



Rationalization of the Distribution of Quran and Hadith Content During the Policy Transition from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum at MTS Al-Mustaqim

Mulyani*¹, Saumi Setyaningrum², Naafi' Fitriani Sri Sundari³, Hamdan Ladiku⁴

^{1,2} Institut Agama Islam Negeri Pontianak, Indonesia

³ Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

⁴ Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Gorontalo, Gorontalo, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: mulyanirahma05@gmail.com

Article Information

Article History

Received:

2026-04-03

Revised:

2026-09-10

Accepted:

2026-09-12



License: cc-by
Copyright © 2026 Authors

ABSTRACT

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum provides teachers with the flexibility to adapt instruction to students' needs. However, in practice, this flexibility is still constrained by the curriculum structure, assessments, and limited instructional time. This study aims to analyze the practices of sequencing Qur'an and Hadith materials at MTs Al-Mustaqim, as well as the considerations teachers take into account when making such adjustments. The study employed a qualitative approach using the case study method. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation over two days in March 2026 with four informants. Analysis was conducted through coding, category grouping, and theme identification, while data validity was verified through source and method triangulation. The results indicate that teachers rearrange the sequence of material within the same grade level based on students' prior knowledge, the relevance of the material, the assessment system, and instructional time. Tajwid material is introduced earlier in seventh grade, Madhhab law material is grouped in eighth grade, while Gharib readings are introduced earlier in ninth grade. From this analysis, the patterns of teachers' decision-making can be understood through Max Weber's concept of instrumental rationality. These findings indicate that curricular flexibility is used to a limited extent to adjust the sequence of material to the learning conditions at the madrasah.

Keywords: *Merdeka Curriculum; Qur'an and Hadith; content organization; instrumental rationality; case study*

ABSTRAK

Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka memberikan ruang bagi guru untuk menyesuaikan pembelajaran dengan kondisi peserta didik. Namun, fleksibilitas tersebut dalam praktiknya tetap berhadapan dengan susunan materi, asesmen, dan keterbatasan waktu pembelajaran. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis praktik penataan urutan materi Al-Qur'an Hadis di MTs Al-Mustaqim serta pertimbangan guru dalam melakukan penyesuaian tersebut. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi selama dua hari pada Maret 2026 dengan empat informan. Analisis dilakukan melalui pengkodean, pengelompokan kategori, dan penemuan tema, sedangkan keabsahan data diperiksa melalui triangulasi sumber dan metode. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru menata ulang urutan materi dalam tingkat kelas yang sama berdasarkan kemampuan awal peserta didik, keterkaitan materi, sistem

asesmen, dan waktu pembelajaran. Materi tajwid ditempatkan lebih awal di kelas VII, materi hukum Mad dikelompokkan di kelas VIII, sedangkan bacaan Gharib ditempatkan lebih awal di kelas IX. Dari proses analisis tersebut, pola pertimbangan guru dapat dipahami melalui konsep rasionalitas instrumental Max Weber. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa fleksibilitas kurikulum digunakan secara terbatas untuk menyesuaikan urutan materi dengan kondisi pembelajaran di madrasah.

Kata kunci: Kurikulum Merdeka; Al-Qur'an Hadis; penataan materi; rasionalitas instrumental; studi kasus

How to cite the article:

Mulyani, Setyaningrum, S., Sundari, N. F. S., & Ladiku, H. (2026). Rationalization of the Distribution of Quran and Hadith Content During the Policy Transition from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum at MTS Al-Mustaqim. *Arfannur: Journal of Islamic Education*, 7(2), 256-273. <https://doi.org/10.24260/arfannur.v7i2.6049>

A. INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in Indonesia is currently undergoing a transition from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum. This change is not limited to revisions in curriculum documents but also affects how teachers manage instruction in madrasahs. Teachers have greater flexibility under the Merdeka Curriculum, as educational institutions allow them to adapt instruction to the needs of their students (Lamangga., 2024). In madrasahs, the implementation of instruction is guided by Ministerial Decree (KMA) No. 347 of 2022, which provides madrasahs with the flexibility to develop instruction according to students' needs (Holilah et al., 2023). This is particularly important in the teaching of the Qur'an and Hadith because the material covered relates not only to understanding verses and hadiths but also to the ability to read the Qur'an and to practice the values contained within it.

The existence of this space will cause teachers to reconsider the material they present to students, since the sequence of material in textbooks does not always align with each student's abilities. According to Taba (1962), the delivery of material must take into account the continuity of the learning experience, so that the material presented will ultimately support one another. However, in practice, teachers do not merely consider the sequence of material. Since this alone is insufficient to ensure learning outcomes are achieved, teachers must also be able to organize the level of difficulty of the material, the duration of instruction, and the assessment system.

A number of studies have examined the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum from various perspectives. The study by Ismiyah et al., (2024) shows that the curriculum change encourages teachers to be more creative in adapting instruction to students' needs. The findings of Maya et al., (2025) indicate that flexibility is one of the opportunities in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, although teachers still face various challenges in its implementation. Meanwhile, (Holilah et al., 2023) show that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs is also closely linked to policies and the readiness of educational institutions. All three studies indicate that the success of curriculum implementation is determined not only by policy but also by teachers' ability to adapt instruction to on-the-ground conditions. However, these

studies have primarily focused on issues of implementation, teacher readiness, flexibility, and policy. There has been little discussion of how teachers utilize the flexibility provided by the curriculum when deciding which materials to prioritize, postpone, or reorganize in their teaching of the Qur'an and Hadith. Yet, these decisions constitute a crucial aspect of teachers' practice as they translate the curriculum's flexibility into classroom instruction.

