

## Innovative Learning Strategies in Social Sciences: The Merdeka Curriculum Experience at Madrasah Tsanawiyah

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores social science teaching strategies implemented under the Merdeka Curriculum at Madrasah Tsanawiyah. The Merdeka Curriculum grants schools autonomy in designing educational approaches to meet specific student needs while aligning with overarching objectives. A qualitative case study approach was employed, incorporating interviews, observations, and document analysis to examine the strategies used by social science teachers at Madrasah Tsanawiyah. The research focused on understanding how educators navigate the curriculum's flexibility and address challenges. The findings reveal that teachers adopt diverse strategies tailored to their students' needs, emphasizing creativity and engagement despite limited resources and time constraints. These strategies demonstrate educators' commitment to maximizing the potential of the Merdeka Curriculum while overcoming implementation barriers. The study provides valuable insights into the practical application of the Merdeka Curriculum in social science education, particularly in resource-limited contexts. It highlights the importance of teacher adaptability and innovation in achieving curricular goals. These findings have implications for curriculum development, professional growth initiatives, and the broader improvement of social science education. This research contributes to the understanding of curriculum autonomy by illustrating its implementation challenges and opportunities within Madrasah Tsanawiyah. Future studies could explore specific teaching strategies in greater depth, evaluate the curriculum's impact on student outcomes, and identify global parallels to enhance the effectiveness of autonomous educational models in diverse contexts.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbudristek) has introduced a new policy under Regulation No. 56 of 2022, which provides guidelines for implementing the latest curriculum aimed at revitalizing learning in Indonesia. This policy establishes an independent curriculum structure to be adopted by educational institutions from kindergarten through secondary levels. The curriculum is divided into distinct phases: Phase A for grades I and II of elementary school, Phase B for grades III and IV, Phase C for grades V and VI, and Phase D for grades VII through IX at the junior high school level (Suyadi et al., 2022). Ideally, this curriculum framework emphasizes active participation from both teachers and learners, encouraging students to act as active agents in their education, and cultivating their potential based on their interests.

Students' diverse interests and abilities demand an approach that grants them autonomy to develop their skills without being confined by rigid teacher-centered methods. Teachers, in turn, are envisioned as mediators, guiding students to achieve learning goals through a process that fosters moral, intellectual, and creative development. Effective learning should enhance critical thinking, creativity, and knowledge construction. However, the current reality of social science education often falls short of these ideals. Many social science teachers still rely heavily on conceptual delivery through traditional lecture methods, which limits student engagement and diminishes interest in the subject (Isroatul Khusna et al., 2022a).

This conventional approach not only hampers student interest but also fails to provide a contextual understanding of social science's relevance to real-life scenarios. Social science education, inherently tied to the dynamics of human society, is crucial for developing critical awareness and practical skills. Unfortunately, the perception of social studies as a subject rooted in rote memorization rather than practical application further alienates students. This disconnect highlights the urgent need for innovative teaching methods that integrate social science concepts into meaningful, real-world contexts, making the subject more engaging and relevant for today's learners.

While significant progress has been made in exploring various aspects of social science, including topics such as agricultural digitalization (Klerkx et al., 2019) and computational social science (Lazer et al., 2020), gaps remain in understanding certain domains. Previous studies have focused extensively on natural sciences and engineering perspectives or employed methodologies such as Structural Equation Modeling (Dash & Paul, 2021). However, there is limited exploration of how educational strategies in specific contexts, such as Social Studies within the Indonesian Merdeka Curriculum framework, address localized learning needs while aligning with global educational goals. Additionally, existing research often overlooks the nuances of how teacher-driven curriculum adjustments can foster better engagement and understanding among diverse student groups.

This research aims to address these gaps by examining the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah Tsanawiyah, with a focus on Social Studies teaching strategies. The study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how teachers adapt and integrate innovative pedagogical methods to meet both local and global educational objectives. By analyzing the unique approaches adopted within this context, the research highlights the significance of granting schools the autonomy to develop curricula tailored to their specific needs and student demographics.

