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Character Education through Project-Based Learning: The Implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile and *Rahmatan lil Alamin* Project in an Islamic Elementary School

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Abstract

This study explores the implementation of the Pancasila student profile and *rahmatan lil alamin* project (P5 P2RA) within the Merdeka Curriculum at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) Taufiqiyah in Semarang, Indonesia—one of the pilot schools appointed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs to implement the Merdeka Curriculum. Employing a descriptive qualitative design, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving the principal, teachers, and program coordinator. The implementation of P5 P2RA at MI Taufiqiyah covers grades 1, 2, 4, and 5 and follows a structured process consisting of introduction, real action, reflection, and evaluation stages. The themes adopted in this project include local wisdom, sustainable lifestyle, and entrepreneurship, aligned with the character dimensions of belief in God, global diversity, creativity, independence, and mutual cooperation. Grounded in Lickona's conception of character education and Kolb's experiential learning model, the findings reveal significant development in students' character. Students demonstrated increased responsibility, independence, gratitude to God, collaboration, environmental and social awareness, creativity, innovation, and self-confidence. The success of implementation was supported by strategic planning and integration of contextual values, leading to the emergence of a localized model of P5 P2RA suitable for Islamic elementary education. This study recommends strengthening implementation guidelines, expanding teacher training, and developing comprehensive assessment instruments to measure student character growth. The findings also support broader policy adoption to ensure that P5 P2RA effectively shapes students with Pancasila and *rahmatan lil alamin* values.

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INTRODUCTION

Character building is the bedrock for producing Indonesian human resources that are not only intellectually and morally strong, but also tolerant and able to face global challenges. The Merdeka Curriculum is a policy shift that offers a new way of learning, where students learn collaboratively in their context with character building, and is aimed at the respective objectives of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project and Rahmatan lil 'Alamin (P5 P2RA) (Idayanti, 2023). This program incorporates six key character patterns: god-fearing and fearing, diversity, interdependence, autonomy, questioning, and creativity (Syaharani & Fathoni, 2023).

The implementation of P5 P2RA at the MI level is conducted to actualize spiritual and social values in the real educational process based on project activities. However, the ground reality presents numerous challenges that confront teachers, such as their limited conceptual grasp of the P5P2RA concept, problems with creating conducive teaching modules, and shortcomings in terms of adequate training and enabling infrastructure (Budiono, 2023; Cahyaningrum & Diana, 2023). As a result, the application of activities is often only in the form of the final results, while the reflection and internalization of the values of Pancasila and Islam, the multiculturalism that became the substance of this program, are rarely done (Afipah & Imamah, 2023; Sama' et al., 2023).

Correspondingly, there is an urgent need to enhance the operation of the P5 P2RA program in madrasas to realize character education (based on Pancasila and Islamic Cultural values of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*). Given the importance of madrasas in moral and religious education, the effective implementation of P5 P2RA can play a crucial role in shaping holistic character development for students (Maryanah et al., 2024). This research is important for identifying the extent to which teachers and madrasas understand, plan, implement, and evaluate the P5 P2RA in a structured and sustainable manner.

Moreover, this study also helps in the discussion of character education policy and practice, which are more appropriate for the recent local context and conditions in Indonesia. To our knowledge, few studies have examined P5 P2RA implementation by combining Pancasila values with multicultural Islamic values such as tolerance (*tasamuh*), citizenship (*muwatanah*), and consultation (*syura*). Therefore, a comprehensive study is necessary (Nafi'ah et al., 2023). Therefore, this study's findings aim to provide evidence-informed recommendations for strengthening the P5 P2RA initiative in Islamic primary schools.

Several previous studies have shown that P5 positively impacts the strengthening of students' character. Siswanto et al. (2024) developed the transformative reflexive empowering character building (TRECB) model, which has been proven to increase understanding and internalization of Pancasila values

through a reflective and transformative approach. In contrast, Saesaputri, Fuad, and Zulaikha (2024) adopted the CIPP evaluation model to assess the effectiveness of P5 implementation in driving schools, demonstrating the importance of contextual evaluation to understand the process and results comprehensively. Other research by Haq et al. (2023) highlights the importance of learning management and institutional support in the implementation of entrepreneurship-themed P5, while Ulandari and Rapita (2023) emphasized the integration of local wisdom in building students' cultural identity. Nevertheless, most of this research is still partial and has not fully connected the stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation of P5 P2RA and its influence on the formation of students' character as a whole.

