# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM AND *SELF-REGULATED LEARNING* BY STUDENTS IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND MORAL EDUCATION SUBJECTS AT STATE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL 5 OGAN KOMERING ULU

**\*[1]Asparita, [2]Siti Maratus Solekah, [3]Mahfudz**
\*[1,2,3]Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Baturaja
Email: \*[1]asparita.oku@gmail.com, [2]likahanin224@gmail.com,
[3]mahfudzsaha54@gmail.com

**Abstract**
This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and its relationship with the development of students' self-regulated learning (SRL). Employing a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation at a senior high school in OKU Regency. The findings reveal that the Merdeka Curriculum encourages active student engagement through project-based learning, reflection, and differentiated strategies. Its implementation provides space for students to set learning goals, monitor progress, and evaluate outcomes independently. A positive correlation is found between the curriculum and the development of SRL skills, especially among students who receive strong support from teachers and their learning environment. However, disparities persist due to differences in social background and teachers' pedagogical readiness. The study concludes that the Merdeka Curriculum holds great potential in shaping autonomous lifelong learners, provided that systemic support is strengthened through teacher training, structured reflection practices, and school-family collaboration.
**Keywords:** Learning Autonomy, Merdeka Curriculum, Reflective Learning, Self-Regulated Learning.

*Abstrak*
*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka serta hubungannya dengan pengembangan self-regulated learning (SRL) peserta didik. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode studi kasus, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi pada salah satu sekolah menengah atas di Kabupaten OKU. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Kurikulum Merdeka mendorong partisipasi aktif peserta didik melalui pembelajaran berbasis proyek, refleksi, dan diferensiasi strategi belajar. Implementasi ini memberikan ruang bagi siswa untuk mengatur tujuan belajar, memantau kemajuan, dan mengevaluasi hasil secara mandiri. Terdapat korelasi positif antara penerapan kurikulum ini dan berkembangnya keterampilan SRL, terutama pada siswa yang memperoleh dukungan kuat dari guru dan lingkungan belajar. Namun, disparitas tetap muncul akibat perbedaan latar belakang sosial dan kesiapan pedagogis guru. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Kurikulum Merdeka memiliki potensi besar dalam membentuk pembelajar mandiri sepanjang hayat, dengan catatan perlunya*

*penguatan sistemik melalui pelatihan guru, refleksi terstruktur, dan kolaborasi sekolah keluarga.*
**Kata kunci***: Kemandirian Belajar, Kurikulum Merdeka, Pembelajaran, Reflektif Self-Regulated Learning.*

## INTRODUCTION

The paradigm shift in national education in Indonesia has entered a new phase with the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. This curriculum is a response to the complex challenges of the 21st century, which not only require mastery of academic content but also emphasize strengthening the learning competencies, character, and independence of students (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022; Efendi & Raharjo, 2022). The Merdeka Curriculum promotes freedom of learning through a student-centered approach, differentiation, and strengthening the role of teachers as facilitators (Hidayat & Widodo, 2022). In this context, the ability of students to regulate themselves in the learning process, known as self-regulated learning (SRL), becomes a very important and relevant component (Zimmerman, 2002; Paris & Paris, 2001).

Self-regulated learning refers to an individual's capacity to actively manage their own learning process, including planning, implementing learning strategies, monitoring progress, and evaluating learning outcomes. The SRL theory developed by Zimmerman (2002) explains that learners who have self-regulation skills tend to have high intrinsic motivation, persistence in completing tasks, and reflective abilities in developing effective learning strategies. This is in line with the learning motivation theories developed by Pintrich (2000), Deci & Ryan (2000), and Bandura (1997), which emphasize the role of intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and goal orientation in influencing learning independence. Thus, these skills are an important foundation in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which demands independence, flexibility, and adaptability from students in a more open and contextual learning environment (OECD, 2019).

However, the reality in the field shows that not all students are ready and able to optimally apply independent learning strategies. Research conducted by Yulianti et al. (2023) shows that many students still have a high dependence on teacher guidance, weak time management, and low awareness to reflect on their learning process. This shows a gap between the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum and the actual capacity of students to implement the principles of self-regulated learning (Nurhayati & Amin, 2023).

