

## Contextualization of Fazlur Rahman's Thought Towards the Curriculum of *Merdeka Belajar* in Primary Education

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**Abstrak:** This study aimed to contextualize Fazlur Rahman's thoughts on the *Merdeka Belajar* (Free Learning) Curriculum system in Primary Education. This study method used a qualitative approach with the type of library research by examining the works of Fazlur Rahman and several books and journal articles related to his thoughts. The scientific method used in this study was the historical method, consisting of heuristic stages, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The study results revealed that Fazlur Rahman's thoughts were very relevant to understand in the context of the *Merdeka Belajar* (Free Learning) Curriculum, including 1) To understand the progress of learning (as is the concept of *Merdeka Belajar*), Rahman emphasized the importance of the concept of Democratization of Education, in which children were given certain freedoms while still being accompanied by educators so that local wisdom and universal human ethics (Islamic values) were maintained.. 2) Education had to continue to adopt various advanced civilizations, but it had to not destroy the moral values of children. 3) In *Merdeka Belajar*, education had to be child-centered, as well as Fazlur Rahman's thoughts. He emphasized that education had to respect children's nature, equality, and freedom so that children's potential (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor) could continue to increase. 4) The importance of using the double movement theory in improving the quality of education. 5) Rahman concluded that true education was education based on the Qur'an's ethics.

**Keywords:** *Fazlur Rahman, Merdeka Belajar (Free Learning) Curriculum, Primary Education*

### INTRODUCTION

At least until the end of April 2021, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) has launched ten episodes of the *Merdeka Belajar* policy. *Merdeka Belajar* Policy is referred to as a step in transforming education to realize superior Indonesian Human Resources (HR), and it is hoped that each student will have a Pancasila Student Profile within themselves. ([ditpsd.kemdikbud.go.id](http://ditpsd.kemdikbud.go.id), 2021). Through *Merdeka Belajar*, institutions, teachers, and students can explore and innovate teaching and learning (Siregar, Sahirah, & Harahap, 2020). For this reason, the logical consequence is that teachers, schools, and students are no longer just being monotonous but rather a freedom of thought and action in providing flexibility to choose lessons according to the interests and talents of students.

The urgency and the essence of freedom and independence in learning must start from the teacher so that if the teacher is patterned in independent learning, it will impact his students. Independent learning will affect how the learning system changes from previously done in the classroom to outside the classroom. Students do not only listen to the teacher's explanation regarding certain knowledge, but they can more freely discuss it with their teacher. Therefore, teachers must explore providing project-based learning methods to stimulate student creativity. Because through *Merdeka Belajar*, students will form independent, brave, smart, and intelligent characters communicating socially, politely, and competitively (Sherly, Dharma, & Sihombing, 2021). Students are no longer oriented with numbers and ranking systems in their schools but

rather explore the potential and intelligence of each student so that they can be optimized in their daily lives.

So far, the learning process in the classroom has focused more on the teacher as the main source of information, so students are not too involved in the learning process. Good students can remember and memorize all the information the teacher conveys. From this point on, the learning process like this makes students tend to be passive, not have the principle of independence, and cannot optimize the development of their potential (Surani, 2019). Along with the changes in this disruptive era, quality Human Resources (HR) are needed in the future. The desired future human characteristics are humans who have independence, social sensitivity, develop all aspects of their potential, and are ready to face the challenges of the times in various situations.

To realize the above goals, the steps that need to be taken are to improve the concept of student active learning again. The actualization of the Tut Wuri Handayani concept also needs to be redeveloped as a concrete manifestation of a human being in the present to embrace the future (Hendri, 2020). The problem in the education body to date is that there are still many restraints in the learning process for teachers, students, and the school itself. Teachers and students must be fully 'independent' in determining the direction of their 'local wisdom' in their learning and teaching process (Ichsan, Samsudin, & Pranajati, 2021). It is because many administrative regulations shackle and bind. Meanwhile, on the other hand, the welfare of teachers is not what is expected, especially with the high demands from policymakers. What happens in the field is that teachers have to complete all the learning tools, which have been colonized by academic-administrative requirements, without providing flexibility and independence for the teachers themselves.