The novelty of this research lies in its contextualized approach to investigating the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic secondary schools, a subject that has received limited attention in the global education literature. Furthermore, this study's focus on Social Studies as a vehicle for fostering critical thinking, contextual understanding, and global competencies provides a fresh perspective on curriculum innovation.

The findings of this research are expected to have both national and international significance. Nationally, they will provide insights for Indonesian policymakers and educators to refine the Merdeka Curriculum and improve teaching practices. Internationally, the study offers valuable lessons for education practitioners, curriculum developers, and policymakers in other countries seeking to balance localized educational needs with global learning standards. By emphasizing diverse and context-

sensitive learning strategies, this research aims to contribute to the development of globally relevant education systems that better prepare students to face complex real-world challenges.

## 2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative methodology to explore the implementation of Social Science teaching strategies under the Merdeka Curriculum at Madrasah Tsanawiyah in Indonesia. The research was conducted in three interconnected stages, each designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the curriculum's application and its impact on teaching practices.

The first stage involved direct classroom observation, where the researcher examined the real-time implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. By observing Social Science classes, the researcher gained valuable insights into instructional methods, classroom dynamics, and the interactions between teachers and students. This immersive approach allowed for a detailed account of how teachers adapted the curriculum to their instructional practices and how students responded to these strategies in the learning environment. The observations captured the nuances of practical teaching methods and provided a foundation for understanding the immediate effects of curriculum application.

In the second stage, in-depth interviews were conducted with Social Science teachers to delve into their experiences and perspectives. These interviews focused on uncovering the challenges faced by educators, the strategies they employed to adapt to the Merdeka Curriculum, and their reflections on its influence on teaching and learning. By eliciting detailed and personal accounts, this phase provided rich qualitative data, offering a deeper understanding of how the curriculum shapes teaching practices and the obstacles encountered during its implementation.

The final stage consisted of document analysis, which involved reviewing curriculum guides, lesson plans, and samples of student work. This analysis complemented the observational and interview data by offering an additional layer of context, allowing the researcher to identify key elements of curriculum design and application. Through this method, the study highlighted how instructional strategies aligned with the intended curriculum outcomes and how they were reflected in student outputs.

By integrating classroom observations, teacher interviews, and document analysis, the study provided a holistic view of Social Science teaching strategies within the Merdeka Curriculum. This multifaceted approach enabled a robust examination of both the theoretical and practical aspects of curriculum implementation. The findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of the curriculum's effectiveness and its implications for teaching and learning in this educational context.

## 3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Learning Evaluation

The usefulness or function of evaluation or assessment is often equated with the purpose of assessment or evaluation. When viewed from the meaning of the word, the purpose of the assessment means something that will be achieved while the function shows the role played in order to achieve the goal of Learning Evaluation. There are three key words related to evaluation design, namely Test (test) measurement (Measurement), and evaluation (evaluation) ('Online Survey', 2022). In planning and design learning system, evaluation design is very important to be developed. This is because through proper evaluation, it can determine the effectiveness of the programme and the success of students carrying out learning activities so that information on evaluation activities a learning designer can make decisions whether the learning programme he designed needs to be improved or not, which parts are considered to have weaknesses so that they need improvement (Fitri & Asrizal, 2023). So, Evaluation (evaluation) is a systematic assessment of the benefits or usefulness of an object, from an educational

point of view, what is meant by evaluation is a systematic process to determine how far the instructional objectives are achieved by learning (Wasehudin et al., 2023).

Evaluation is one component of the learning system in particular, and the education system in general (Taridala et al., 2023). The term evaluation is no longer something new in today's life. Especially for people involved in education. The term evaluation comes from the English language, Evaluation, which means assessment. Evaluation has many different meanings, according to Wang and Brown in a book entitled *Essentials of Educational Evaluation*, it is said that "Evaluation refers to the act or process of determining the value of something", meaning "evaluation is an action or a process to determine the value of something" (Amiruddin et al., 2023). Suchman views, "evaluation as a process of determining the results that have been achieved by some planned activities to support the achievement of goals" (N. E. Wardani et al., 2023).

