies for overcoming implementation problematics.

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