Islamic education as a national sub-education must continue to play an important role in achieving the educational goals mandated by law. In reality, Islamic education (particularly Islamic basic education) does not only provide education at the level of transfer of knowledge but rather serves as a basis for the transfer of values (Mu'amalah, 2020) so that the knowledge gained is not only a matter of intellectuality alone, but also based on spiritual, social, and emotional. Islamic education, which has been internalized since elementary school age (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah), will make students fully optimize their potential. Because in Islam, learning is an obligation and a necessity for every individual (Wijaksono & Ichsan, 2022), this understanding implies that everyone has a collective awareness to learn to actualize themselves independently, without pressure from any party.

If you examine the history of Islamic civilization, classical Islamic education has produced various qualified Muslim scholars who have the maturity of religious knowledge and general knowledge. So that what happens in them is a balance between the power of thought and the power of *dzikir* (Arifin & Muslim, 2020). This point became a strong foundation for the progress of Islamic civilization at that time. One classical Muslim scholar with the maturity of religious and general knowledge is Fazlur Rahman.

As an influential Muslim scholar, Fazlur Rahman has specifically emphasized the importance of reconstructing the educational curriculum so that Islamic education is not left behind with secular education created by Western civilization. Rahman critically criticizes education in the Islamic world, which is far behind due to several factors, so he offers the concept of democratization of education, namely education that provides freedom for students to develop their potential as a source of learning (Bahri, 2016). Therefore, it is from the concept of democratization of education that it is important to review how Fazlur Rahman's thoughts can be used as an important analytical tool in understanding the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, which these days is used as the benchmark for national education in Indonesia, especially in the context of basic education.

Many studies reveal Fazlur Rahman's thoughts, and several studies related to *Merdeka Belajar*. Still, of all the existing research, research has yet to be found that specifically examines Fazlur Rahman's educational thoughts related to the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum, so contextualizing these two things is important to understand together. The previous related studies include 1) Research from Hamsah & Nurchamidah (2019) entitled "*Islamic Education in the Perspective of Neo-Modernism (Study of Fazlur Rahman's Thought Analysis)*". 2) Research from Prayitno & Qodat (2019) entitled "*Fazlur Rahman's Concept of Thought on the Modernization of Islamic Education and Its Relevance to Islamic Education in Indonesia*". 3) Research from Mawaddah & Karomah (2018) entitled "*The Relevance of Fazlur Rahman's Thoughts to Modern Education in Indonesia*".

4) Research from Zuhri (2017) entitled "*The Relevance of Fazlur Rahman's Education Concept to the 2013 Curriculum*". 5) Research from Mardani, Susiawati, & Fathimah (2023) entitled "*Free Learning Curriculum in the Democratization of Islamic Education in Indonesia*". 6) Research from Suryadi, Damopolii, & Salahuddin (2021) with the title "*Modernization and Democratization of Islamic Education according to Fazlur Rahman*". Therefore, this article will describe more clearly three important things, namely understanding the history of education in Fazlur Rahman's life, uncovering the concept of *Merdeka Belajar* according to Fazlur Rahman, and examining the urgency of independent learning in primary education in the context of Fazlur Rahman's thoughts.

## METHODS

This study is qualitative research, namely research that aims to explore events in detail by collecting related data (Rukin, 2019). This study type is literature study, in which the researcher diligently collects research data with various references to books, journal articles, magazines, newspapers, websites, and other relevant literacy, so that researcher can understand the existing theories in the literature to be used as analytical tools for this study object (Sugiyono, 2016). The study method the researcher uses is the historical method, in which the researcher carries out several important stages, namely heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography (Creswell, 2010).

The stages of the historical method above can be explained in more detail as follows: *First*, the heuristic stages. Researchers use this stage to explore related literature sources so that it can be used as an important theory in analyzing the data obtained. *Second* the source criticism stage. Researchers must also be critical of data sources that have been collected previously continuously and interactively. At this stage, the researcher is given the flexibility to choose and sort relevant and irrelevant data. *Third* is the interpretation stage. The researcher carried out the process of analyzing the research data using a historical approach. *Fourth*, the historiography stages. After going through the three previous stages, at this stage, the researcher writes down the study results comprehensively according to the analysis obtained (Sukmadinata, 2013).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Fazlur Rahman's Educational Journey

Fazlur Rahman was born in Hazara, northwestern Pakistan, on September 21, 1919. His father is a well-known scholar in Pakistan, namely Maulana Sabab Ad-Din. So it is unsurprising that his father has strictly religiously educated Rahman since childhood. Through his father's upbringing, Rahman, at the age of 10, had memorized 30 chapters of

the Qur'an (Sutrisno, 2006). Since he has been given a strict education since childhood, Rahman has had a tremendous influence on the formation of his character and character so that he can always face the dynamics of life.

