

## Implementation of Spice Route History Material in History Learning in Grade X at SMK Negeri 1 Samarinda

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### Abstract

This study examines the implementation of spice-route history material in history learning in Grade X at SMK Negeri 1 Samarinda. It aims to describe how the material is implemented within the Merdeka Curriculum, including the teaching strategies used and students' responses to the integration of spice-route material in history learning. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings show that spice-route material is presented in Chapter 2 and functions as introductory material before broader topics, such as Hindu-Buddhist influence in Indonesia, are discussed. In the planning stage, teachers prepare Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objective Flow (ATP), and Teaching Modules. The learning resources used by teachers and students include school textbooks, articles, and other internet sources. The main obstacles faced by teachers and students are the limited availability of learning resources and restricted time allocation.

### Keywords

History learning; spice route history; historical material; Merdeka Curriculum

### Article History

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## Introduction

Every education system inevitably experiences change, including changes in the curriculum. Indonesia has gone through various curriculum reforms, and such changes are a normal part of educational development, including the current transition from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum. The curriculum is a crucial component in the implementation of education because it serves as the main guideline in the learning process (Insani, 2019; Firmansyah, 2023). In this transition, educators' strategies have increasingly aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum through project-based learning and the strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile (Marisa, 2021; Rahayu et al., 2022). The Merdeka Curriculum encourages students to connect knowledge with real life through relevant and interactive learning. While the 2013 Curriculum emphasizes a balance among attitudes, skills, and knowledge and focuses on students' specialization streams, the Merdeka Curriculum places greater emphasis on the early development of students' character, competence, and talents, with less reliance on rote material (Ramadhan & Warneri, 2023).

The shift from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum is driven by the latter's simpler and more in-depth structure, with lighter achievement standards. This curriculum gives students greater freedom in learning, as seen in the removal of the specialization program in senior high schools that adopt it. Curriculum change also responds to the development of the times and to the growth of knowledge as part of students' learning experiences in facing problems (Ramadhan & Warneri, 2023). The Merdeka Curriculum was developed as a more flexible framework that focuses on essential material while also supporting the development of students' uniqueness and abilities. The Ministry of Education and Culture introduced four major policy ideas in support of the Merdeka Belajar program, namely changes related to the School Examination, National Examination, lesson planning, and student admissions zoning (Mustaghfiroh, 2020; Marisa, 2021; Rahayu et al., 2022). This curriculum is considered more relevant and interactive because it emphasizes project-based learning that gives students the opportunity to explore real issues actively. In practice, schools have several options in implementing it, ranging from partial adaptation of curriculum principles to broader use of Merdeka Curriculum learning tools (Angga et al., 2022).

In history learning, there has also been a renewal of material to be taught to students, including the compulsory topic of the spice route. The spice route refers to the trade system that historically connected spice-producing regions with markets across the world (Sulaiman et al., 2018). This trade route was particularly important for transporting spices such as pepper, cloves, cinnamon, ginger, and many other commodities (Swantoro, 2019). Because spices had very high value and were sought after in many parts of the world, these routes became historically significant (Rahmawati et al., 2023). The spice route, especially through open port networks, also became a form of cultural heritage that connected societies across regions. Historical traces of the spice route remain visible in the Indonesian archipelago today (Safitry et al., 2021). By implementing spice-route material in education, schools are expected to help develop a younger generation that is broad-minded and has strong character. This material is part of a relatively new educational policy that can strengthen students' knowledge, skills, and character.

## Method

This study uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a type of research that produces findings that cannot be obtained through statistical procedures or other forms of quantification. In this context, the qualitative approach is a research procedure that generates data in the form of written words, spoken words, and images from people and observable behavior rather than numerical data (Sujarweni, 2014).

## Results and Discussion

The implementation of spice-route material in history learning in Grade X at SMK Negeri 1 Samarinda begins with the stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation. At the planning stage, the teacher prepares learning tools such as objectives, materials, media, and methods that are appropriate to the topic. At the implementation stage, the material is delivered to students through various approaches, such as lectures and discussion. Finally, the evaluation stage is carried out to determine the extent of students' understanding of the material presented and to provide feedback to improve the quality of future learning. Based on observations at SMK Negeri 1 Samarinda, the preparation of Grade X history learning under the Merdeka Curriculum includes Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objective Flow (ATP), and teaching modules. CP refers to the competencies that students must achieve in each phase, ATP is a structured sequence of steps to achieve learning objectives, and the teaching module contains material, methods, and assessment. These three components form the main foundation for creating learning that is effective, well directed, and in line with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. Learning media are an important aspect in supporting the learning process. Based on observations and interviews with Mrs. RA, the Grade X history teacher at SMK Negeri 1 Samarinda, the media used in learning are video and PowerPoint (PPT). These media help students understand the material more easily, especially the history of the spice route, while also increasing focus, learning interest, and a more interactive and engaging classroom atmosphere.