Another definition put forward by Stufflebeam says that, "evaluation is the process of describing the search and providing information that is very useful for decision makers in determining alternative decisions". The definition of evaluation is further emphasised by Sudjana "with limits as a process of giving or determining value to certain objects based on certain criteria" (Agustina et al., 2022). Arifin further said, "evaluation is a process not a result (product). The result obtained from evaluation activities is the quality of something, whether it concerns value or meaning, while the activity to arrive at giving value or meaning is evaluation."

Evaluation is defined in various ways by different scholars. Guba and Lincoln describe evaluation as the process of assessing the value and significance of a subject under consideration. This subject can take many forms, including individuals, objects, activities, conditions, or specific entities. From this perspective, two key elements characterize evaluation:

**Table 1.** Comparing Views on Evaluation

Aspect of Evaluation	Traditional View	Modern View
Nature	Process (series of ongoing actions)	Act of giving value/meaning
Focus	Implementation	Results
Outcomes	Not directly a result	Determines value based on results
Application	Distinguishing learning outcome vs. learning process evaluation	Measuring achievement against set objectives

Learning evaluation is a systematic process designed to assess the effectiveness of educational activities in helping students achieve their predetermined goals. This process involves gathering and analyzing data on both learning outcomes and the learning process itself. By evaluating outcomes, educators determine whether students have met the specific objectives set for them, providing insight into the success of the learning activities. Simultaneously, evaluating the learning process examines the effectiveness of teaching methods, materials, and classroom interactions, revealing how well these elements support student learning. This comprehensive approach enables educators to identify strengths and weaknesses in both teaching and learning, guiding improvements in instructional strategies, materials, and classroom practices. Ultimately, a thorough evaluation system supports continuous enhancement of educational quality, ensuring that both the process and outcomes of learning are optimized to better support student success.

From some of the definitions above, it can be concluded that evaluation is a tool used to weigh and determine the value and meaning of something that can be in the form of people, objects, activities,

conditions or a certain unit based on a set of agreed criteria and can be accounted for. If the definition of evaluation is associated with 'learning outcomes', evaluation means an action or process to determine the value of one's learning success (students) after carrying out the learning process). It is very important to evaluate learning to find out whether the learning system implemented by educators is effective (Suharti et al., 2022). If evaluation is not done, it means that the educator is not making progress in designing the learning system (H. K. Wardani et al., 2023). Educators must do new things to change the classroom learning system. This includes materials, methods, media, learning resources, environment, and assessment system.

In the function of learning evaluation is often considered as one of the scary things for students, because indeed, through this activity can be determined still students in further learning, assumptions such as this must be corrected, evaluation must be seen as something reasonable, that is, as something for an integral of a learning process. There are some functions. Feedback is a crucial instrument in education, serving multiple purposes. Firstly, it provides students with valuable insights into their progress and performance, aiding their understanding of what areas they have mastered and where improvement is needed. This awareness enables students to discern essential learning objectives and prioritize their study efforts effectively. Additionally, feedback plays a pivotal role in informing curriculum development, offering valuable information to refine and enhance educational programs. Moreover, it guides decision-making processes, aiding educators and stakeholders in making informed choices regarding students' academic paths and future endeavors. Furthermore, feedback serves as a valuable resource for curricular developers, facilitating the clarification of learning goals and ensuring their alignment with educational objectives. Overall, feedback functions as a comprehensive tool for all stakeholders involved in education, contributing to continuous improvement and advancement within school systems.

