

Developing Learning Outcome Indicators in Akidah Akhlak Education: A Case Study in Islamic Junior Secondary Schools under the Merdeka Curriculum

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the development of learning outcome indicators in the instructional planning of Akidah Akhlak for seventh-grade students in Phase D under the Merdeka Curriculum. The main issue lies in non-operational indicators, particularly in the affective domain, which limits effective assessment and character development. This study employed a qualitative case study design conducted at MTsN 01 Kota Bekasi, Indonesia. Data were collected through document analysis, observations, and interviews with a teacher. The analysis focused on the alignment between indicators, learning outcomes, student characteristics, and assessment practices. The results show that cognitive indicators are clearly formulated and measurable. However, affective indicators remain general, lack observable behavioral criteria, and are not integrated into assessment practices. These findings highlight the importance of developing operational and measurable affective indicators to support holistic learning. The study implies that teachers need greater support in designing indicator-based assessment frameworks and strengthening affective indicator formulation to ensure that character development objectives within Akidah Akhlak education can be assessed systematically and effectively under the Merdeka Curriculum.

Keywords Akidah Akhlak; Learning Completion Indicators; Learning Planning

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INTRODUCTION

Learning planning plays a crucial role in ensuring the effectiveness of educational practices, particularly within competency-based curricula such as the Merdeka Curriculum. However, in practice, the formulation of learning outcome indicators in Akidah Akhlak education remains inconsistent and often lacks operational clarity. Many indicators are expressed in general terms and do not adequately represent observable student behaviors, especially in the affective and moral domains. This limitation reduces the effectiveness of instructional planning, as indicators function as the primary reference for learning objectives, instructional activities, and assessment (Karngbea & Kennedy, 2022).

In the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers are given flexibility to design contextual and student-centered teaching tools (Saputra et al., 2026). As a key component of the education system, the curriculum serves as a reference for teachers and institutions in organizing learning processes (Irawan et al., 2023). In the context of Islamic Religious Education, particularly Akidah Akhlak, learning outcome indicators play a strategic role in guiding the development of students' religious understanding, moral attitudes, and character formation. However, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in many madrasahs is still in a transitional phase, making the quality of learning planning highly dependent on teachers' ability to translate learning outcomes into measurable indicators (Adiyani et al., 2025).

At the level of Islamic junior secondary schools (Madrasah Tsanawiyah), especially in Phase D (Grade VII), this challenge becomes more complex due to the developmental characteristics of early adolescents. Students at this stage are capable of abstract thinking but still require concrete behavioral guidance to internalize moral and ethical values (Purwaningsih, 2024). Initial observations indicate that teachers tend to emphasize cognitive aspects, while affective indicators related to attitudes and character are often formulated in general and non-operational terms (Vázquez Marín, 2024). In addition, some teachers rely on standardized teaching materials or adopt existing indicator models without adapting them to classroom contexts. As a result, the indicators often fail to reflect differentiated learning principles and the holistic competencies emphasized in the Merdeka Curriculum (Khairanis et al., 2025).

Previous studies on learning planning within the Merdeka Curriculum have primarily focused on learning objectives, teaching modules (ATP), and formative assessment. These studies show that teachers face difficulties in translating learning outcomes into specific and applicable objectives (Widiansyah et al., 2025). Other studies indicate that Islamic Education teachers require further support in developing character-based instructional tools (Maharaja, 2024). However, despite the growing number of studies on curriculum implementation and assessment within the Merdeka Curriculum, limited attention has been given to the specific formulation of learning outcome indicators, particularly in Akidah Akhlak learning at the MTs Phase D level. Existing studies tend to focus on implementation and evaluation aspects, while the construction, quality, and operational clarity of indicators—especially in the affective domain—remain underexplored. This gap leads to inconsistencies between instructional planning and assessment practices, ultimately affecting the effectiveness of character development in Islamic education.

From a theoretical perspective, learning planning emphasizes indicators as measurable derivatives of learning objectives (Xin et al., 2022). This perspective is grounded in the taxonomy of educational objectives proposed by Benjamin Bloom, which classifies learning outcomes into cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, and further emphasizes the operationalization of the affective domain in instructional

design (Krathwohl, 2002). Student development theory highlights that learners in Phase D require both cognitive stimulation and structured moral guidance (Lutfiah, 2025). In Islamic education, the internalization of moral values requires indicators that capture not only knowledge but also attitudes and daily practices (Zaini et al., 2022). Therefore, developing learning outcome indicators in Akidah Akhlak education requires integrating pedagogical theory with Islamic character education principles.

