

DUAL POLICY CONVERGENCE IN MADRASAH: IMPLEMENTATION OF MERDEKA CURRICULUM THROUGH THE HYBRID VALUE-BASED MODEL (MIKM-HBN)

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ABSTRACT The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic elementary schools (madrasah ibtidaiyah) presents a distinctive structural complexity: the simultaneous obligation to comply with two separate regulatory systems from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This complexity has not been systematically examined in existing literature on Islamic education policy in Indonesia. This qualitative single-case study aimed to analyze the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum policy at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 8 Peukan Bada, Aceh Besar, identify patterns of dual policy convergence, analyze facilitating and inhibiting factors, and construct an appropriate implementation model for value-based Islamic educational institutions. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with five informant groups, participatory observation, and document analysis. The analytical framework integrated William N. Dunn's grand theory of public policy, Edward III's and Grindle's middle theories of policy implementation, and Burns and Bass's transformational leadership theory. Four principal findings emerged. First, the P5RA project was the most successfully implemented dimension, with its impact concretely felt by all stakeholders. Second, the two policy systems converged in a complementary-harmonious manner. Third, transformational leadership of the principal functioned as an essential mediating variable. Fourth, the Islamic cultural identity of the Acehnese community served as an implementation accelerator. The study's novelty lies in the construction of the Hybrid Value-Based Merdeka Curriculum Implementation Model (MIKM-HBN) — the first model to simultaneously integrate dual policy input, transformational leadership as a mediator, a modified Edward III framework with religious value dimensions, and local context as a strategic asset.

KEYWORDS: *Merdeka Curriculum; Madrasah Ibtidaiyah; Love-Based Curriculum; MIKM-HBN Model; Dual Policy Convergence.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The implementation of national curriculum policy in Islamic elementary schools (madrasah ibtidaiyah) in Indonesia presents a structural complexity that has not been adequately addressed in existing policy implementation literature. Unlike public schools, which receive curriculum directives from a single ministry, madrasah operate under the simultaneous jurisdiction of two distinct regulatory systems: the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag). This dual governance structure creates a context in which educators must reconcile potentially competing policy demands within a single institutional setting.

The Merdeka Curriculum, formalized through Permendikbudristek No. 12/2024, represents a paradigmatic shift in Indonesian national education — emphasizing student-centered learning, differentiated instruction, assessment for learning, and the development of twenty-first century competencies. Concurrently, the Ministry of Religious Affairs introduced KMA No. 450/2024 for madrasah, subsequently reinforced by Kepdirjen Pendis No. 6077/2025 which institutionalized the Love-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta/KBC) — a pedagogical framework grounded in five core Islamic values known as Panca Cinta. The intersection of these four regulatory instruments within a single institutional space constitutes what this study terms dual policy input, a phenomenon that remains theoretically uncharted in the Indonesian educational policy literature.

The existing body of research on Kurikulum Merdeka has predominantly focused on teacher readiness, instructional tool effectiveness, and stakeholder perceptions in public school contexts (Purnomo, 2024; Atikoh, 2023; Harahap, 2024). Studies examining Islamic schools have noted their distinct characteristics (Safar, 2022) but have not analytically addressed the convergence of dual regulatory systems. The absence of a conceptual model capable of explaining how madrasah navigate simultaneous compliance with two distinct policy systems constitutes the primary theoretical gap this study seeks to address.

This study addresses four research questions: (1) How is the Merdeka Curriculum implemented at MIN 8 Peukan Bada based on Permendikbudristek No. 12/2024 and KMA No. 450/2024? (2) How does convergence between Kemendikbudristek and Kemenag policies shape implementation patterns? (3) What factors facilitate and inhibit implementation in the framework of Edward III and Grindle? (4) What implementation model is appropriate for value-based madrasah in the context of dual policy convergence?

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a single-case study design (Yin, 2018), selected because the research objective required an in-depth examination of a bounded contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 8 Peukan Bada, Aceh Besar was selected purposively as the research site based on its strategic position as an institution simultaneously subject to both regulatory systems, its location within a community characterized by strong Islamic socio-cultural identity, and the implementational dynamism observed during preliminary fieldwork conducted in the 2024/2025 academic year.