Meanwhile, the organization of content or its sequence is not a new concept in curriculum studies. According to Taba (1962), the sequence of content is part of organizing the learning experience. Therefore, the focus of this study is not on the act of changing the sequence of content, but on the process and considerations teachers use when making such adjustments. This is important because teachers must adapt the material to students' conditions while still adhering to the material distribution for each grade level and the assessment system in effect at the madrasah. These conditions were observed at MTs Al-Mustaqim. Based on initial observations, the Qur'an and Hadith teachers arranged the material within the same grade level without altering the material distribution across grade levels. In seventh grade, tajwid material is introduced earlier because students' Qur'an reading abilities still vary widely. In eighth grade, similar topics are grouped together to ensure a more coherent discussion, while in ninth grade, material considered more difficult is introduced earlier so that students have sufficient time to practice.

This organization indicates that teachers make limited use of curricular flexibility while still taking into account the conditions of the madrasah. Teachers do not make changes freely because they must adhere to the assessment system and time constraints for instruction. Thus, the organization of instructional content at MTs Al-Mustaqim can be viewed as a form of intra-grade rationalization that is, adjusting the sequence of content within a single grade level without altering the distribution of content across grade levels. From Max Weber's perspective, this decision reflects teachers' deliberation in selecting actions deemed appropriate to achieve learning objectives while remaining within the boundaries of the existing system.

Given these conditions, this study positions the practice of intra-grade rationalization as an aspect that has not been extensively discussed in research on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs. The novelty of this study does not lie in the concept of sequence itself, but in revealing how Al-Qur'an and Hadith teachers utilize the curriculum's flexibility to organize content while considering students' needs, time constraints, and assessment requirements. This study aims to analyze the strategies for rationalizing the distribution of Al-Qur'an and Hadith material at MTs Al-Mustaqim during the transition period from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum.

B. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to examine how teachers organized the Qur'an and Hadith curriculum during the

transition from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum at MTs Al-Mustaqim. The research was conducted over two days in March 2026. There were four research informants: three Al-Qur'an and Hadith teachers for grades VII, VIII, and IX, and the Vice Principal for Curriculum. Informants were selected through purposive sampling because they were directly involved in teaching and curriculum management. Data were collected through interviews lasting approximately 30 minutes with each informant, direct classroom observations, and documentation in the form of Prota, Promes, and ATP. The data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation were first sorted according to the research focus and then coded based on the information that emerged, such as the reasons for organizing the material, student conditions, instructional time, and the assessment system. Codes with related content were subsequently grouped and used to identify themes related to the rationalization of instructional material. These findings were then compared with the results of observations and learning documents and analyzed using Max Weber's perspective on the rationality of action. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation by comparing statements from three teachers and the Madrasah's Vice Principal for Curriculum as well as through methodological triangulation, by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation (Creswell, 2014).

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

1. Organizing the Sequence of Qur'an and Hadith Material in Grades 7, 8, and 9

Based on the interview results, the Qur'an and Hadith teachers at MTs Al-Mustaqim adjust the order of the material used in their lessons. These adjustments are made for each grade level, taking into account the students' abilities and the material to be taught. In seventh grade, teachers cover the tajwid material which is found at the back of the textbook at the beginning of the odd-numbered semester. The 7th-grade Qur'an and Hadith teacher explained: "I placed the tajwid material at the beginning because the students who have just enrolled have varying levels of Qur'an reading ability. So, before moving on to other material, their reading skills need to be strengthened first." (7th-Grade Qur'an and Hadith Teacher, Interview, March 2026).

In eighth grade, adjustments were made to the material on the rules of Mad. Material found in several sections of the textbook was arranged closer together so that the discussion would not be too disjointed. The 8th-grade Qur'an and Hadith teacher explained: "For 8th grade, I combined the Mad rules material because the topics are still interrelated. When presented in close succession, it's easier for the students to understand, and the discussion flows more smoothly." (8th-Grade Qur'an and Hadith Teacher, Interview, March 2026).

Meanwhile, in ninth grade, the gharib reading material is introduced earlier in the school year. The teacher explained that this material requires more

explanation and practice, so it needs to be taught when there is still sufficient time for learning. The 9th-grade Qur'an and Hadith teacher stated: "I prioritize the 'gharib' readings because the material is somewhat difficult and the students need a lot of practice. If it's taught early on, there's still time to explain and review it before the end of the semester." (9th-Grade Qur'an and Hadith Teacher, Interview, March 2026).