This study addresses this gap by positioning learning outcome indicators as essential pedagogical instruments rather than merely administrative requirements. Specifically, this study contributes by: (1) analyzing the process of developing learning outcome indicators; (2) evaluating their quality in relation to learning outcomes and student characteristics; (3) identifying weaknesses, particularly in affective indicators; and (4) examining their relationship with assessment practices and student profile frameworks.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the development of learning outcome indicators in Akidah Akhlak instructional planning, assess their quality and alignment with student characteristics, identify weaknesses in affective indicator formulation, and examine their relationship with learning assessment practices.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore in depth the development of learning outcome indicators in Akidah Akhlak instructional planning. The case study design was selected to enable a comprehensive understanding of how teachers construct and interpret learning outcome indicators within a real educational context. The research was conducted at MTsN 01 Kota Bekasi, a public Islamic junior secondary school located in Bekasi, West Java, Indonesia, which has implemented the Merdeka Curriculum. The participant of this study was an Akidah Akhlak teacher teaching Phase D (Grade VII), namely Eka Sumaikah. The informant was selected using purposive sampling based on criteria including teaching experience, active involvement in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, and responsibility for developing instructional planning documents.

Data were collected through multiple techniques to ensure depth and credibility. First, document analysis was conducted on learning planning tools, including Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP), teaching modules, lesson plans, syllabi, and assessment rubrics. Second, observations were carried out to examine how the teacher formulates and interprets learning outcome indicators within instructional planning practices. Third, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the teacher's pedagogical considerations, challenges, and reasoning in developing learning outcome indicators. The researcher acted as the primary instrument in data collection and analysis, directly engaging with documents and the informant to interpret the data. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model developed by Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña (1996), which involves three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. This process was carried out iteratively throughout the study to ensure analytical rigor.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, triangulation of sources and techniques was applied by comparing findings obtained from document analysis, observations, and interviews. In addition, prolonged engagement and persistent observation were conducted to enhance data credibility (BARA, n.d.). Ethical considerations were also taken into account by obtaining the informant's consent prior to data collection and ensuring that the data were used solely for research purposes. The analysis focused on three main aspects: (1) the process of developing learning outcome

indicators; (2) the pedagogical and religious considerations underlying their formulation; and (3) the alignment of indicators with student developmental characteristics in Phase D and the intended learning outcomes of Akidah Akhlak learning.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Result

The Process of Developing Learning Outcome Indicators

The findings indicate that the Akidah Akhlak teacher began the process of developing learning outcome indicators by conducting an initial analysis of the learning outcomes (Capaian Pembelajaran/CP) outlined in the Merdeka Curriculum for Phase D. These learning outcomes served as the primary framework that defines the expected competencies of students in both the cognitive and affective domains.

The structure of the learning outcomes used in the instructional planning is presented in Figure 1.

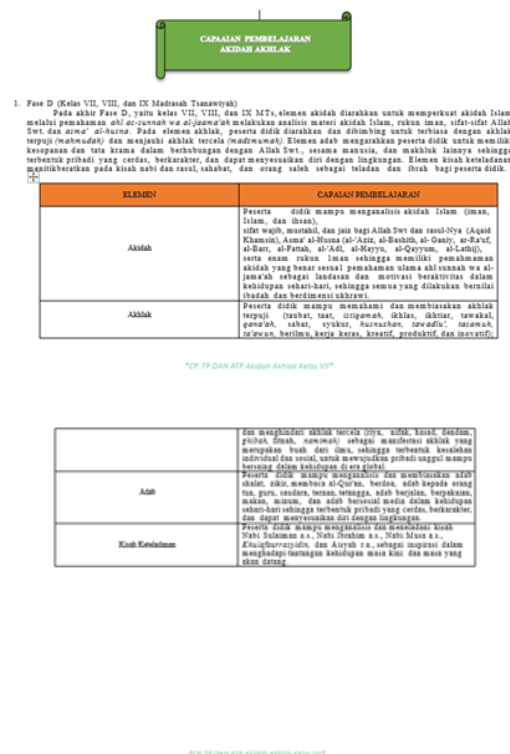


Figure 1. Learning Outcomes (Capaian Pembelajaran) of Akidah Akhlak for Phase D

Based on the document analysis, the learning outcomes consist of two main elements, namely *aqidah* and *akhlak*, which are further elaborated into specific competency descriptions. These competencies include students' ability to understand theological concepts, internalize moral values, and demonstrate appropriate attitudes in daily life. The analysis of this document shows that the teacher used the CP as a foundational reference to determine the scope of learning content and the expected direction of student development.