The influence of Rahman's thinking in a religious context is that he was educated from an early age as a follower of the Hanafi school of thought, a school that is more focused on using reason. Not only that, at that time, in Pakistan, there had been developing thoughts that tended to be liberal developed by Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Muhammad Iqbal, and Shah Waliyullah (Rahman, 1990). With most of the environment using ratios, at the end of 1933, Rahman continued his B.A. and completed his Masters's degree at Punjab University. After that, Rahman continued his studies at Oxford University and completed his Ph.D. in 1949 (Fazlurrahman, 2018).

It is at this point in studying in the West that Rahman mastered five languages, namely English, Greek, Arabic, Turkish, German and Urdu (Suryadi, 2020). Hal ini menjadikan peluang besar Rahman dalam mempelajari berbagai literatur ilmu pengetahuan Barat, khususnya studi Islam yang ditulis oleh para orientalis Barat. Melalui hal tersebut, Rahman menyerap berbagai ilmu dan pengalamannya untuk dijadikan sebagai bahan penting demi perbaikan peradaban Islam secara objektif.

After graduating from Oxford University, Rahman teaches at Durhan University in England and the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University in Canada. So that his original foundational work entitled "*Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy*" can be published (Murni, 2019). After publishing his first work, he completed several important works during the three periods of the development of his thought, namely the formation period, the development period, and the maturity period.

*First* the formation period. Rahman, in this period, writes three works, namely: 1) *Avecinna's Psychology*, 2) *Avecinna's De Anima, Being the Psychological Part of Kitab Al-Shifa'*, dan 3) *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy*. The first two works are related to Ibn Sina's thoughts on the book he wrote. In contrast, the third book is related to his concern for the reality of modern Muslim scholars who are less interested in understanding in detail the doctrine of prophecy in Islamic teachings (Saihu, 2020).

*Second*, the development period. In this period, Rahman looked very radical, whereas Rahman was previously interested in understanding normative Islamic studies. During this period, Rahman tries to reformulate Islam to respond to today's Islamic society's various challenges and needs. Several factors cause it, namely 1) there is a strong controversy between modernists and traditionalists-fundamentalists, 2) there is intense interaction with Western civilization by Rahman, so that he remains critical and objective on the dynamics that occur in the Islamic world, and 3) Rahman also holds an important position as Director of the Islamic Research Institute and member of the Advisory Council for Islamic Ideology in the Government of Pakistan (Aziz, 2019).

*Third*, the maturity period. Rahman, in this period, spent his time writing books from various aspects, both normative and historical. Among his works are: 1) *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, which contains God, man, nature, prophecy, eschatology, crime, and the birth of the Muslim community. 2) *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra Shirazi* contains the thoughts of Mulla Sadra, who tries to reconstruct the peripatetic tradition and that of Ibn Arabi. 3) *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of Intellectual Tradition* contains the intellectual history and Islamic education from the Classical to the present Modern period (Bahri, 2016).

From the three periods of Fazlur Rahman's thought above, it can be understood that Rahman's life and the results of his thoughts are very important to understand in the current era. Moreover, he made important works related to Islamic education associated with

modernity. Rahman is an Islamic scholar who is strong and objective in understanding education dynamics. On the one hand, he criticizes the world of Islamic education; on the other hand, he still maintains the original prophetic values. On the one hand, Rahman extols Western civilization with its various modernities; on the other hand, he also criticizes the West because its civilization can undermine the moral values of other civilizations, especially Islamic civilization.

## 2. *Merdeka Belajar* (Free Learning) in Fazlur Rahman's Perspective

Fazlur Rahman is an adherent of pragmatism; that is, everything is not only stated for what it is but must be stated for what something is used for. By understanding the context, Fazlur Rahman's thoughts are always related to their functions and uses. Rahman always criticizes the search for knowledge that damages moral values because, according to him, Islam is understood as a process that produces integrative humans (scientists), namely having critical, creative, innovative, dynamic, honest, fair, and progressive characteristics, and so on (Assegaf, 2013).