Observations of the learning process indicate that teachers do not strictly follow the sequence of material based on the pages in the textbook. Instead, teachers follow a sequence of material that has been adapted for instruction. This was also verified through the Prota, Promes, and ATP to assess the alignment between the planned material and the material actually taught in class. The results are shown in the following table:

Table 1. Reorganization of Al-Qur'an Hadith Materials in Grades VII-IX

Grade	Material	Arrangement	Consideration
VII	Tajwid	Placed earlier in the odd semester	Students have varying levels of Qur'an reading ability
VIII	Rules of Madd	Similar materials are grouped closer together	The materials are interrelated
IX	Gharib Recitations	Placed earlier in the academic year	Requires more explanation and practice

2. Organizing Course Content Within Time Constraints and the Grading System

In addition to students' circumstances and the difficulty level of the material, the interview results show that teachers also take learning time into account. Madrasah activities and holidays can reduce learning time, so teachers need to rearrange the material to be taught. One teacher explained: "Sometimes learning time is reduced because of school activities or holidays. So I usually prioritize material that requires more time so we won't have to rush at the end." (Qur'an and Hadith Teacher, Interview, March 2026).

The organization of the material also takes into account the administration of midterm and final exams. Teachers do not transfer material from one grade level to another but only rearrange its sequence within the same grade level. Regarding this, the teacher explained: "The material remains appropriate for each respective grade. We do not move Grade 7 material to Grade 8 or vice versa. We only adjust the sequence so that instruction and assessment can continue as planned." (Qur'an and Hadith Teacher, Interview, March 2026).

The results of observations and reviews of the Prota, Promes, and ATP indicate that the organization of content remains consistent with the lesson plans used by teachers. Thus, the research data show that the changes made primarily concern the sequence in which content is presented within a single grade level,

while the distribution of content across grade levels remains unchanged. These findings were subsequently used as the basis for a discussion of the considerations teachers take into account when organizing content.

Discussion

3. Instrumental Rationality in the Categorization of Qur'anic and Hadith Materials

Research findings indicate that Al-Qur'an and Hadith teachers at MTs Al-Mustaqim do not fully follow the sequence of material in the textbook. Teachers make adjustments based on student conditions, the level of difficulty of the material, and class time. In seventh grade, tajwid material is introduced earlier because the Qur'an reading abilities of newly enrolled students vary widely. In eighth grade, the material on the rules of Mad, which is found in different sections of the book, is arranged closer together, while in ninth grade, the material on gharib readings is introduced earlier because it requires more practice time. This rearrangement is done within a single grade level and does not alter the distribution of material across grade levels.

These findings support the research by Nisa et al (2024), which shows that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum provides teachers with the flexibility to adapt instruction to students' circumstances. However, this study identified a more specific form of adaptation: the use of this flexibility in determining the sequence of instructional content. Thus, curricular flexibility in practice is not only related to the selection of teaching methods or activities but also extends to teachers' decisions regarding the organization of the material to be presented to students. This finding simultaneously expands upon the discussion by Maya et al. (2025) regarding flexibility and constraints in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, as this study demonstrates how such flexibility is utilized in day-to-day instructional decisions.

In seventh grade, the earlier introduction of tajwid material indicates that teachers consider students' prior knowledge before moving on to subsequent material. This aligns with Adawiyah et al. (2024), who emphasize the importance of mastering tajwid in Qur'anic education. However, the findings of this study show that the issue lies not only in the importance of tajwid material but also in the decision regarding when to teach it. Teachers use students' reading proficiency as the basis for determining which material should be prioritized. In eighth grade, a similar pattern was observed when the material on the rules of Mad which is separated in the textbook was arranged more closely together. This arrangement indicates that teachers consider the relationships between topics when determining the order of instruction, rather than simply following the sequence provided in the textbook.

In ninth grade, teachers' considerations were more evident in terms of time constraints. The "gharib" reading material was introduced earlier because it required more explanation and practice. This finding indicates that decisions

regarding the sequence of material are based not only on the characteristics of the material and the students' circumstances but also on the available learning time. On the other hand, these conditions reveal limitations in teachers' flexibility. Teachers cannot organize the material entirely based on their own judgment because they must still adhere to the learning schedule, madrasah activities, and the assessment system. Thus, the flexibility found in this study is not complete freedom but rather a scope for adjustment that remains within the boundaries of institutional rules and needs.

This situation is significant when viewed through the lens of Max Weber's concept of instrumental rationality. Instrumental rationality does not merely indicate that teachers choose actions they deem appropriate, but rather involves weighing objectives against available means. In this study, teachers faced several conditions simultaneously, namely student ability, the level of difficulty of the material, instructional time, and assessment requirements. Organizing the material was one of the strategies chosen to align learning objectives with these conditions. Therefore, teachers' decisions are best understood as a process of selecting actions deemed feasible in the given situation, rather than merely as an exercise of freedom in implementing the curriculum.

These findings also highlight a difference from the discussion by Holilah et al. (2023), which focuses more on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs in relation to policy and the readiness of educational institutions. This study indicates that implementation challenges can also be observed at the level of teachers' decisions when translating the curriculum into classroom lesson plans. In other words, curriculum changes do not end with policy implementation at the madrasah level but extend to the practical decisions teachers make when dealing with the actual circumstances of their students.

Thus, the contribution of this study does not lie in the finding that teachers can change the sequence of content, as the organization of content has long been a part of curriculum studies. Its contribution lies in the finding that teachers exercise this flexibility through rationalizations of a limited nature. Teachers can organize the material according to students' needs, but these decisions are still influenced by time constraints, the assessment system, and the structure of the material at each educational level. This finding demonstrates that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Al-Qur'an and Hadith instruction occurs at the intersection of the flexibility provided by the curriculum and the constraints that still exist in teaching practice.