After analyzing the learning outcomes, the teacher proceeded to break them down into more specific and operational learning objectives. This process involved identifying

key concepts, determining the sequence of learning materials, and adjusting them to the characteristics of Phase D students.

The findings indicate that this stage plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between general curriculum expectations and classroom-level instructional planning. Furthermore, the results of document analysis reveal that the teacher relied on structured instructional planning tools, particularly the teaching module, to organize and align learning outcomes, objectives, and indicators (Hermawan et al., 2025).

The teaching module serves not only as a guideline for instructional implementation but also as a framework for systematically formulating learning outcome indicators.

The structure and components of the teaching module used in this study are presented in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Teaching Module of Akidah Akhlak (Merdeka Curriculum)

Overall, the development process followed a sequential pattern, starting from learning outcomes, followed by learning objectives, and culminating in the formulation of learning outcome indicators. This process indicates that the teacher relied on formal curriculum documents and structured planning tools in developing indicators.

The Quality of Learning Outcome Indicators

The findings indicate that the quality of learning outcome indicators developed by the teacher varies across different domains of learning. Based on document analysis, the indicators in the cognitive domain are formulated more clearly and tend to be measurable compared to those in other domains.

The teaching module shows that several indicators are structured to reflect students' conceptual understanding of Akidah Akhlak materials. These include indicators such as explaining the meaning of *aqidah*, identifying textual evidence from the Qur'an and Hadith, and describing the relationship between *Iman*, *Islam*, and *Ihsan*. These indicators demonstrate a focus on knowledge acquisition and conceptual clarity. In addition, the formulation of these indicators shows a logical progression from basic understanding to more complex thinking processes. For example, students are not only expected to recall concepts but also to analyze relationships between key ideas. This is reflected in learning activities such as group discussions, argument analysis, and concept

mapping, which are documented in the teaching module (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

The findings also reveal that the indicators are generally aligned with the learning objectives outlined in the instructional planning. The consistency between learning objectives and indicators indicates that the teacher follows a structured approach in translating curriculum expectations into measurable learning targets. Furthermore, the indicators are supported by learning materials and activities that provide opportunities for students to engage in analytical and reflective thinking processes.

However, the level of specificity of the indicators varies. While some indicators clearly describe expected learning outcomes, others remain relatively broad in formulation. In several cases, the indicators focus on general understanding without explicitly stating the criteria for successful achievement. This variation suggests that the clarity and measurability of indicators are not yet consistently applied across all components of the instructional plan.

Overall, the findings show that the quality of learning outcome indicators in the cognitive domain is relatively well-developed. The indicators are generally aligned with learning objectives and supported by appropriate learning activities. However, the level of detail and operational clarity still varies, indicating the need for more consistent formulation of measurable indicators.

Weaknesses in Affective and Moral Indicators

The findings indicate that the formulation of learning outcome indicators in the affective and moral domains remains less specific compared to those in the cognitive domain. Based on document analysis, many indicators are still expressed in general terms and do not clearly describe observable and measurable student behaviors. Examples of the formulated indicators are presented in Figure 3.

D. INDIKATOR KETERCAPAIAN TUJUAN PEMBELAJARAN

1. Menjelaskan makna akidah secara bahasa dan istilah.
2. Menunjukkan dalil naqli dari Al-Qur'an dan Hadis sebagai dasar Akidah Islam.
3. Menjelaskan tujuan mempelajari Akidah Islam.
4. Mengidentifikasi manfaat mempelajari akidah dalam kehidupan sehari-hari.
5. Menjelaskan pengertian Iman, Islam, dan Ihsan.
6. Menganalisis keterkaitan antara Iman, Islam, dan Ihsan.
7. Mengomunikasikan contoh fenomena kebenaran akidah Islam dalam bentuk peta konsep atau media lain.

Figure 3. Indicators of Learning Objective Achievement

As shown in Figure 3, most of the indicators emphasize cognitive competencies, such as explaining concepts, identifying evidence, and analyzing relationships between key ideas. These indicators are relatively clear and measurable, as they describe specific learning outcomes that can be observed through student performance in academic tasks.

However, the findings reveal that indicators related to attitudes and moral behavior are not explicitly formulated in the same level of detail. In several cases, affective indicators are expressed in broad terms, such as *"displaying commendable behavior"* or *"being polite"*, without specifying concrete actions or measurable criteria. This lack of operational clarity makes it difficult to assess whether students have achieved the intended moral and character-related outcomes.