Based on observation results, history learning conducted by Mrs. RA at SMK Negeri 1 Samarinda presents its own challenge, especially in the last session of the day (14:30–15:50), when students' physical condition tends to decline. To address this, Mrs. RA applies a lighter and more communicative approach. The main learning resources used are textbooks, supported by articles and internet sources approved by the teacher to broaden students' insight. The learning methods used are lectures and discussion, while evaluation is carried out through assignments and multiple-choice questions. This combination of sources and methods is intended to help students become more critical, active, and better able to understand historical material, particularly the spice route. Based on observations conducted at SMK Negeri 1 Samarinda regarding the implementation of spice-route history material, this material forms part of the discussion in Indonesian history lessons. In Grade X, the topic of spice-route history is presented as its own subchapter, thereby giving teachers and students sufficient room to discuss it in a more focused and in-depth way. This shows that the material is considered important in building students' understanding of the history of trade and the influence of developments in the archipelago. Based on an interview with Mrs. RA as the history teacher at SMK Negeri 1 Samarinda regarding the spice-route material included as part of Indonesian history, the material provides an overview of the importance of the spice trade in Indonesian history.

At the same time, it functions as an apperception or introduction to the topic of Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms, emphasizing the link between the spice trade and the spread of religion and culture to the archipelago. The spice route becomes a key to understanding how civilization in the archipelago developed through trade. Based on observations, Mrs. RA uses lecture and discussion methods in teaching history, especially the spice-route material. Lectures are used to provide systematic explanations and build students' basic understanding, accompanied by reflective questions to keep students active. After that, students are involved in discussion to exchange ideas, analyze, and deepen their understanding. This approach is intended to ensure that students have a sufficient knowledge base before moving to deeper learning stages. Based on interviews, Mrs. RA uses lecture and discussion methods in learning. Lectures are used to provide a systematic basic understanding, while discussion encourages students to think critically, express opinions, and interact actively.

The combination of these two methods is intended to create an interactive learning atmosphere and help students understand the material more deeply. This method not only deepens students' understanding, but also trains speaking skills, opinion building, and teamwork.

Discussion also helps students who have difficulty understanding the material learn from their peers, creating an interactive and participatory learning atmosphere. Based on observations and interviews with Mrs. Rahayu Aprilia, the Grade X history teacher at SMK Negeri 1 Samarinda, in teaching the spice-route material, Mrs. RA connects the material with students' everyday lives. This approach makes it easier for students to understand and feel the relevance of history in the present context, such as the consumption of spices in cooking or cultural diversity as a result of past trade. Mrs. RA also motivates students by showing that the spice route had a major impact on culture, the economy, and modern life. Contextual explanation helps foster curiosity and makes learning more meaningful.

Based on observations and interviews with Mrs. Rahayu Aprilia, the history teacher at SMK Negeri 1 Samarinda, students' activeness during learning could be seen from their participation in asking questions and discussing the material on the history of the spice route. This activeness reflects high cognitive engagement and contributes positively to students' understanding of the material. Discussion and question-and-answer activities help students develop a deeper understanding while also training their ability to think logically and express opinions. Therefore, it is important to create a classroom atmosphere that supports students' active participation. Evaluation is a process of systematically assessing student learning outcomes. Based on observations, Mrs. RA uses evaluation in the form of multiple-choice questions and quizzes. The multiple-choice questions are taken from the textbook and completed by students in their notebooks to measure their understanding of the spice-route material. In addition, Mrs. RA also gives short quizzes after the material is delivered to help students remember key points. She also applies discussion as a form of evaluation, allowing students to share their understanding and ask questions when they face difficulties. This evaluation aims to create learning that is interactive and meaningful.

Based on interviews with Mrs. RA, the Grade X history teacher at SMK Negeri 1 Samarinda, the purpose of learning evaluation is to measure students' understanding of the concepts taught. Evaluation is carried out gradually using various methods, such as short quizzes to recall important points and group discussion to exchange understanding. Students consider this evaluation effective because it helps them understand the material better. Direct feedback from the teacher is also highly valued because it helps students correct mistakes and improve understanding. This evaluation not only measures learning outcomes, but also improves the quality of learning.