Humans with the above characteristics can provide alternative solutions to various problems humans face across eras. According to Rahman, education must continue to be based on the values of the Qur'an so that the potential in humans must continue to develop and the knowledge they acquire can be used as an important organ of the whole creative person by utilizing natural resources for the benefit of humans. It is to create justice, progress, and human order on Earth (Saihu, 2020).

Fazlur Rahman reminded us that Islamic education cannot be separated from the Western education system because Islam always learns from it. But what is important to understand is that the Western education system has dehumanized and frozen the human soul. Although the West has weaknesses, the Islamic world is overly defensive. It is done in order to save Muslims from the pollution and damage caused by various scientific disciplines that the Western world has created, especially threatening the standards of Islamic morality itself. Therefore, a solution is needed to bridge the two weaknesses above, namely by combining the new Western education with the old style of Islamic education so that mixing educational strategies like this can positively impact Islamic education in the future (Murni, 2019).

Fazlur Rahman's thoughts have impacted Islamic education in the world, especially in Indonesia today. Based on the principles of fiqh, "*Almuhafadzah 'ala al-qadim as-shalih, wa al akhdzu bi al-jadid al-ashlah*", adopting two civilizations by finding the best point in life is the best solution in the world of education (Istiyani, Ichsan, & Samsudin, 2021) so that Islamic education will continue to provide benefits in the future, especially the absorption of digital technology in the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era and its application in the Society 5.0 era so that the poison from Western civilization which is feared to damage morale can be wasted by itself. So for Rahman, the knowledge that does not expand various insights and actions (with an adoption system) is half-baked science and very dangerous for life. In Islamic civilization, it is still widely found that people can know the ultimate goal of life without being based on knowledge of the existing social reality (Assegaf, 2013). It means that education must give students the freedom to have open insight. Rahman said, "*If people want to make progress in accordance with the context of Islamic goals, then the use of modern research techniques (based on various advanced civilizations) is absolutely necessary*" (Assegaf, 2013).

It is necessary that times are always changing, so Islamic education must also be able to respond to these changes so that it can continue to compete in global civilization and become a solution to actual problems. At this point, education becomes important to move

together. So Fazlur Rahman echoed the concept of democratic education, which always provides space for freedom and positive and dynamic changes to answer the challenges above. The democratization of education is an education that values character, equality, and freedom for students so that they can develop their inner potential, with the hope of becoming a solutive human being (Suryadi et al., 2021). Therefore, the concept of democratization of education initiated by Fazlur Rahman above is the essence of Freedom to Learn, which is echoed by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud), namely freedom of thought, because each student has different knowledge and experience so that their potential must be honed and developed continuously (Yamin & Syahrir, 2020).

### 3. The Urgency of Merdeka Belajar in Primary Education: Reflections on Fazlur Rahman's Thoughts

For Fazlur Rahman, education's essence is that students can develop their freedom through the educational process with the ability of three aspects at once, namely cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects (Assegaf, 2013). The concept of education initiated by Fazlur Rahman can be drawn into the context of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum in Indonesia today. The advantages of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum focus on the context of cognitive essential material and the development of student competence (in the context of affective and psychomotor) so that students learn more deeply, meaningfully, and enjoyably (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022).

For Rahman, the concept of democracy itself is very important to review because it already fulfills Islamic values. Namely, it appreciates human rights and social justice for all. One example of human rights is freedom. Freedom is a basic human right in the world. Through freedom, humans can have creativity and knowledge and carry out goals that they think are good. But for Rahman, freedom here does not mean interfering with the rights of others. If understood in the context of education, the expected freedom is the freedom of students to optimize their potential in educational spaces because the freedom developed is freedom with full responsibility (Assegaf, 2013).

In the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum, learning must be adapted to students' characteristics, potential, and needs. This curriculum allows students, teachers, and schools to determine appropriate subjects. With this freedom, the academic community can freely carry out various innovations, creativity, and independence to make the learning atmosphere more enjoyable and without pressure (Sherly et al., 2021).