Furthermore, the document analysis shows that although the teaching module integrates values such as love for Allah, politeness, and exemplary conduct, these values are not

translated into specific behavioral indicators. For example, there are no detailed descriptions of observable actions such as using respectful language during discussions, demonstrating responsibility in group work, or applying moral values in daily interactions.

The findings also indicate that the indicators do not explicitly capture students' reflective abilities in connecting religious values with their personal experiences. Learning activities such as discussions, concept mapping, and reflective tasks are included in the teaching module, but the indicators do not clearly measure students' ability to internalize and apply these values in meaningful ways.

Overall, the results show that while cognitive indicators are relatively well-defined, affective and moral indicators remain general and lack operational specificity. This condition suggests that the formulation of indicators has not yet fully addressed the need for observable and measurable representations of students' character development.

DISCUSSION

Developing Learning Outcome Indicators in the Context of the Merdeka Curriculum

The findings of this study indicate that the development of learning outcome indicators in Akidah Akhlak instructional planning follows a structured process that begins with the analysis of learning outcomes and proceeds to the formulation of learning objectives and indicators. This process reflects the backward design principle proposed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, in which instructional planning begins with the identification of desired learning outcomes before aligning objectives and assessment measures (McTighe et al., 2021). This finding suggests that the teacher has adopted a structurally sound planning approach; however, the effectiveness of this approach depends on the clarity and operational quality of the indicators themselves. When indicators remain general, the alignment between planning and assessment becomes weakened despite the use of an appropriate design framework.

The results also show that indicators in the cognitive domain are relatively well formulated, particularly in terms of conceptual understanding and analytical skills. Indicators such as explaining the meaning of *Iman*, *Islam*, and *Ihsan* and analyzing *naqli* arguments correspond to higher-order thinking skills within the revised taxonomy framework (Azizah, 2023). These findings indicate that the teacher has been able to translate curriculum expectations into structured cognitive learning targets.

Furthermore, the integration of learning activities such as group discussions, concept mapping, and analytical tasks reflects a learning design that supports active knowledge construction. This is consistent with the perspective of Lev Vygotsky, particularly the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which emphasizes the importance of scaffolding in helping students understand complex and abstract concepts (Panhwar et al., 2025). However, while cognitive scaffolding appears to be well implemented, similar structured support is not evident in the affective domain. This suggests that the application of constructivist principles remains uneven across learning domains.

Thus, the development of cognitive indicators and learning activities demonstrates alignment with the competency-based and deep learning orientation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The Relationship Between Teacher Understanding and Indicator Quality

The findings reveal that the quality of learning outcome indicators is closely related to the teacher's understanding of indicator formulation. The teacher demonstrates a relatively strong understanding of cognitive indicators, as reflected in

the clarity and measurability of indicators related to knowledge and conceptual understanding (Nurhayati & Hidayat, 2023).

According to Kemp and Dayton, effective learning indicators should be specific, observable, measurable, and aligned with learning objectives (Nasir et al., 2024). While the cognitive indicators in the teaching module meet several of these criteria, the affective indicators remain general and lack operational clarity. This indicates that the teacher's understanding of indicator formulation is uneven across domains. This finding implies that teacher competence in instructional planning is domain-specific, where cognitive understanding tends to be stronger than affective pedagogical knowledge. As a result, teachers may struggle to translate abstract affective goals into observable and measurable indicators, which ultimately affects the validity of assessment practices (Fauzi, 2024).

From the perspective of Bloom's taxonomy, the affective domain requires indicators that reflect stages such as receiving, responding, valuing, and internalizing values (Pla & Cohen, 2024). However, the findings show that these stages are not yet translated into observable and measurable behaviors. As a result, teachers may experience difficulty in assessing whether students have achieved the intended character and attitude outcomes. This suggests that strengthening teachers' understanding of affective indicator formulation is essential for improving overall indicator quality (Hermawan et al., 2025).

This indicates that cognitive aspects are more easily operationalized due to their observable and measurable nature, which contrasts with the complexity of affective learning outcomes. This imbalance may lead to an overemphasis on cognitive achievement at the expense of character development.

Alignment with Phase D Student Characteristics

The findings demonstrate that cognitive indicators are generally aligned with the developmental characteristics of Phase D learners. According to Jean Piaget, students at this stage are in the formal operational phase, characterized by the ability to think abstractly, analyze relationships, and engage in logical reasoning (Nainggolan & Daeli, 2021). This alignment is reflected in indicators that require students to analyze concepts and relationships in Akidah Akhlak learning.