### 3.2 Learning Effectiveness

The influence resulting from action is effective learning. Efficiency is the result of achieving a goal. It's also comparable to Kusumah's statement that effectiveness is a measure of whether a goal or goal has been achieved (Anggraini & Dewi, 2023). If any program or activity is well designed and done well, learning can be said to be effective or successful. Learning is changing the way one thinks and acquires knowledge through practice. Learning can also change one's behavior to be better than ever. Considering both opinions, we can say that learning is something that has the potential to change a person (Raissi et al., 2019). Learning effectiveness is an important factor. In a learning process, factors that influence learning effectiveness include:

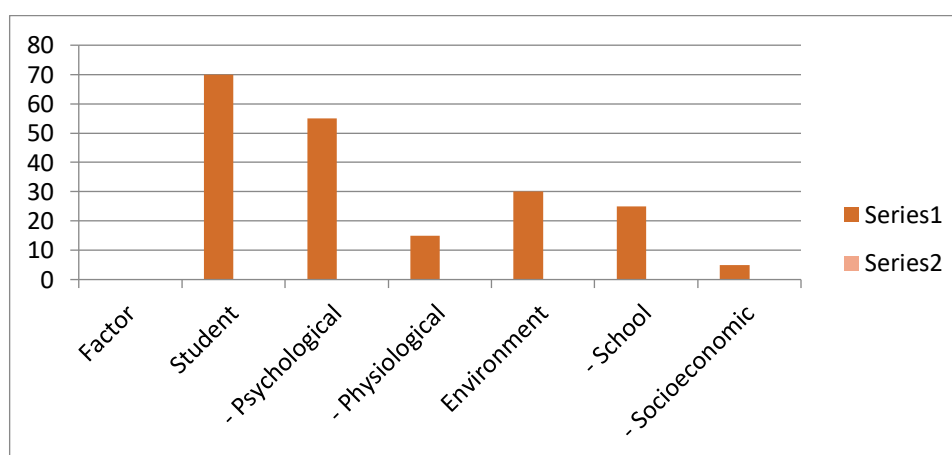


Figure 1. Student Learning Factors

Factors within students and factors outside students are two main categories of factors that affect learning effectiveness. The psychological and physiological aspects of students include factors such as IQ, learning ability, learning motivation, attitudes, feelings, and interests. These factors are important to determine how far students can understand the lesson. Students can better results if they have strong learning abilities and strong motivation. Physiological factors, such as the student's physical and mental condition, are also important (Jorgenson et al., 2019). Students who are in good physical and mental condition tend to be better prepared to do well. On the contrary, students' external factors consist of many things. On the other hand, factors outside the student's self cover a lot of things. Learning regulators such as a well-designed curriculum, effective teaching methods, awake school discipline, adequate learning facilities, and grouping of students to suit individual needs all affect the quality of learning (Kusumawati, 2023). In addition, social factors in the school, such as positive student-teacher relationships and supportive interactions between students, are very influential. Situational factors, like the socio-economic status of students, the conditions of the place of study, and the home environment, also affect the quality of learning (Ridayani et al., 2022). Understanding and managing these factors in a learning context is crucial for educators and stakeholders in developing effective learning strategies to ensure that students the best learning outcomes.

### 3.3 The Context of the Independent Curriculum in Madrasah Tsanawiyah

Currently, Indonesian education is in the era of 4.0 to 5.0. The hallmark of education in Online Learning 4.0-based is a higher level of teacher and student connectivity through the internet network. Not only that, but almost all institutional operations and administration are managed digitally (Asvial et al., 2021). Starting from the acceptance of new students with an online system, digital-based libraries, and even switching the exam model, from paper-based tests to online-based tests. Therefore, in this era of industrial revolution 4.0, educators are required to have strong *core competencies* including *educational competence, competence in research, competence for digital, competence in globalization, and competence in future straties* so that they are able to master technology in the application of learning in virtual spaces (Isroatul Khusna et al., 2022b).