Furthermore, the success of the Merdeka Curriculum's implementation is largely determined by the extent to which schools and teachers are able to create a learning ecosystem that encourages student independence. Teachers are required not only to deliver material, but also to design learning activities that stimulate metacognition, provide space for exploration, and provide meaningful feedback (Putra & Arifin, 2022; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012). As stated by Paris & Paris (2001) and Winne & Hadwin (2008), teachers play an important role in guiding students through *modeling*, *scaffolding*, and providing continuous learning reflection strategies.

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study type. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of how the Merdeka Curriculum is implemented in schools and how students develop self-regulated learning in the context of autonomous learning. According to Yin (2018), qualitative case studies allow researchers to explore phenomena in real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are unclear. This view is reinforced by Garrison (1997), who emphasizes that qualitative research allows for comprehensive exploration of independent learning models. The research location was determined purposively, namely at one of the public high schools in OKU Regency that has been implementing the Merdeka Curriculum gradually since the 2022/2023 academic year. This selection was based on considerations of the school's readiness to apply the principles of differentiated learning and the existence of fairly active student learning reflection practices.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the experiences, perceptions, and strategies used by teachers in facilitating self-regulated learning. Observations were made of teaching and learning activities, particularly in formative assessment sessions and weekly reflection activities. The documentation analyzed included teaching modules, student reflection journals, and curriculum implementation reports. Data analysis was performed using thematic analysis techniques as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis stages began with data transcription, repeated reading, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, and interpretive narrative compilation. To increase the credibility of the findings, the researcher used data triangulation techniques and member checking with key informants.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum

Based on observations and in-depth interviews, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the schools where the research was conducted has shown significant progress in terms of lesson planning, the use of teaching modules, and the active involvement of students in the learning process. Teachers have attempted to apply the principle of differentiated learning by giving students the opportunity to choose learning methods that suit their styles and interests. In addition, there have been systematic efforts to integrate the Pancasila learner profile into daily learning activities (Efendi & Raharjo, 2022).

However, challenges are still felt in terms of strengthening the role of teachers as facilitators. Some teachers are still confused about how to develop diagnostic assessments and are not yet fully accustomed to facilitating student learning reflection. Several teachers acknowledged that the transition from an instructional approach to facilitating autonomous learning requires a paradigm shift and ongoing training. This is consistent

with the findings of Rachmadtullah et al. (2023) and in line with the educational motivation theory described by Santrock (2021) and Syah (2020) that the success of the new curriculum is largely determined by the pedagogical readiness of teachers.

**B. The Relationship between the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and** *Self-Regulated Learning*

The results of the analysis show that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is directly and positively correlated with the development of self-regulated learning skills in students. This curriculum inherently supports the growth of independent learning through elements of differentiation, project-based learning, and reflective activities (Putra & Arifin, 2022; OECD, 2019). Interviews with students show that they are becoming accustomed to setting their own study schedules, reflecting on their learning achievements, and modifying their learning strategies when encountering difficulties. This phenomenon is in line with the self-regulated learning model developed by Zimmerman (2002), which emphasizes three main phases: planning, implementation, and reflection. The Merdeka Curriculum structurally provides space for all of these phases to be internalized in the student learning cycle (Winne & Hadwin, 2008). Skills such as setting learning goals, monitoring understanding, and evaluating results are further honed because the learning design is process-oriented, not just focused on the final result.

In observations of weekly reflection activities facilitated by teachers, it was found that students began to be able to identify their strengths and weaknesses in the learning process honestly and in a structured manner. This reinforces the findings of Paris & Paris (2001) and Deci & Ryan (2000), who stated that an adaptive and flexible learning environment can strengthen the development of students' self-regulation capacity. However, the development of self-regulated learning is not uniform. Students from environments with low learning support show slower SRL development. This indicates that the role of teachers as facilitators, constructive feedback, and family support are important factors in maximizing the potential of the Merdeka Curriculum in shaping independent students (Nurhayati & Amin, 2023).

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum provides new space for the growth of student learning independence through a learning approach that emphasizes differentiation, context-based projects, and personal reflection. The results of this study indicate that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has encouraged students to actively engage in the learning process, design learning strategies, and evaluate their achievements independently (Zimmerman, 2002; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012). In this context, self-regulated learning skills develop along with increased learning autonomy facilitated by teachers and the school environment (Bandura, 1997; Pintrich, 2000).