From this review, a research gap was found, namely, the lack of studies that integrate all aspects of P5 P2RA implementation holistically at the MI level. Most research only highlights one aspect or assesses the output, without paying attention to the dynamics of the learning process, implementation constraints, and improvement strategies. In addition, there is still minimal research that explicitly discusses how Islamic values such as rahmatan lil ‘alamin are instilled through project activities in P5 P2RA (Damayanti & Ghozali, 2023; Nasution et al., 2024).

This study offers an original contribution by presenting a comprehensive analysis of the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the P5 P2RA in a pilot madrasa, MI Taufiqiyah Semarang. This study not only examines the implementation of project activities but also explores the extent to which the dimensions of Pancasila character and multicultural Islamic values are integrated and influential in shaping students' character. Additionally, this study seeks to formulate a P5 P2RA implementation model that is contextual and adaptive to the needs of Islamic-based schools.

Theoretically, this study refers to the character education theory developed by Lickona (2009), which emphasizes three main components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. In this context, P5 P2RA acts as a medium to develop all three through direct experience-based learning, which internalizes values through collaborative and reflective activities. Furthermore, Kolb’s experiential learning model was used to examine the stages of P5 activities in the PKART flow (Introduction, Contextualization, Real Action, Reflection, and Follow-up) (Kolb et al., 2014). These phases correspond to Kolb's learning cycle: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

METHODS

This study applied a descriptive qualitative approach to describe the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening and Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin Project (P5 P2RA) in the Merdeka curriculum at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. The qualitative method was employed as an appropriate procedure for investigating the meanings, processes, and dynamic relationships that are naturally formed in the school context, specifically in developing students' character through the PjBL style (W. J. Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This study examined Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Taufiqiyah Semarang, a pilot madrasah in the Semarang City Ministry of Religious Affairs that applies the Merdeka curriculum. The choice of this location was deliberate, as the madrasah implemented P5 P2RA systematically across multiple grades, and practitioners had available documentation to support an in-depth investigation. The research population is the main systematic implementers of P5 P2RA at MI Taufiqiyah, who are involved in the program, including the madrasah principal as the policy maker, teachers of grades I, II, IV, and V as the program executors, and the project coordinator of P5 P2RA. Key informants were purposefully selected because of their direct participation in all phases of the project. A clear explanation of the study's objectives and methods was provided to all informants, who gave their written consent. The identity of the informants remains confidential, with codenames to ensure ethical research principles.

The data collection consisted of three main techniques: (1) semi-structured in-depth interviews (with techniques seeking to collect information related to strategic planning, dynamics in implementation, and mechanisms of evaluation activities); (2) non-participant observation technique (to observe directly implementation of activities in classrooms and in the environment of the madrasah); and (3) document study (which includes modules of activity in this project, report activity, photographs, and relevant datasheets). Participants were interviewed using an open-ended guide but with the flexibility to pursue other issues. We observed the participants without the involvement of the researcher in the activities to ensure that the data were as naturalistic as possible (Patton, 2014).

Data collection was followed by data analysis through the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of three stages: (1) data reduction or condensation, the process of selecting and organizing significant data for a research focus; (2) data display, using tables, thematic narratives, and direct quotations to enhance interpretation; and (3) drawing and verifying conclusions, which were done inductively from patterns that emerged in the field. Data analysis began early in the data collection process and continued throughout the writing process.

Source and method triangulation were employed to ensure data validity and reliability. The data from school principals, teachers, and official records were triangulated through the source. Method triangulation was achieved using data from interviews, field observations, and document reviews. In addition, member checking was conducted by verifying the emerging interpretations with key informants. This was to guarantee that the researcher's ideas were grounded in the situation and not drifted from the real significance (Hadi, 2017). The concepts of reflexivity and ethical engagement were also employed by the researcher at various points during the research process. This practice was manifested via the systematic recording of field reflections and striving to be neutral in reporting the findings.