Therefore, it is important to reconstruct Fazlur Rahman's thoughts about education in order to understand the urgency of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum in National Education today. It is because Rahman's thoughts are the initial foundation for understanding the importance of actualizing independent learning, especially for students at elementary school age. Fazlur Rahman's thoughts which have urgency in the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum can be explained as follows:

a. Education must continue to adopt modern civilization.

In the history of Fazlur Rahman's life, at that time, education in the Islamic world was very far behind education (read: Western civilization) in various ways. For Rahman, education needs a solid foundation in actualizing its responsibilities in the modern era of globalization. If traditional education does not immediately make adjustments, it will certainly die. So education must adopt more effectively between the basic cultural values that were previously owned and modern culture (Mawaddah & Karomah, 2018).

Education should be strengthened from elementary school age so that students can stimulate creativity and independence in the future. The civilization of Western society

can be advanced and modern because its mindset has changed to continue to modernize all of its daily life. Digitalization of education is very important to implement in this era of society 5.0. But a common challenge is that the digitalization era will only be able to improve society if the mindset of Islamic society is changed, meaning that people are not motivated for a new, better civilization. Vice versa, if Islamic society can concretely adopt the civilization of the present era, it will become a catalyst because it can solve various life problems, so education becomes the main key to achieving what is expected above. So the best solution for Fazlur Rahman is to adopt various modern civilizations with Islamic values to create a more advanced educational civilization.

To support the adoption of modern civilization, the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum fully supports the implementation of a new paradigm of learning, namely renewal in the organization of learning. In elementary school, there are three important phases in restoring learning development and learning: Phase A for grades 1 and 2, Phase B for grades 3 and 4, and Phase C for grades 5 and 6. The three phases are divided into two important activities: intracurricular learning and the Project to Strengthen Pancasila Student Profiles (*Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila*) (Kemendikbud, 2022). It means that the development of an educational curriculum (read: *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum) will be effective if it is adapted to the demands of the times and the needs of civilization (Indarta et al., 2022). In the era of Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0, curriculum development must continue to be relevant, flexible, continuous, practical, and effective in adopting various changes.

b. Education must be student-centered

According to Fazlur Rahman, education should continue to pay special attention to students. Education must be able to develop the freedom of learners. If the self-potential of students can develop with the help of professional educators, then automatically, students will continue to be enthusiastic about developing their creativity; in other words, “*Pupils are thoroughly motivated by the master teacher to take action to achieve the goals that they have established under his guidance*” (Weimer, 2013). To produce creative students, the best way is that learning must be student-centered. It is because each student has different interests, abilities, experiences, preferences, and learning styles (Sutrisno, 2003). For this reason, students' potential can be developed and improved.

Therefore, Rahman offers the concept of andragogy education. If pedagogy views students as dependent personal subjects, it means that everything students do still depends on others, parents, teachers, leaders, and the surrounding community. So andragogy has the opposite assumption. That is, the subject of the learner is a person who has directed himself. Students are considered adults who understand their needs and everything that benefits them (Assegaf, 2013). For this reason, parents, teachers, leaders, or the community are facilitators who have the function of facilitating and encouraging to optimize the learning process.

Pedagogy assumes that students are something that is formed, while andragogy assumes that students have experience and become a source of learning for themselves and others. In pedagogy, students' learning readiness must be uniform according to the curriculum level, class, and age. Meanwhile, andragogy is determined by the tasks of daily life and the problems faced. Students will be ready to learn if their experiences and needs are by them. Therefore, andragogy education trains students as learning

resources to solve various life problems within themselves as part of problem solvers (Fornaciari & Dean, 2013).

Fazlur Rahman's thoughts above can be understood that the core of andragogy learning is an emphasis on students as independent individuals who can be free to develop their potential according to what they are interested in so that they can construct their knowledge and experience using problem-solving. If it is associated with the four principles of learning in the 21st century, then learning in the world of education must be student-centered. Participants are placed as learning subjects who actively develop their interests and potential (Makela, Kankaanranta, & Helfenstein, 2014).