4. Instrumental Rationality in the Categorization of Qur'anic and Hadith Materials

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at MTs Al-Mustaqim has fundamentally changed educators' paradigm in viewing and utilizing textbooks as the primary learning resource. Based on in-depth observations, textbooks are no longer treated as rigid guides that must be followed linearly from the first chapter to the last; rather, their function has shifted to that of flexible and contextual

references (Observations, March 2026). From a sociological perspective, this phenomenon reflects the practice of instrumental rationality (Zweckrational) as articulated by Max Weber. Within Weber's framework, instrumental rationality refers to the actions of actors based on rational considerations to achieve specific goals through the most effective and efficient means. In this context, teachers at MTs Al-Mustaqim utilize their autonomy to adapt the presentation of material to the real needs of students and the classroom dynamics they face (Nisa et al., 2024). Although the curriculum has conceptually designed the Qur'an and Hadith material in a systematic manner ranging from mastery of the rules of tajwid to understanding the meanings and internalizing the values in practice the linear structure of the textbook does not always align with students' varying levels of readiness to learn. Therefore, the restructuring of the sequence of material carried out by teachers is a rational and pedagogical step to bridge the gap between the formal curriculum documents and the real needs in the classroom (Waruwu et al., 2025).

In seventh grade, this rationality is concretely reflected in the reorganization of the tajwid curriculum. Teachers deliberately moved Chapter IV which covers Mad Ṭabī'i, Mad Wajib Muttasil, and Mad Jaiz Munfasil to the beginning of the odd-numbered semester. Based on interview results, the teacher emphasized that mastery of tajwid must be prioritized as the primary foundation before students study material that requires the ability to analyze the meaning of verses. From a Weberian perspective, this decision reflects the selection of appropriate means to achieve a long-term goal, namely the ability to deeply understand the content of the Qur'an and Hadith. Teachers recognize that teaching verse analysis to students who have not yet mastered recitation is an instructionally ineffective approach. Therefore, once students' reading skills are deemed adequate, instruction proceeds to conceptual material such as the study of verses addressing natural phenomena and social values. This strategy aligns with the findings of Adawiyah et al., (2024), who emphasize that mastery of tajwid in the early stages is an important prerequisite for preventing reading errors in subsequent learning stages.

In eighth grade, teachers' rationality is reflected in their use of strategies to organize the material. Teachers identified weaknesses in the textbook's structure, in which the rules of tajwid are presented in isolated, non-sequential sections. For example, the discussion of Mad 'Iwad, Layyin, and 'Arid Lissukun in Chapter I is quite far removed from the material on Mad Silah in Chapter IV, as it is interspersed with thematic content. Strictly following the textbook's sequence risks disrupting the continuity of students' understanding. Therefore, the teacher took the initiative to combine the discussion of these two chapters at the beginning of the semester. This strategy aims to maintain the continuity of students' thought processes as they grasp a cluster of competencies before moving on to other, more complex material. This approach has proven effective in managing students' cognitive load and strengthening their conceptual understanding (Hasanah et al., 2025).

Meanwhile, in ninth grade, the organization of the curriculum is largely

influenced by considerations of time efficiency and students' readiness for the final stage of their education. Material on Gharib readings such as Imalah, Isymam, Tas-hil, and Naql which is placed in the middle of the semester in the textbook, is moved to the beginning of the school year. Teachers consider this material to be highly challenging and requiring intensive practice. If taught toward the end of the semester, the effectiveness of learning would decline because students begin to focus on preparing for graduation exams. Conversely, material of a reflective and motivational nature such as the spirit of seeking knowledge and a never-give-up attitude is placed at the end of the semester. This arrangement takes into account not only students' cognitive aspects but also their affective aspects, thereby supporting the development of lifelong learner character (Tambunan et al., 2024).

Overall, the findings at MTs Al-Mustaqim indicate a systematic process of rationalizing the mapping of instructional content across each grade level. This reorganization is confined to a single grade level to maintain continuity in the complexity of the material, in accordance with the principles of students' cognitive development. This demonstrates that teacher autonomy within the Merdeka Curriculum is a key factor in creating adaptive and contextual learning experiences. Flexibility in managing the sequence of learning objectives allows teachers to design learning processes that are more relevant, effective, and oriented toward students' needs. Thus, teachers no longer serve merely as implementers of the curriculum but as intellectual actors capable of constructing learning experiences in a critical and reflective manner in accordance with the social realities of the classroom (Yanling et al., 2026).

5. Students' Cognitive Readiness as a Key Consideration in Structuring Course Content

Students' prior knowledge is one of the factors that must be considered when determining how to present instructional material. The structure of the material provided in textbooks does not always align with the specific circumstances of all students. Differences in learning experiences and foundational abilities can make a particular topic easier for some students to understand, while requiring additional support for others. This situation is particularly important in the study of the Qur'an and Hadith, as the ability to read the Qur'an serves as a foundation for progressing to subsequent stages of the curriculum.