RESULTS

1. Strategic Planning for P5 P2RA Implementation

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah of Taufiqiyah was one of the pilot schools that implemented the Pancasila Student Profile and Rahmatan lil Alamin (P5 P2RA) within the Merdeka Curriculum framework. The school developed integrated character education plans through project-based learning, focusing on three main themes: sustainable living, local wisdom, and entrepreneurship. These themes were age-appropriate and aligned with students' developmental stages across grade levels.

Based on in-depth interviews with the principal and teachers, strategic planning meetings began approximately one month prior to project implementation. The school conducted a series of coordination meetings involving the principal, curriculum coordinator, classroom teachers, and the parents' committee. During these meetings, the project focus and contextually relevant themes were collaboratively selected and assigned grade levels. Teachers were designated as project coordinators or class assistants and were responsible for mentoring the student teams, facilitating project-based learning, and documenting the implementation process.

To support their planning, teachers developed lesson plans and modules incorporating the core values of Pancasila (six dimensions) and Rahmatan lil Alamin (*tasamuh, qudwah, and syura*). The PKART framework (Preservice, Planned Action, Reflection, and Follow-up) was used to structure the project stages. During collaborative workshops and literature reviews, the teachers generated ideas related to local culture and sustainability. The observations showed that the educators embedded community knowledge, including traditional agricultural practices and local foods, into their project designs. The planning calendars, checklists, and monitoring tools were documented in the project logbook.

As one teacher stated, "We all worked on projects and had our RPPs based on Pancasila and Islamic principles. We exchanged ideas, discussed obstacles, and

co-created materials so students could truly internalize these values." (Interview, March 2024). This planning phase fostered cross-disciplinary collaboration and collective ownership, resulting in high levels of engagement from teachers and parents.

2. Project Implementation in Lower Grades (First and Second Grades)

In Grades 1 and 2, the project focused on the theme of "Sustainable Lifestyle" to raise environmental awareness among students. According to interviews and classroom observations, the students engaged in initial activities exploring plastic waste and its environmental impact. They classified and sorted various types of plastic using tangible items, such as bottles, containers, and wrappers, brought in by teachers.

Observations revealed high student enthusiasm during a school-wide plastic collection. Visual rewards, such as stars and stickers, were used to motivate participation. After identifying plastic types, students upcycled materials into useful items, such as plant pots and mosaics, working in small groups to promote collaboration. Teachers assessed students' creativity and problem-solving skills using observation checklists, which indicated significant gains in independence and environmental awareness. Moreover, teachers ensured that the implementation of this project aligned with the approach in the learning process, namely (PKART), starting from the introduction, contextualization, real action, reflection, and follow-up stages. The results of plastic waste management are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Results of plastic waste management in grades one and two

Another project, themed "Local Wisdom: My Food, My Identity," encouraged students to explore traditional food culture. The interviews showed that student motivation increased when they researched traditional foods at home with their families. They returned with recipes, stories, and samples that were presented as posters. Student journals indicated improved cultural pride and oral communication skills. One teacher recalled a typically shy student becoming

animated while demonstrating how to make traditional rice cakes. Through this project, students internalized values such as *muwatanah* (national pride), *tasamuh* (tolerance), and *qudwah* (exemplary conduct). An example of a regional food poster made by students in grades 1 and 2 is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Regional food poster work made by 1st and 2nd-grade students

3. Project Implementation in Upper Grades (Grades 4 and 5)

In Grades 4 and 5, the project titled "*Aksinya Berkebun*" was carried out every Saturday after the school's scouting activity. Data from interviews, observations, and document analyses revealed a structured twelve-phase implementation process. The program began with diagnostic assessments of students' prior knowledge of urban farming, followed by an awareness class on environmentally friendly behaviors.

Students then sorted examples of environmentally friendly and unfriendly actions, followed by plant biology lessons, where they identified and drew plant parts. They also investigated the types of soil and created planting media through interactive sessions. During the real-action phase, the students planted seeds in the school garden, monitored their growth, and recorded their observations in their workbooks. The harvesting phase marked a learning milestone, which was documented through photos, field notes, and interviews.