Data were collected through four complementary methods: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, document analysis, and focus group discussion (FGD). Eleven informants participated in semi-structured interviews, representing five groups: (KM1) the principal, (GR1–GR3) three classroom teachers, (SW1–SW3) three students, (OT1–OT3) three parents/guardians, and (KMG1) a representative from the Aceh Besar Kemenag office. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Trustworthiness was established through source and method triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement in the field.

The analytical framework integrated George C. Edward III's policy implementation model (1980), Merilee S. Grindle's content-context framework (1980), and Burns and Bass's transformational leadership theory. The study adopted analytical generalization (Yin, 2018) as its generalizability strategy, developing theoretical propositions transferable to analogous madrasah contexts rather than seeking statistical generalization.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum: Four Operational Dimensions

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at MIN 8 Peukan Bada was analyzed across four operational dimensions: planning, execution, assessment, and project-based learning. In the planning dimension, the Kurikulum Operasional Madrasah (KOM) was developed through a collaborative, participatory process involving all teaching staff, producing a living document rather than a mere administrative requirement. This practice reflects the organizational learning orientation described by Grindle's institutional characteristics variable.

In the execution dimension, teachers demonstrated emerging adoption of differentiated instruction and deep learning approaches. Notably, a significant finding emerged regarding the relationship between regulatory knowledge and pedagogical practice: several senior teachers, while unable to articulate Kurikulum Merdeka principles in technical terminology, were observed

implementing practices fully consonant with its philosophical foundations. This study terms this phenomenon praxis preceding theory a condition in which institutionally embedded pedagogical values precede and anticipate formal regulatory mandates.

The assessment dimension revealed a transitional shift from summative-dominant evaluation toward integrated formative and summative approaches, though implementation consistency varied significantly across classrooms. The P5RA (Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila dan Rahmatan lil Alamin) dimension emerged as the most transformative, with the ecobrick project serving as the most empirically documented example. This project simultaneously fulfilled national P5 requirements (Permendikbudristek), expressed the KBC value of environmental love (Kepdirjen 6077/2025), developed cross-curricular competencies, and generated documented parental behavioral change evidencing multi-dimensional impact within a single learning activity.

3.2 Dual Policy Convergence: A Complementary-Harmonious Pattern

The central theoretical contribution of this study concerns the nature of the relationship between two coexisting policy systems. Contrary to the assumption that dual regulatory authority creates institutional conflict, the data from all five informant groups consistently evidenced what this study designates as complementary-harmonious convergence. Rather than competing, the two regulatory systems operate at different ontological levels: Permendikbudristek provides the national pedagogical framework (the how of teaching), while KBC provides the axiological foundation (the why and with what spirit).

This finding carries significant theoretical implications for Grindle's content-context analysis. The policy content (dual regulatory mandate) that might be expected to generate implementation conflict was instead transformed, through active mediation, into a source of institutional enrichment. This transformation was not automatic; it required the deliberate interpretive work of transformational leadership. When KMG1 (Kemenag representative) stated that all learning at the madrasah is always connected to love for Allah, to the Prophet, to the family — this confirmed at the regulatory design level the complementary intent that the institutional level data also evidenced.

Table 1. Convergence Matrix: Dual Policy Systems at MIN 8 Peukan Bada

Dimension	Kemendikbudristek (Permendikbudristek 12/2024)	Kemenag (KMA 450/2024 + Kepdirjen 6077/2025)
Pedagogical Framework	Merdeka Curriculum: differentiated learning, CP-based phases, P5	KBC: Panca Cinta values infuse every learning activity with Islamic meaning
Project Learning	P5: Pancasila Student Profile — six competency dimensions	P5RA: Rahmatan lil Alamin added — Islamic values integrated into all projects

Dimension	Kemendikbudristek (Permendikbudristek 12/2024)	Kemenag (KMA 450/2024 + Kepdirjen 6077/2025)
Assessment	Formative & summative assessment based on Learning Achievement (CP)	Character Growth Report — narrative assessment of value internalization added
Leadership Role	Principal manages KOM development and instructional supervision	Principal as active mediator: translates, harmonizes, integrates dual policy into coherent vision

Source: Constructed from field data (2025)

3.3 Facilitating and Inhibiting Factors: A Modified Edward III Analysis

Analysis through the Edward III framework revealed that all four variables — communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure — were active in shaping implementation outcomes. However, the application of this framework to a value-based institutional context necessitated two conceptual extensions.