This situation is evident in the teaching of the Qur'an and Hadith at MTs Al-Mustaqim, particularly among seventh-grade students. Students entering the madrasah have varying levels of proficiency in reading the Qur'an. Some have already received instruction through TPQs or Madrasah Diniyah, while others still need to strengthen their basic reading skills. These differences led the teacher to introduce tajwid material at the beginning of the semester. This decision demonstrates that the sequence of material in the textbook is not always the sole basis for determining instruction. The teacher also considers the skills students have

already acquired before proceeding to the next topic.

The way teachers assess students' prior knowledge aligns with (Artini et al., 2025), who highlight the importance of tailoring instruction to students' needs. Latif et al., (2025) also identify learning readiness as a key consideration in achieving learning competencies. Findings at MTs Al-Mustaqim support this perspective but provide a more specific insight into the organization of instructional content. Student readiness is not only used to determine the method or form of guidance but also serves as the basis for determining which material should be prioritized. Thus, the flexibility inherent in the Merdeka Curriculum at the classroom level can manifest in simple decisions that nonetheless significantly influence the sequence of the learning process.

The placement of tajwid at the beginning of the semester also demonstrates a connection between students' foundational skills and the material to be studied later. Teachers do not include this material simply because tajwid is considered important, but because there is a need to strengthen students' reading skills. This finding aligns with (Sulaiman & Alawiyah, 2024), who emphasize the importance of foundational skills in Qur'anic education. The difference is that this study shows that this reinforcement is achieved through the sequencing of the material. In other words, students' needs are not merely addressed after instruction has begun but are already taken into account when teachers determine which parts of the material to cover first.

The diverse conditions within the classroom also indicate that the organization of the curriculum has its limitations. Moving the tajwid material to the beginning of the semester does not bring all students to the same level of proficiency. Students who had better reading skills from the start are still able to keep up with the lessons more quickly, while students who are still struggling require repetition and further guidance (Ainiyah & Fa'idah, 2025). This shows that flexibility in arranging the sequence of the curriculum does not, by itself, resolve the issue of differences in students' abilities. Curriculum sequencing is merely one form of adaptation that must still be complemented by instructional management tailored to each student's individual progress.

A similar issue was observed in eighth-grade classes when the teacher grouped Madhhab legal principles found in different sections of the textbook. This grouping was based on the interrelationships between the topics to ensure the discussions were not too disjointed. This approach can help maintain the continuity of learning, but the research data has not yet shown any specific measurements proving an improvement in learning outcomes after the material was grouped. Therefore, these findings are not intended to conclude that changing the order of the material directly improves learning outcomes. Rather, they indicate that teachers carefully consider how to organize the material to suit its characteristics and the learning conditions they face.

Teachers' choices under these conditions can be understood through Max

Weber's concept of instrumental rationality. Teachers have learning objectives that must be achieved, but these objectives must be balanced against the varying circumstances of their students. Introducing tajwid at the beginning of the semester and grouping similar materials are strategies teachers choose to address these conditions. The concept of instrumental rationality, in this context, helps explain how teachers make choices among the available options. Rationality does not imply that teachers' decisions always result in ideal learning conditions, but rather indicates a balancing act between the goals to be achieved and the situation at hand.

When compared to previous research, these findings support the results of Latif et al (2025), regarding the importance of adapting instruction to students' readiness. This study expands on that discussion by showing that students' readiness can influence teachers' decisions regarding the sequencing of content. At the same time, the findings at MTs Al-Mustaqim indicate that such flexibility still has its limits. Teachers can rearrange the sequence of content but cannot alter the overall structure of content across grade levels and must still take into account the allotted instructional time and the assessment system in place at the madrasah.

The findings show that the application of the flexibility of the Merdeka Curriculum in the teaching of the Qur'an and Hadith takes place through limited adjustments. Teachers have the leeway to respond to differences in students' abilities, but this leeway is not independent of institutional rules and conditions. The contribution of this study lies in its explanation that students' cognitive readiness is not only a consideration in the implementation of instruction but can also influence decisions regarding the sequence of material. This finding also indicates that utilizing the curriculum's flexibility requires ongoing adjustments, as changing the sequence of material alone is not sufficient to address all differences in student ability.

6. Teachers' Strategies for Reconstructing Curriculum Content Amid Assessment Standardization

Flexibility in organizing the curriculum does not mean that teachers can completely overhaul the learning structure without considering the regulations in effect at the madrasah. The scope for adjustment available to teachers is still constrained by the assessment system and the distribution of curriculum content at each grade level. This situation means that curriculum organization must balance two requirements that must be considered simultaneously: the need to adapt instruction to students' circumstances and the need to ensure that the curriculum aligns with the evaluation system used by the madrasah.

This situation is evident in how teachers at MTs Al-Mustaqim adjust the sequence of the curriculum. Adjustments are made only within a single grade level and do not involve moving content between grade levels. Content designated for Grade 7 is taught exclusively in Grade 7, and the same applies to Grades 8 and 9. Changes are primarily made to the timing and sequence of instruction. This

approach indicates that teachers utilize the available flexibility while maintaining the curriculum structure that serves as the framework for instruction and assessment. In this regard, the research findings align with those of (Anggrain et al., 2025), who demonstrated that flexibility in curriculum implementation occurs within a regulatory framework that teachers must adhere to.