However, the results also indicate that affective and moral indicators are not yet fully aligned with students' developmental needs. From the perspective of John W. Santrock, early adolescents require concrete behavioral guidance, consistent reinforcement, and opportunities for moral habituation (Legi, 2022). The current indicators, which are still general in nature, do not provide sufficient guidance for observable behavior or character development. This misalignment indicates that instructional planning has not fully incorporated developmental psychology perspectives, particularly the need for concrete behavioral reinforcement and guided moral practice during early adolescence. As a result, students may face difficulties in internalizing abstract moral values without clear and structured behavioral indicators.

In addition, the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the development of student profiles such as *rahmatan lil 'alamin* and *akhlak karimah*. However, the findings show that these values have not yet been fully translated into measurable indicators. This indicates a gap between curriculum expectations and the operationalization of indicators in instructional planning (Mu et al., 2022).

Implications for Akidah Akhlak Learning Planning

The findings of this study have important implications for improving the quality of instructional planning in Akidah Akhlak education. The results indicate that although learning activities have been designed using approaches such as differentiation and deep learning, the lack of clear and operational indicators reduces the effectiveness of assessment practices (Suryana & Rahman, 2023). This suggests that without well-defined indicators, assessment practices risk becoming subjective and inconsistent, thereby weakening their validity in measuring both cognitive and affective learning outcomes. In the context of Akidah Akhlak education, this limitation is particularly critical, as character development requires systematic and continuous evaluation based on observable behaviors.

According to Daniel L. Stufflebeam, indicators play a crucial role in the evaluation process, particularly in determining the success of learning outcomes (Ogwudile, 2025). When indicators are not clearly defined, assessment becomes less focused and may not accurately reflect student achievement.

The findings also show that while differentiated learning strategies have been implemented in the teaching module, these strategies are not consistently linked to learning outcome indicators. This weak alignment limits the ability of teachers to evaluate student progress in a systematic and measurable way.

Therefore, strengthening the formulation of learning outcome indicators—particularly in the affective domain—is essential. The development of clear, specific, and measurable indicators, accompanied by well-defined assessment rubrics, will enable teachers to assess not only cognitive achievement but also students' moral and character development in a more consistent and meaningful manner. Therefore, future instructional planning should prioritize the integration of indicator-based assessment frameworks that explicitly link learning objectives, indicators, and evaluation criteria. This will enable teachers to implement more systematic, transparent, and meaningful assessment practices.

Contribution to Existing Studies

This study extends previous research on the Merdeka Curriculum, which has primarily focused on learning implementation and the formulation of learning objectives (Mujiburrahman et al., 2025). By positioning learning outcome indicators as the central focus of analysis, this study provides a more specific contribution to the field of instructional planning in Islamic education.

The findings confirm previous studies indicating that cognitive indicators are generally well developed (Nguyen et al., 2025). However, this study highlights a significant gap in the formulation of affective and moral indicators, which remain general and lack operational clarity. In addition, this study reveals a mismatch between the use of deep learning and differentiated approaches and the formulation of indicators that do not fully capture reflective and moral development.

Thus, this study reinforces the importance of developing comprehensive learning outcome indicators that integrate cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions in order to support holistic and meaningful Akidah Akhlak learning.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the development of learning outcome indicators in Akidah Akhlak instructional planning under the Merdeka Curriculum has been carried out through a structured process that begins with the analysis of learning outcomes, followed by the formulation of learning objectives and indicators. The findings show

that indicators in the cognitive domain are relatively well developed, as they are clear, measurable, and aligned with both learning objectives and the developmental characteristics of Phase D students.

However, the study also reveals that indicators in the affective and moral domains remain general and lack operational specificity. These indicators do not yet fully describe observable and measurable student behaviors, making it difficult to assess the achievement of character and moral development outcomes. In addition, the alignment between learning outcome indicators and assessment practices is not yet optimal, particularly due to the absence of detailed rubrics and measurable criteria.

This study contributes to the existing literature by highlighting the gap between well-structured cognitive indicators and underdeveloped affective indicators in Akidah Akhlak learning planning. It emphasizes that strengthening the formulation of affective and behavioral indicators is essential to support holistic learning that integrates knowledge, values, and character.

Practically, this study suggests the need for improving teachers' competence in developing operational and measurable indicators, particularly in the affective domain. Future efforts should focus on integrating indicators with assessment rubrics and aligning them with student developmental characteristics and curriculum expectations. Further research is recommended to explore the development of indicator-based assessment models that can more effectively measure both cognitive and character-based learning outcomes in Islamic education.

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