In the reflection phase, the students answered questions about urban farming and their P5 experiences. The final evaluations included celebratory events where students presented their projects. Observations suggested increased confidence, improved communication skills, and a deeper understanding of P5 P2RA values: collaboration, care, diversity, and intercultural understanding.

4. Evaluation of Learning Outcomes and Character Development

Assessment was conducted using integrated evaluations, including performance results, self-assessment, and teacher assessments. Students received evaluation sheets rating their understanding of core concepts, such as urban farming and group cooperation. These were collected and analyzed as part of the project's documentation.

Character development was assessed through reflective activities and student interviews. Questions such as "What did you feel after doing this lesson?" and "What values did you learn from working with others?" elicited responses that reflected emotional engagement and appreciation of teamwork and nature. One student stated, "I liked planting and watering plants with my friends. I learned that plants need daily care, and it's better to work as a team."

Teachers observed students confidently sharing their experiences during the "Celebration of Learning" event. Field reports confirmed that students gained self-confidence, public speaking skills, and the ability to reflect on their learning experiences. The observations showed an increase in the willingness to help others, care for plants, and actively participate in the classroom. These findings align with the P5/P2RA model dimensions, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Effects of P5 P2RA Implementation on Students' Character

No.	Project Theme	P5 Dimensions	P2RA Values
1.	Sustainable Lifestyle	Collaboration, Independence	Tolerance (*Tasamuh*), Innovation (*Tatawwur*)
2.	Local Wisdom	Global Diversity	Citizenship (*Muwatanah*), Exemplary Conduct (*Qudwah*)
3.	Entrepreneurship	Creativity	Moderation (*I'tidal*), Consultation (*Syura*)

5. The impact of implementing P5P2RA on Students' Character Development

One of the most notable outcomes was the development of students' ability to collaborate and engage in mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) with their peers. According to interviews with teachers, students exhibited an increased willingness to work together in both academic and practical project settings. This was particularly observable during the gardening project (*aksinya berkebun*), where students worked in teams to prepare planting media, plant seedlings, and share the responsibility of watering and monitoring plant growth. Observational data confirmed that students took the initiative to help their peers and demonstrated a

high level of group coordination, especially during the action and reflection phases of the project.

Another significant impact was the enhancement of students' environmental awareness and care for the environment. Based on observations and supported by project documentation, students became more sensitive to their surroundings, identifying problems such as unmanaged school waste and proposing eco-friendly solutions to them. For example, some groups suggested reusing organic waste as compost and showed a proactive attitude toward maintaining their planting areas. Teachers reported through interviews that this behavioral shift reflected a deepened sense of responsibility and care for the environment, one of the intended values within the P5 P2RA framework.

The implementation also fosters a stronger understanding and appreciation of cultural identity and diversity. Through the project theme of "Local Wisdom," students explored traditional agricultural practices, including cassava cultivation, and reflected on their relevance in contemporary society. Documentation from student reflections and class portfolios showed that learners not only recognized the importance of preserving local traditions but also linked them to national identity and civic responsibility (*muwatanah*). Interviews with students revealed that many had never thought about farming as part of their cultural heritage until they engaged with this project.

The program's impact extended into the domain of intercultural communication and deliberation (*shura*). As observed during group discussions and decision-making activities, students began to articulate their ideas more clearly, listen actively to others, and reach a consensus respectfully. Teachers noted, based on both observation and documentation in the project report, that students grew in confidence and demonstrated the ability to communicate across differences, fostering an inclusive dialogue within their teams.

Finally, the reflections recorded in student journals and evaluation sheets indicated a positive emotional connection to the learning process. Many students expressed joy, pride, and accomplishment after completing the gardening project. The interviews supported these findings by revealing that the students found the P5 activity had given them a deep and enjoyable learning experience beyond what they experienced in the traditional classroom.