Considerations regarding assessments are one reason why further changes to the curriculum content were not made. Teachers continue to focus on the material that will be included in assessments such as midterm and final exams. This situation means that teachers must consider not only whether a particular topic is easier to understand when placed in a specific section, but also whether all the material covered at that grade level can still be completed before the assessments take place. Thus, there is a fairly clear limit to the use of this flexibility. Teachers can adjust the sequence, but they must still ensure that the material required for their grade level has been covered.

This finding reveals a different aspect of the concept of curriculum flexibility. Flexibility at the implementation level does not always free teachers from the demands of the existing system. Rather, the assessment system serves as a key consideration that limits the extent to which the curriculum can be restructured. This situation indicates that curriculum changes at the policy level are not always accompanied by changes to all existing mechanisms within educational institutions. Teachers still must align their instructional decisions with the assessment systems already in place. This finding aligns with (Coker et al., 2024), who observed that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum provides flexibility but simultaneously faces various challenges in its execution.

Time considerations are also a crucial part of curriculum planning. In practice, instruction time does not always proceed according to the initial plan due to madrasah activities, holidays, or other commitments. These circumstances can reduce the amount of effective instruction time. Therefore, material considered more difficult or requiring more practice is placed at the beginning of the course so that there is still time to explain and review the material. This consideration demonstrates that organizing the curriculum is not only related to students' abilities but also to potential changes in learning time that may occur over the course of a semester (Nabilah et al., 2024).

Placing more difficult material at the beginning of the semester can be seen as a precautionary measure, but this strategy also has consequences. Teachers must determine which material to prioritize based on an assessment of its difficulty level and the time available. This decision is not always easy, as students' needs, the sequence of material, the madrasah's schedule, and assessment time must all be considered simultaneously. Thus, the restructuring of material undertaken by teachers is not merely a matter of moving material from one section to another, but rather a process of selecting the sequence deemed most feasible given the available learning conditions.

These findings can be explained through Max Weber's concept of instrumental rationality. Teachers aim to cover all the material and ensure students are prepared for assessments, while the available resources are constrained by time, the madrasah's schedule, and the structure of the curriculum. Under these conditions, teachers choose to reorder the material without altering the distribution of content across grade levels. Weber's concept helps explain the relationship between goals, choices of action, and the conditions that constrain those choices. Thus, rationality in this study is not understood as action that always results in ideal learning, but rather as the considerations teachers make when they must make choices amid multiple concurrent demands.

Compared to Budiono & Hatip (2023), who discussed the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs in relation to existing policies, the findings of this study demonstrate how these regulations directly impact teachers' decisions in the classroom. While previous research provided an overview of the level of policy implementation, this study highlights the forms of adaptation at the level of curriculum organization. These findings also complement those of (Mersaud, 2025), who identified both flexibility and constraints in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. In the context of MTs Al-Mustaqim, these constraints are evident in teachers' need to maintain alignment between the taught material and the applicable assessment system.

These findings indicate that the reconstruction of curriculum content at MTs Al-Mustaqim takes place within a space that is not entirely unrestricted. Teachers have the opportunity to rearrange the sequence of content, but these decisions are still influenced by the assessment system, the distribution of content across grade levels, and time constraints. These conditions suggest that, in practice, the flexibility of the Merdeka Curriculum is best understood as a space for making adjustments, rather than as a complete departure from existing rules. The contribution of this study lies in its explanation of how teachers use this limited space to maintain a balance between learning needs, available time, and assessment requirements.

7. The Implications of Curriculum Streamlining on Teacher Professionalism and Learning Effectiveness

Reorganizing the material is not only about changing the order of instruction but also affects how teachers make decisions when teaching. When the order in the textbook does not fully align with classroom conditions, teachers need to determine which parts of the material should be prioritized, which should be grouped together, and which can be covered later. These decisions demonstrate that curriculum implementation at the classroom level does not strictly follow the curriculum documents or textbooks. Teachers still use the prescribed material but have the flexibility to adapt its presentation to the circumstances they encounter during instruction.

In the context of MTs Al-Mustaqim, these adjustments are primarily evident

in the relocation of tajwid material to the beginning of the curriculum and the grouping of related topics. This approach requires teachers to understand students' initial proficiency levels while also considering the interconnections between topics. Consequently, the change in the sequence of material increases teachers' responsibility in determining the learning flow. This aligns with Jasuli (2023), who indicates that curriculum implementation requires teachers to have the ability to adapt instruction to the conditions of the educational institution. However, the findings of this study also indicate that this ability does not mean teachers have complete freedom. The organization of material remains constrained by the division of material at each level, the assessment system, and the available instructional time.

These findings indicate that teachers' professionalism in this study is better assessed through the process of instructional decision-making rather than through changes in the sequence of the material itself. Teachers must consider several factors simultaneously: students' prior knowledge, the difficulty level of the material, the time available, and material related to assessment. Putri et al (2024), explain the importance of teachers' ability to make decisions aligned with instructional needs. The findings at MTs Al-Mustaqim support this view but emphasize that these decisions occur within a limited scope. Teachers can make adjustments but must still ensure that all material required for each grade level is covered.