First, the communication variable required expansion beyond information transmission to encompass value communication — the capacity of institutional leaders to convey not only what policy mandates but why it matters and what values animate it. Data from all informant groups consistently identified communication deficiencies as the most critical constraint in the implementation chain. The six-tier bureaucratic relay (Kemenag Center → Kanwil → Kankemenag → Pengawas → Principal → Teachers) produced systematic message degradation at each transmission level, such that by the time policy directives reached classroom teachers, their substantive rationale had been significantly attenuated.

Second, the resources variable required expansion to incorporate non-material resources — specifically, Islamic values, pedagogical tradition, and local cultural identity — as legitimate and empirically consequential implementation assets. This finding partially explains the paradox observed in teacher disposition: despite limited formal Kurikulum Merdeka training, teachers demonstrated generally favorable dispositions because the curriculum's philosophical orientations resonated with institutionally embedded values they already held.

The bureaucratic structure variable revealed a significant distinction between external coordination patterns (vertical, elongated) and internal organizational patterns (collaborative, participatory). The collective KOM development process represented an organizational practice that effectively compensated for external structural rigidities, constituting what the study terms an internal structural innovation within the broader birokrasi ganda (dual bureaucracy) context.

3.4 The MIKM-HBN Model: A Theoretical Contribution

The synthesis of the four research findings is embodied in the Hybrid Value-Based Merdeka Curriculum Implementation Model (MIKM-HBN), this study's primary theoretical contribution. The model identifies five integrated components constituting a coherent analytical and operational framework for madrasah implementing the Merdeka Curriculum under dual regulatory authority.

Table 2. Components of the MIKM-HBN Model

1	Dual Policy Input	Simultaneous compliance with Kemendikbudristek and Kemenag regulatory systems, recognized as complementary rather than conflicting
2	Transformational Mediator	Principal as active mediator: translating, harmonizing, integrating dual policy into coherent institutional vision through transformational leadership practices
3	Value-Enriched Process	Implementation process analyzed through modified Edward III framework — communication as value communication; resources including non-material Islamic value assets
4	Local Context Asset	Acehnese Islamic socio-cultural identity as active implementation accelerator, not passive contextual backdrop (Grindle's context dimension)
5	Integrated Output	Output encompasses academic achievement (CP) and character formation (Profil Pelajar Pancasila + Rahmatan lil Alamin) as inseparable dimensions of educational success

Source: Constructed from research findings (2025)

The MIKM-HBN model's most significant theoretical contribution is its repositioning of transformational leadership from a facilitating factor to a mediating variable. Consistent with Burns and Bass's transformational leadership theory, the principal's role at MIN 8 Peukan Bada transcended administrative management to encompass the interpretive work of policy translation — transforming externally generated regulatory directives into institutionally coherent pedagogical orientations. This mediating function was empirically evidenced by the consistent cross-group attribution of institutional success to principal leadership, and by the documented organizational practices (collective KOM development, dialogic supervision, individualized teacher support) that operationalized the four transformational leadership dimensions

4. CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence that madrasah ibtidaiyah operating under dual policy authority are not necessarily disadvantaged by that duality. At MIN 8 Peukan Bada, the two regulatory systems the Merdeka Curriculum from Kemendikbudristek and the Love-Based Curriculum from Kemenag converged in a complementary-harmonious pattern that enriched rather than complicated implementation. This convergence was not automatic; it was mediated by the active interpretive work of transformational leadership and accelerated by the strong Islamic cultural identity of the Acehese community.

The MIKM-HBN model offers a theoretically grounded and empirically validated framework for understanding and improving Merdeka Curriculum implementation in value-based Islamic educational institutions. The model contributes three specific theoretical advances: (1) the reconceptualization of transformational leadership as a policy mediating variable rather than a facilitating factor; (2) the expansion of Edward III's communication and resources variables to encompass value communication and non-material resources in religious institutional contexts; and (3) the introduction of dual policy convergence analysis as a necessary dimension of policy implementation research in Islamic education.

For policy practitioners, this study recommends that Kemenag develop explicit guidance for madrasah on integrating KBC with Kurikulum Merdeka through convergence mapping; that principal development programs incorporate dual policy mediation competencies; and that evaluation frameworks for madrasah expand beyond academic achievement metrics to include character development outcomes. Future research should examine the transferability of the MIKM-HBN model to other madrasah contexts beyond Aceh, and investigate the specific competencies required for effective dual policy mediation at the institutional level.

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