DISCUSSION

1. Interpretation of Findings

The implementation of the P5 P2RA program at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) Taufiqiyah Semarang reflects the nuanced and context-responsive aspirations of the Merdeka Curriculum in developing holistic character. The planning, implementation, and evaluation processes of the P5 P2RA project demonstrate

coherence with national educational goals and Islamic ethical values, emphasizing spiritual, civic, and ecological awareness. This result is consistent with previous research suggesting that character education should be contextualized, participative, and value-driven (Lickona, 2009).

Strategic planning at MI Taufiqiyah is considered a good practice in terms of aligning project themes (Sustainable Living, Local Wisdom, and Entrepreneurship) with the six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile and Islamic values: *tasamuh* (tolerance), *qudwah* (example behavior), and *syura* (consultation). This is in accordance with the results of Maryanah et al. (2024), who stated that school strategic planning is a stimulus for curriculum cohesion and stakeholder ownership. Recently, similar results were found by Saesaputri et al. (2024), who studied P5 in "pioneer schools" and demonstrated that planning through joint workshops had a strong and statistically significant positive effect on teacher readiness and contextual relevance.

Teacher collaboration during planning and implementation is a key strength of the program. This is in line with Budiono (2023) and Cahyaningrum and Diana (2023), who emphasize that teachers' shared vision and collaborative pedagogical design enhance the fidelity of some implementations of P5. The coverage of community-owned foods, such as local food and traditional farming, is another evidence in support of Yasa et al. (2023) and Fatmawati et al. (2024), who also support blending local wisdom for cultural identity and ecological literacy.

The application phases, with a focus on experiential learning through projects such as waste recycling and gardening, exhibit Kolb's (2014) experiential learning cycle, as students progress from concrete experience to reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. These steps are well documented in MI Taufiqiyah and concur with the reflections of Haq et al. (2023), who discovered that project-based religious learning enhances student engagement and learning. Moreover, the program exemplifies Lickona's (2009) triad model of moral knowing, feeling, and action by internalizing ethical values into classroom routines.

Moreover, the student-centered activity-reflection structure used in the project design responds to Afipah and Imamah (2023) and Damayanti and Ghozali's (2023) criticisms that many P5 projects leave out the process of reflection and focus on the product. The MI Taufiqiyah model offers a more balanced and complete application by integrating reflection through journals, group discussions, and student presentations.

2. Thematic Impact and Character Dimensions

The character outcomes of this study further affirm the findings of Pramesti et al. (2024) and Sama' et al. (2023), who documented significant improvements in collaboration, creativity, and environmental awareness through project-based

learning. In this study, cooperation emerged most clearly in gardening activities, where students practiced mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) and demonstrated their initiative. Behavioral changes were also observed by Septika (2024) in their evaluation of sustainability projects.

Environmental awareness is another key area of growth, consistent with Suprihhatin and Rohmadi (2024), who reported increased ecological ethics among MI students after implementing plastic waste management projects. Through tangible engagement with waste and urban farming, students not only internalized environmental values but also began proposing sustainable practices, aligning with the transformative goals of P5 (Hidayanto et al., 2023; Nuraeni et al., 2025).

The integration of cultural identity through traditional food and local agriculture enhances the values of *muwatanah* (citizenship) and global diversity. This is consistent with Arhinza et al. (2023), who found that P5 themes related to local culture fostered identity formation and national pride among students. Intergenerational learning—as seen when students learn recipes from grandparents—further emphasizes the importance of the sociocultural context in character education (Damayanti & Ghozali, 2023).

Reflective communication and civic values were cultivated through peer discussions and democratic decision-making during project stages, affirming the findings of Wahdhany et al. (2024) and Alhamuddin and Murniati (2024), who emphasized the value of structured dialogue and deliberation in building a respectful and inclusive classroom culture.

3. Implications for Curriculum and Pedagogy

This study provides a replicable model for integrating Islamic values into character education under the Merdeka Curriculum. While previous research has shown isolated successes in integrating religious values into P5 themes (e.g., Haq et al., 2023; Suprihatin & Rohmadi, 2024), the holistic approach adopted by MI Taufiqiyah—encompassing planning, implementation, and evaluation—provides a more systemic perspective. This school's model affirms the recommendations of Nafi'ah et al. (2023) to embed multicultural Islamic principles into curriculum planning to foster tolerance, justice, and humanity.