From the perspective of the learning process, organizing the material facilitates the learning process, particularly in maintaining continuity in the discussion. Interrelated topics can be covered in close succession so that students do not have to revisit previous discussions after covering other topics. In eighth grade, for example, Mad law topics are grouped so that discussions within the same subject area are not too disjointed. This approach helps teachers maintain the flow of instruction and gives students the opportunity to grasp the material step by step. However, based on research data, there are no specific metrics available to demonstrate that this organization directly improves student learning outcomes. Therefore, its implications are best understood in terms of changes in the learning process, rather than as evidence of a quantitative improvement in learning outcomes.

The same pattern is evident in student engagement during instruction. Placing material considered more foundational at the beginning gives students the opportunity to build a solid foundation before tackling more challenging material. In a classroom where students' reading abilities vary, this approach can help teachers adjust the pace of instruction. These findings are consistent with those of (Dhera et al., 2024), who emphasize the importance of tailoring instruction to students' readiness. However, this study cannot yet confirm that changing the sequence of instructional content directly leads to increased student motivation or engagement. The student engagement observed in the classroom is better understood as part of the process accompanying the adaptation of instruction.

Rearranging the material also does not completely eliminate the difficulties faced by teachers. Students with different prior knowledge still require different forms of support. Students who have already mastered the reading material can move more quickly, while those who are still struggling require repetition and guidance. This means that adjusting the sequence of material only helps teachers manage the flow of learning; it is not a standalone solution to disparities in student ability. This point is important to note because curricular flexibility is most meaningful when accompanied by instructional strategies tailored to the needs of each individual student.

When compared to the study by Chen et al (2023), which highlights the importance of instructional management in providing more equitable learning opportunities, the findings of this study shed light on the stage of organizing instructional content. Organizing instructional content can help teachers provide a more structured timeline and flow to offer additional support to students who need it. However, the equity of learning opportunities is not determined solely by the sequence of instructional content. The availability of time, teachers' classroom management skills, and the type of support provided remain critical factors. Thus, this study supports previous research while also demonstrating that curriculum management is only one aspect of efforts to create learning experiences better suited to students' needs.

From Max Weber's perspective, the teacher's decision can be understood as an action that takes into account available goals and conditions. The teacher does not merely choose a new sequence but considers what they wish to achieve and the obstacles that may arise during the learning process. The concept of instrumental rationality helps explain this process, particularly when teachers choose to reorganize the material as a way to address differences in student ability, time constraints, and assessment requirements. However, research findings also indicate that these choices do not always result in ideal conditions. There are still students who require review, additional time, and support after the material has been reorganized.

Thus, the main implication of the curriculum organization at MTs Al-Mustaqim lies not merely in improving learning effectiveness, but in creating space for teachers to manage instruction based on actual classroom conditions. This organization helps establish a learning sequence that better aligns with the needs identified by teachers, while remaining within the boundaries of the applicable curriculum, assessment, and time constraints. This finding expands our understanding of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum: flexibility at the classroom level is not only related to the freedom to choose teaching methods but can also be used to adjust the sequence of the curriculum. At the same time, this flexibility still requires careful consideration and cannot be separated from the various constraints inherent in madrasah practice.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, the organization of the Qur'an and Hadith curriculum at MTs Al-Mustaqim is carried out by adjusting the sequence of the material to the conditions faced by teachers during instruction. These adjustments do not alter the distribution of material across grade levels but are made within the sequence of material taught in the same class. Teachers' considerations relate to students' prior knowledge, the interrelationships among topics, instructional time, and assessment needs. The data analysis reveals that teachers' decisions regarding material organization are not made arbitrarily but are based on considerations of learning objectives and existing conditions. This demonstrates that Max Weber's concept of instrumental rationality can be used to understand how teachers make decisions when selecting the approach deemed most appropriate for a given learning situation. In the field of curriculum management, these findings indicate that the flexibility of the Merdeka Curriculum is evident not only in the selection of teaching methods or activities but also in the way teachers organize the sequence of content. However, this flexibility still has its limits because teachers must still adapt it to the curriculum, assessments, and the time available. This study was limited to a single madrasah with four informants and a two-day research period; therefore, the results cannot yet represent curriculum organization practices at other madrasahs. Future research could be conducted at multiple madrasahs with varying conditions and over a longer observation period to obtain a more diverse picture of curriculum organization in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

E. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adawiyah, R., Haris, N. F., & Santosa, I. C. (2024). Pentingnya Pendidikan Tajwid dalam Pembentukan Keterampilan Membaca Al- Qur ' an di Kalangan Siswa Sekolah Dasar. *Jurnal Agama, Sosial, Dan Budaya*, 3(2), 337–346.
- Ainiyah, Z. D., & Fa'idah, M. L. (2025). Metode Reading Aloud Sebagai Upaya Peningkatan Kemampuan Membaca Al Quran Pada Pembelajaran Al Quran Hadist. *Jurnal Riset Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (JURMIA)*, 5(2), 228–238.
- Anggrain, E. S., Manalu, J., & Mihammad Fahrezi. (2025). Penerapan Fungsi Perencanaan Dan Pengorganisasian Oleh Guru Dalam Manajemen Pendidikan Di Sekolah Dasar. *Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin*, 4(9), 1998–2006.
- Artini, N. W. J., Sudarsana, I. K., & Dewi, N. P. C. P. (2025). Penerapan Pembelajaran Diferensiasi untuk Meningkatkan Keterlibatan Siswa di Kelas VI SD Negeri 2 Penebel. *Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Pendidikan*, 23(1), 129–134.
- Chen, O., Paas, F., & Sweller, J. (2023). A Cognitive Load Theory Approach to Defining and Measuring Task Complexity Through Element Interactivity. *Educational Psychology Review*, 35(2), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-023-09782-w>