In the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum, student-centered learning does not mean that students can freely choose lessons according to their own will in full. Still, there must be intervention from educators as facilitators in helping deliver prior knowledge that students already have. Providing the widest possible opportunity to learn according to their learning style and encouraging them to be accountable for what they have done is the starting point in welcoming the new civilization of national education, which Fazlur Rahman has long hoped for. Educators should also be given the role of mentor when students find it difficult to construct their knowledge and learning experiences (Simatupang & Yuhertiana, 2021), especially students in primary education.

c. Double movement theory as a solution to improve the quality of national education

Double movement is a theory developed by Fazlur Rahman with the understanding that there is a double movement in overcoming life's problems, especially in education. Namely, the movement from the present situation to the time when the Qur'an was revealed reflects on the present (Yati, Imran, & Maemonah, 2021). Rahman believes that this theory can be applied in education, especially from an early age students are taught to develop this theory. Islamic education will produce critical and creative scientists if the double movement theory is applied. Namely, scientists who have alternative solutions to the fundamental problems of human life (Umair & Said, 2023).

The double movement in the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum can be understood that *Merdeka Learning* is the newest curriculum that tries to respond to the dynamics of education in the world of industrial revolution 4.0 and towards Society-based education 5.0. One of the results of an important response in this theory that can be applied to the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum is strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile (*Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila*). The government here has taken a dual movement, namely the education movement, by maintaining local Indonesian wisdom and adopting and reflecting it in contemporary modern education according to the challenges and needs of the times so that it becomes a comprehensive curriculum product. In Islamic education itself, various madrasas (especially Madrasah Ibtidaiyah and Islamic Boarding School) have adopted this double movement theory with various learning processes (Ichsan et al., 2021), one of which is the exploration of various modern methods of memorizing the Qur'an for children according to their potential.

Through the theory of double movement, students will become people who can apply the concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. With the double movement theory, students will continue to apply creativity with strong thinking because they are given the freedom to explore their potential. He will appear ego-free to manipulate the universe by not denying the transcendental aspect of God as the final ego.



d. True education is education that is based on the ethics of the Qur'an

Society in cross eras cannot be separated from education because education solves societal problems (Suwandayani, 2019). But sometimes, on the contrary, through education, too, society has some problems. It can be understood that the civilization of a country depends on the dynamics of education it creates because civilization is formed by the knowledge system that underlies it. For this reason, in Islamic education, the expected social function is moral and social justice based on the values of the Qur'an.

The ethics of the Qur'an must continue to be developed in the world of education, especially in basic education, because in the ethics of the Qur'an, for Fazlur Rahman, there are three important foundations: faith, Islam, and holiness. Based on the Qur'an's ethics, students are caliphs so that their potential can continue to be developed to regulate all of nature for the benefit of human life. Rahman explained in more detail that education is calling on humans to use their minds to understand and investigate the universe and to realize how great the knowledge of God's creation is (Assegaf, 2013).

Likewise, in *Merdeka Belajar*, students are given the freedom to explore their potential, one of which is by creating a fun and happy learning atmosphere. This happy atmosphere is not only for students but also for all academics (students, school leaders, teachers, and parents). In the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum, it is hoped that education output can construct the best and superior quality education in various fields (Suntoro & Widoro, 2020). If understood from the ethics of the Qur'an, the concept of *Merdeka Belajar* has been practiced by Rasulullah SAW with his three methods of preaching for the civilization of the people, including the dialogic interactive method, the exemplary method, and the story method (Aprilia & Bustam, 2021). *Merdeka Belajar* is the answer to the challenges of the era, where in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and Society 5.0, Indonesian people must become producers (leaders), not consumers of civilization, but still adhere to religious and Eastern moral values.

Through the *Khalifah fil ard* (leader on earth), Fazlur Rahman emphasized that the Qur'an has harshly criticized the search for knowledge that can damage moral values. Islamic education must be based on Islamic ideology, meaning education cannot deny the potential for truth and error. So the Qur'an has called on humans to comprehensively study the events within themselves, the universe, and human history across eras and take important lessons from them to improve life.

## CONCLUSIONS

As a follower of the Hanafi school of thought and pragmatism, Fazlur Rahman provided the concept of democratization of education, which is essentially the essence of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum initiated by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture today. Rahman's thoughts that have urgency in the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum are 1) education should always adopt modern civilization, 2) education should continue to be centered on students as subjects and sources of learning, 3) the application of the double movement theory must be used as a solution to improve the quality of national education, and 4) in the context of Islamic education, education that is based on the ethics of the Qur'an. The four thoughts of Fazlur Rahman above can be used as a basic standard in exploring education in Indonesia as early as possible, especially since primary education (*Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*).

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