This study also offers insights into differentiated project design across grade levels, a strategy advocated by Arhinza et al. (2023) to promote developmental appropriateness. Lower grades focused on sensory-based and family integrated projects (e.g., local food), whereas upper grades tackled more complex collaborative initiatives, such as gardening, illustrating scaffolding in project difficulty and cognitive demands.

Furthermore, the MI of the Taufiqiyah case reinforces the findings of Muslihati et al. (2023) and Zuriah et al. (2024) regarding the crucial role of school-

community collaboration. Parental involvement in project planning and implementation not only enhances learning but also supports the transmission of values across school and home contexts. This synergy is essential for sustainable character development.

4. Policy and Assessment Considerations

The incongruence of character development with an assessment system already in place is a serious concern, as highlighted by Nasution et al. (2024) and Rahmani et al. (2023). Predicate assessment overemphasizes cognitive outcomes and neglects the affective and behavioral aspects of students' development. The use of reflection journals, teacher observation sheets, and narrative feedback by MI Taufiqiyah provides interesting alternatives; however, policy is not systematically in place. A standardized factor analysis framework is required to ensure scalability and robustness in various educational contexts.

At the policy level, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and local governments need to encourage model programs such as Taufiqiyah through teacher mentoring, policy briefs, and funding for context-sensitive thematic development. Such initiatives may also contribute to closing the policy-practice divide identified by Budiono (2023) and Kiska et al. (2023), especially in madrasahs that have limited opportunities for professional development.

5. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study makes a significant contribution to understanding the implementation and impact of P5 P2RA (Project-Based Learning within the Independent Curriculum); however, it has several limitations. First, using a single madrasah (Islamic school) as the research site limits the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Variations in teacher competency, leadership support, and community participation can influence the effectiveness of P5 P2RA in various settings. Future multisite case studies involving madrasahs with diverse characteristics would broaden the scope and enhance the reliability of the findings.

Second, this qualitative study employed interviews, observations, and document analyses. While these methods yield rich contextual data, they lack quantitative measures of character development. Subsequent research could be enriched by a mixed-methods design incorporating pre- and post-intervention assessments, longitudinal tracking, or experimental comparisons between implementation models.

Third, although Islamic values were integrated into the project, this study did not systematically evaluate the level of internalization of religious values in the students' character. Future research could investigate how explicit instruction using *Qur'ānic* verses, *ḥadīths* (prophetic traditions), or stories of the prophets

could strengthen the P5 P2RA framework within the madrasah setting, thus creating a more comprehensive model of Islamic integrated character education.

Finally, while the "Local Wisdom" theme proved effective, further research is needed to understand how other themes, such as innovation, entrepreneurship, and global citizenship, might influence character development. Future studies examining the comparative impact of various P5 P2RA themes could inform schools in selecting themes that are appropriate to student needs and local contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the application of the Pancasila Student Profile and the Strengthening Project of the Pancasila Student Profile and the Rahmatan Lil Alamin Student Profile (P5 P2RA) at MI Taufiqiyah Semarang significantly contributes to character development when supported by structured planning, collaborative teaching, and culturally relevant project-based learning. The integration of national character values with Islamic principles, such as *tasamuh* (tolerance), *muwatanah* (civic responsibility), and *syura* (consultation/ deliberation), enables students to internalize moral values through experiential and reflective learning. Projects such as gardening and exploring local foods not only facilitate knowledge acquisition but also cultivate empathy, cooperation, and environmental awareness.

The significance of this research is that it provides evidence that deep character development cannot be achieved through thematic integration alone, but that pedagogy requires students to be emotionally, socially, and morally involved. The findings establish that experiential education with structured reflection promotes the connection of values to behaviors in real-life situations. This study provides a useful example for the administrators of Islamic-based schools regarding how to synchronize the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum with their tafsir-oriented education. To scale up, future implementation must build upon continuing teacher training, an improved system of assessment, and closer cooperation between schools and communities.

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