- Coker, H., Kalsoom, Q., & Mercieca, D. (2024). Teachers ' Use of Knowledge in Curriculum Making : Implications for Social Justice. *Education Sciences*, 14(3), 1–19.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Dhera, M. M., Ti'a, E., Lawe, Y. U., & Sego, M. I. S. (2024). Analisis Kebutuhan Siswa serta Kesiapan Belajar Siswa Melalui Pendekatan Berdiferensiasi dalam Pembelajaran pada Siswa. *Jurnal Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar*, 1(4), 1–9.
- Hasanah, S. N., Prayogo, M. S., & Sa'adah, P. A. L. (2025). Strategi Guru Dalam Mengelola Pembelajaran Tematik Di Sekolah Dasar Pada Era Kurikulum Merdeka. *AEJ (Advances in Education Journal)*, 2(2), 849–856.
- Holilah, N., Asrori, M., Fiabdillah, R., & Fadloilallah, R. (2023). Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka pada Madrasah (Analisis KMA Nomor 347 Tahun 2022). *Jurnal Tarbiyah Islamiyah*, 8(3), 1159–1173.
- Ismiyah, K. N., Mahmudah, R., & Nurulqolbi, S. (2024). Kreativitas Guru dalam Mengimplementasikan Kurikulum Merdeka pada Mata Pelajaran IPAS Jenjang Sekolah Dasar. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 8(1), 762–767.
- Jasuli. (2023). Peran Guru dalam Manajemen Kurikulum dan Pembelajaran. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 3(1), 111–126.
- Lamangga., M. (2024). Analisis Transisi Kurikulum 2013 ke Kurikulum Merdeka pada Mata Pelajaran Akidah Akhlak di MTs Bustanul Ulum. *JPPP: Jurnal Perspektif Penelitian Pendidikan*, 2(2), 38–45. <https://doi.org/10.33084/jpppp.v2i2.10138>
- Latif, A., Markhamah, & Rahmawati, L. E. (2025). Transformasi Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia Berdiferensiasi di Sekolah Dasar melalui Pendekatan Teaching At The Right Level (TaRL). *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 8(4), 228–242.
- Maya, M. D., Muhammad, R., A, S. R. D., Hadi, R. T., Gultom, I., & Ikhlas, M. (2025). Fleksibilitas Dan Tantangan Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia di SDN 060877 Medan. *Jurnal Nakula: Pusat Ilmu Pendidikan, Bahasa Dan Ilmu Sosial*, 3(2), 208–216.
- Mersaud, J. (2025). Perceptions of the International Baccalaureate Curriculum among Educators Worldwide : A Thematic Study. *OTS Canadian Journal*, 4(9), 45–70.
- Nabilah, M., Lukman, M., & Hasanudin, S. P. (2024). Penerapan Manajemen Waktu Untuk Meningkatkan Prestasi Belajar Siswa pada SMP YPI Darussalam. *Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat: Kreasi Mahasiswa Manajemen*, 4(3), 247–250.

- Nisa, K., Nurhaliza, Aisyah, R., Umam, K., & Lestari, S. (2024). Mengenal Kurikulum Merdeka : Langkah Awal Menuju Pembelajaran yang Lebih Fleksibel. *Jurnal Pendidikan, Ilmu Sosial, Dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 4(3), 1903–1912.
- Putri, S. M., Ayatin, R., & Muttaqien, I. A. Y. (2024). Profesionalisme Guru dalam Meningkatkan Proses Pembelajaran. *Jurnal Citra Pendidikan (JCP)*, 4(2), 1690–1695.
- Rosiyati, D., Wibowo, W. H., Sutopo, & Musrikah. (2025). Optimalisasi Hasil Belajar Siswa Melalui Pembelajaran Remedial Diana. *Jurnal Kependidikan*, 13(2), 203–214.
- Sulaiman, H., & Alawiyah, T. (2024). Efektivitas Pembelajaran Ilmu Tajwid Peserta Didik Terhadap Kemampuan Membaca Al- Qur ' an. *Jurnal Masagi*, 2(2), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.37968/masagi.v2i2.559>
- Taba, H. (1962). *Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Tambunan, T. M., Pasaribu, S. G., & Nababan, D. (2024). Strategi Pembelajaran Afektif untuk Meningkatkan Pendidikan Masa Depan. *Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin Ilmu*, 1(1), 17–23.
- Waruwu, D., Hia, M., Zega, P., & Harefa, H. O. N. (2025). Peran Guru Mata Pelajaran dalam Menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka. *Ainara Journal (Jurnal Penelitian Dan PKM Bidang Ilmu Pendidikan)*, 6(2), 284–292.
- Yanling, B., Rahman, A. B. A., & Yik, L. H. (2026). Teacher Agency in the Context of China ' s Curriculum-based Ideological and Moral Education (CIME): A Integrative Conceptual Review. *International Journal Of Academic Research In Progressive Education and Development*, 15(1), 523–538.