In the 5.0 era, education must adapt swiftly and effectively to the digitalization of systems. This adaptation emphasizes three core aspects in the educational curriculum: character education, the development of critical, creative, and innovative thinking skills, and the integration of technology into learning processes. Character education equips students with the ability to adapt to future changes, fostering independent learning, the application of knowledge, analytical thinking, and the blending of intellectual insights with ethical values reflected in daily behavior (Hassanien et al., 2020). Moreover, critical thinking skills paired with technological proficiency define the essence of 21st-century education, positioning students not as passive recipients but as active participants in the learning process (Syahriani et al., 2023). According to Barus, there are seven learning models aligned with the characteristics of the 5.0 era, as outlined by Vela Acero and Jiménez-Cortés (2021), which include:

**Table 2.** Comparison of Active Learning Models

Model	Focus	Key Benefit
Discovery Learning	Student exploration	Deeper understanding, problem-solving
Inquiry-Based Learning	Experimentation and questioning	Critical thinking, self-directed learning, problem solving
Problem-Based Learning (PBL)	Active problem-solving	Collaboration and communication
Production-Based Training (PBT)	Practical experience	Real world skills

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Teaching Factory	Vocational training	Jobready skills
Blended Learning	Flexibility and personalization	Increased access, self paced learning

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This demonstrates that the role of teachers in 21st-century education, particularly in the context of the 5.0 era, is crucial and pivotal. Teachers are essential in guiding students to acquire knowledge and skills that are seamlessly integrated with technology, enabling them to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. In response to these demands, the Ministry of Education and Culture has introduced the concept of independent learning. This approach is designed to equip students with the capability to navigate and thrive amidst social changes, cultural shifts, and the rapid pace of technological advancement. Independent learning not only empowers students to develop autonomy in their educational journey but also ensures that schools and teachers foster an environment conducive to creative and independent thought. By promoting self-directed learning, educational institutions can provide a more flexible and personalized learning experience that encourages students to explore and innovate. This paradigm shift is intended to create a more dynamic and adaptable educational system, where both educators and learners have the freedom to engage in creative problem-solving and critical thinking, ultimately preparing students for the complexities and opportunities of the modern world (Pal & Vanijja, 2020).

In 2020, the Center for Curriculum and Books developed a curriculum along with textbooks (main textbooks) that carry the spirit of independent learning. This textbook is one of the learning materials for students and teachers (Syahriani et al., 2024). Social science textbooks are arranged based on learning outcomes from the curriculum that carries the spirit of independent learning. This curriculum emphasizes aspects of competence, including attitudes, knowledge, and skills, that are delivered in an integrated manner through materials, activities, and projects (Fidan & Tuncel, 2019). The Independent Curriculum in social science learning is a learning approach that provides flexibility for educational units and teachers to develop student potential and flexibility for students to learn according to their abilities and development. This curriculum emphasizes aspects of competence, including attitudes, knowledge, and skills, that are delivered in an integrated manner through materials, activities, and projects (E & Yu, 2018).

Social Sciences subjects are a combination of various social sciences and humanities families. Human interaction as individuals and groups with nature and their environment in space and time span is the focus of social science (Camerer et al., 2018). The purpose of social science learning in the Independent Curriculum is to foster students' social science perspectives in studying human, community, and environmental phenomena and be able to contribute positively to being active citizens in order to think and act in accordance with the values of Pancasila. Madrasah Tsanawiyah has held a Workshop on Preparation for the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum in 2022. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in social science learning in Madrasah Tsanawiyah provides flexibility for educational units and teachers to develop student potential and flexibility for students to learn according to their abilities and development.