However, the effectiveness of the relationship between the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and the strengthening of self-regulated learning (SRL) is highly dependent on the pedagogical readiness of teachers, school system support, and the social background of students (Hidayat & Widodo, 2022; Santrock, 2021). Not all students

experience equal SRL development, especially those from less supportive learning environments. Therefore, more systemic interventions are needed in the form of teacher training, reflective learning design, and strengthening collaboration between schools and families (Paris & Paris, 2001; OECD, 2019). Thus, the Merdeka Curriculum can be an important catalyst in shaping students who are independent, reflective, and responsible for their learning process.

**CONCLUSION**

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum provides new opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills through a learning approach that emphasizes differentiation, context-based projects, and personal reflection. The results of this study show that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has encouraged students to actively engage in the learning process, design learning strategies, and evaluate their achievements independently. In this context, self-regulated learning skills develop along with increased learning autonomy facilitated by teachers and the school environment. However, the effectiveness of the relationship between the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and the strengthening of self-regulated learning greatly depends on the pedagogical readiness of teachers, school system support, and the social background of students. Not all students experience equal SRL development, especially those from less supportive learning environments. Therefore, more systemic interventions are needed in the form of teacher training, reflective learning design, and strengthening collaboration between schools and families. Thus, the Merdeka Curriculum can be an important catalyst in shaping students who are independent, reflective, and responsible for their learning process. However, this ideal can only be achieved if all components of education work synergistically to create an adaptive, inclusive learning ecosystem that is oriented towards the long-term development of students as lifelong learners.

**REFERENCES**

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: W.H. Freeman.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist, 55*(1), 68–78. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68

Efendi, M., & Raharjo, T. (2022). Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka dalam pembelajaran abad 21. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter, 12*(2), 233–245. https://doi.org/10.21831/jpk.v12i2.49821

Garrison, D. R. (1997). Self-directed learning: Toward a comprehensive model. *Adult Education Quarterly, 48*(1), 18–33. https://doi.org/10.1177/074171369704800103

Hidayat, R., & Widodo, A. (2022). Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar dan tantangan guru di sekolah menengah. *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan, 28*(1), 12–25. https://doi.org/10.17977/jip.v28i1.31462

Kemendikbudristek. (2022). *Panduan Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka*. Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Pendidikan Dasar, dan Pendidikan Menengah.

Nurhayati, S., & Amin, A. (2023). Hubungan kemandirian belajar dengan hasil belajar siswa pada implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan, 20*(1), 75–88. https://doi.org/10.23887/jpp.v20i1.51239

OECD. (2019). *OECD Learning Compass 2030*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Paris, S. G., & Paris, A. H. (2001). Classroom applications of research on self-regulated learning. *Educational Psychologist, 36*(2), 89–101. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15326985EP3602_4

Pintrich, P. R. (2000). The role of goal orientation in self-regulated learning. In M. Boekaerts, P. Pintrich, & M. Zeidner (Eds.), *Handbook of Self-Regulation* (pp. 451–502). San Diego: Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012109890-2/50043-3

Putra, R. E., & Arifin, Z. (2022). Peran Guru dalam Meningkatkan Self-Regulated Learning Melalui Pembelajaran Berbasis Proyek. *Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran, 8*(1), 35–49. https://doi.org/10.26740/jipp.v8n1.p35-49

Rachmadtullah, R., Syaodih, E., & Nurtanto, M. (2023). Tantangan Guru dalam Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka: Studi Fenomenologis. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 28*(1), 22–33. https://doi.org/10.24832/jpnk.v28i1.1051

Santrock, J. W. (2021). *Educational Psychology* (7th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill Education.

Schunk, D. H., & Zimmerman, B. J. (2012). *Motivation and Self-Regulated Learning: Theory, Research, and Applications*. New York: Routledge.

Syah, M. (2020). *Psikologi Pendidikan dengan Pendekatan Baru*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.

Winne, P. H., & Hadwin, A. F. (2008). *The weave of motivation and self-regulated learning*. In D. H. Schunk & B. J. Zimmerman (Eds.), Motivation and self-regulated learning (pp. 297–314). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Yulianti, L., Handayani, S., & Rahayu, P. (2023). Kesiapan Self-Regulated Learning Siswa dalam Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Psikologi Pendidikan dan Konseling, 9*(1), 45–58. https://doi.org/10.21009/JPPK.091.05

Zimmerman, B. J. (2002). Becoming a self-regulated learner: An overview. *Theory Into Practice, 41*(2), 64–70. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4102_2