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in social science learning in Madrasah Tsanawiyah involves several important considerations. Firstly, social science education adopts a learner-centered inquiry approach, which emphasises the improvement of knowledge and skills relating to the interaction of individuals with their environment. Secondly, the nature of social studies includes social, economic, and cultural human behaviour in the context of an ever-evolving society. Therefore, the learning process prioritises the achievement of competencies rather than just the completion of material, with educational material as a tool to achieve learning outcomes. In addition, educators in Madrasah Tsanawiyah have the autonomy to develop curriculum materials that are aligned with the objectives of the Independent Curriculum, including social science textbooks that are

adjusted to the standards of SMP / MTs Class VIII (*Salma, personal communication, 17 January 2024*). In addition, in social science learning, students are actively engaged in understanding social dynamics first-hand, with educators using appropriate strategies to facilitate meaningful social interactions and instil awareness of the role of society. Overall, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum aims to foster students' social science perspective, empowering them to understand human phenomena, societal structures and environmental dynamics. Ultimately, the goal is to foster active citizenship and promote adherence to Pancasila values through informed thinking and positive contributions to society.

### **3.4 Free Learning Curriculum Training**

Before implementing the independent learning curriculum at Madrasah Tsanawiyah, this school implemented the 2013 Curriculum. The up-to-date Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is something that must be followed by teachers at Madrasah Tsanawiyah. The government has conducted training for teachers at Madrasah Tsanawiyah (*R. Phitriyah, personal communication, 17 January 2024*). There are several trainings that have been attended by teachers in this school. In addition, schools need to understand the regulations and prepare supporting documents in the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. In the interview conducted, the preparation process for the implementation of this independent curriculum for all school stakeholders was initiated by the Wakasek for Curriculum to compile the things needed in learning (*Akmal, personal communication, 20 January 2024*).

Madrasah Tsanawiyah is also a model school for the implementation of this Merdeka Belajar Curriculum at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level. Learning tools, media and teacher readiness in carrying out learning for one school year which will take place with the concept of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. This is important to note because in learning, the application of this curriculum has undergone several significant changes. Various successes must be carried out systematically both internally and externally because the government has taken preventive steps by developing skills and abilities by improving the curriculum. The preparation carried out includes an analysis of the initial objectives regarding what content or material must be taught by the teacher concerned to students in the teaching and learning process. The Wakasek for Curriculum also explained that while the Merdeka learning curriculum was running, he was also still active in the process of developing this curriculum. Likewise, student teachers who have begun to implement this in the classes they teach are also still often actively participating in training and seeing developments in the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum.

### **3.5 Implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in Learning**

This independent learning curriculum is implemented in accordance with the rules of the Ministry of Education and Culture and circular letter number 1 of 2020 concerning the freedom of learning policy. Although Madrasah Tsanawiyah is under the coordination of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, for the latest face-to-face curriculum is implemented. In the implementation of the curriculum, there are positive and negative impacts for teachers who teach. The positive impact felt by teachers is that with a very high enthusiasm and interest in learning and sufficient understanding, this curriculum is a very good opportunity to gain knowledge from other fields so that they have broad insight and experience (*F. Yufriadi, personal communication, 17 January 2024*). The implementation of the independent curriculum does not occur simultaneously, but still refers to policies that allow school flexibility in curriculum implementation.

However, the assessment of students who lack motivation or difficulty understanding lessons will feel burdened with this curriculum and this becomes an important supervision for teachers. Students feel uncomfortable and may not even want to do cross-curriculum assignments (*Young, 2014*). The negative impact in the implementation of this curriculum is that teachers work a little extra so that there is a burden that must be passed regarding examples of learning tools such as teaching modules and patent project modules. In addition, it is difficult for students to achieve certain educational goals that are only grades and set by the curriculum. This is only based on target focus and often students feel

burdened by the necessity of achieving targets or outcomes that have been determined in the curriculum.

### 3.6 Evaluation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum

The Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is an effort to restore learning in Indonesia, where this curriculum is known to be flexible in addition to focusing more on essential materials and character development of its students. In Madrasah Tsanawiyah, teachers consider the material in this curriculum to be essential so that there is sufficient time for in-depth learning of basic competencies such as literacy and numeracy. In practice at Madrasah Tsanawiyah, teachers and students complained that the material that must be delivered by students is too dense, which causes students to lack understanding in receiving material. Evaluation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is a series of planned and systematic activities in collecting and processing valid and reliable information and data.

The *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum marks a significant transformation in Indonesia's educational framework, introducing a flexible and student-centered approach that prioritizes both essential learning materials and the holistic development of students' character (Adrianus Sihombing et al., 2021). This curriculum aims to provide ample time for the in-depth mastery of foundational competencies such as literacy and numeracy, making it a cornerstone for strengthening students' understanding of core subjects at *Madrasah Tsanawiyah*. However, challenges have emerged, with both teachers and students noting that the curriculum's content is excessively dense. This complexity complicates both the delivery of lessons by educators and the comprehension of material by students. The overwhelming volume of content creates a barrier to students' ability to effectively grasp, retain, and apply the knowledge, posing a critical challenge to the curriculum's successful implementation.

Despite the curriculum's theoretical benefits, including enhanced flexibility and a focus on core competencies, practical implementation at Madrasah Tsanawiyah has revealed issues with content density. The substantial amount of material has led to difficulties in balancing the depth and breadth of instruction, which negatively impacts students' comprehension and overall learning experience. Addressing these practical concerns is crucial for improving the curriculum's effectiveness and ensuring that it meets its intended goals. Thus, a thorough evaluation of the curriculum is essential to address these challenges and refine its application.

The evaluation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum involves a carefully planned process aimed at collecting and analyzing valid and reliable data to assess its effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and overall feasibility (Ali Mursyid et al., 2023). This process is critical for understanding how well the curriculum meets its objectives and supports the needs of educational institutions like Madrasah Tsanawiyah. Although the curriculum is intended to enhance educational flexibility and focus on essential materials, the practical implementation has presented challenges, particularly in managing the dense content. Feedback from Madrasah Tsanawiyah highlights these difficulties, underscoring the need for ongoing evaluation and refinement to improve the curriculum's impact and ensure its successful application.

The assessment methods used to evaluate student competencies, such as written tests, portfolios, and assignments, are also scrutinized. These methods are designed to provide a comprehensive view of students' abilities and progress, granting teachers and schools greater autonomy in measuring learning outcomes (Thohir et al., 2021). However, the evaluation process at Madrasah Tsanawiyah has encountered significant obstacles, including the extensive number of assessment components and the substantial time required for both students and teachers. These challenges hinder the ability to conduct thorough evaluations and highlight the need for adjustments to the assessment framework to enhance its practicality and effectiveness.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research offers a detailed insight into social science teaching strategies at Madrasah Tsanawiyah within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum. In Indonesia, the Merdeka Curriculum is a forward-thinking model that allows schools the autonomy to create their own curricula. This study employed a qualitative methodology with a case study approach to explore this innovative system. The findings highlighted several teaching strategies utilized by social science teachers at Madrasah Tsanawiyah, including project-based learning, group discussions, and problem-based learning. These strategies were chosen with careful consideration of the students' needs, characteristics, and the content being taught. The study's implications are substantial for enhancing social science teaching practices under the Merdeka Curriculum, offering a comprehensive view of teaching dynamics at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level. Despite challenges like limited resources and time to implement these strategies, the study underscores the strong commitment of social science teachers at Madrasah Tsanawiyah. Their dedication to nurturing creativity in the classroom demonstrates both adaptability and resolve in overcoming these obstacles. This research is crucial for a broader understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum's implementation, particularly in secondary schools and social science education. The findings can inform curriculum development and teacher training initiatives, ultimately aiming to elevate the quality of social science education at Madrasah Tsanawiyah and similar institutions. Therefore, the results of this study lay a strong foundation for education stakeholders, including social science teachers at Madrasah Tsanawiyah, to take meaningful actions toward improving curricula and enhancing teacher training programs. It is hoped that this collaborative effort will lead to significant positive changes in students' learning experiences and overall educational outcomes.

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