Constraints in the Implementation of Spice Route History Material in History Learning in Grade X at SMK Negeri 1 Samarinda. The implementation of spice-route history material in learning does not always run smoothly because of various obstacles. Internally, barriers arise from a lack of motivation, limited mastery of the material, and students' mental and physical readiness. Externally, obstacles include limited media, supporting facilities, and time constraints. Based on observations, one of the main obstacles is the lack of learning resources, because spice-route material is still relatively new in the curriculum and the information in textbooks is limited. Therefore, teachers need to seek additional sources such as articles and digital media to support learning. Based on interviews that were conducted, the main obstacle faced at the lesson-preparation stage was the limited availability of learning resources. This shortage makes it difficult for teachers to present the material in a deeper and more comprehensive way to students. This condition requires teachers to look for alternatives by using additional sources, such as scholarly articles, reference books, and relevant digital media to enrich learning content. In this way, it is hoped that historical material, especially on the spice route, can be delivered in a more interesting and comprehensive manner in accordance with students' needs.

Based on observation results, the second obstacle in learning spice-route history material is that the lesson is conducted in the last session of the day and the classroom condition is less conducive, which causes a decline in students' focus and enthusiasm. This situation hinders the effectiveness of learning because students tend to be tired and have difficulty concentrating. To

address this, teachers need to apply more creative, interactive, and engaging learning strategies, such as the use of digital media, educational games, or group discussion, so that students remain focused and motivated to understand the material. Based on observations, the third obstacle in learning spice-route history is students' lack of focus during the learning process. Three of the seven students interviewed stated that the less conducive classroom condition, especially in the final period, made them tired, sleepy, and unable to concentrate well. This caused students to be more interested in using their phones than paying attention to the teacher. In addition, spice-route material was considered difficult because it requires an in-depth understanding of chronology and cause-and-effect relationships. These obstacles hinder the effectiveness of learning and students' understanding.

Implementation of Spice Route History Material in History Learning in Grade X at SMK Negeri 1 Samarinda. The preparation stage of history learning in Grade X at SMK Negeri 1 Samarinda includes the formulation of Learning Outcomes (CP), namely the competencies that students must achieve in each learning phase. Next, the teacher prepares the Learning Objective Flow (ATP), namely systematic steps to achieve learning objectives within a certain time. The following stage is the preparation of teaching modules containing material, learning steps, and assessment to support the achievement of learning objectives (Yusuf Budi Prasetya Santosa et al., 2023). These three components are important parts that must be optimally prepared so that the learning process runs effectively and the learning objectives can be achieved to the fullest.

The implementation of spice-route history material in Grade X history learning under the Merdeka Curriculum cannot be separated from various challenges and problems. Adjustment to a more contextual and project-oriented learning approach has become one of the main challenges faced by history teachers in the era of the Merdeka Curriculum (Fajri et al., 2023; Almarisi, 2023). Although the Merdeka Curriculum aims to develop critical thinking skills and a deeper understanding of history, teachers still encounter difficulties in designing learning activities that can attract students' interest in history lessons (Almarisi, 2023). The learning media used are video and PowerPoint (PPT). These media can help students focus more and support their understanding of the material taught by Mrs. RA. Good history learning will be achieved when the learning process is carried out effectively by utilizing media that suit learning needs. Prawitasari and Sriwati explain that media are important tools of communication in conveying messages and are therefore highly useful in the learning process (Prawitasari & Sriwati, 2021). The use of learning media such as PowerPoint can be optimized by inserting relevant images, such as photographs of historical places or historical remains, to enrich the material and help students understand the historical context more easily.

The presentation of material in video or visual form also requires language that is clear, concise, and appropriate to students' level of understanding so that learning becomes more effective (Hamka, 2022). History learning at SMK Negeri 1 Samarinda uses textbooks as the main source and internet-based materials as supplementary sources. Learning resources include all things, whether objects or people, that can support the learning process. In this sense, textbooks remain the primary source used in classroom learning, while internet resources complement them by broadening students' access to information (Munadi, 2013; Rimba Sastra Sasmita, 2020). Before the internet era, one of the main challenges in education was limited access to information. Today, internet use as a learning resource has become common among students. Through the internet, students can access various references, including research results and articles from different fields. Internet use has also been shown to influence students' motivation and interest in learning (Pibriana & Ricoida, 2017; Arlia & Sumiati, 2015; Nugrahini & Margunani, 2015).

The implementation of spice-route material at SMK Negeri 1 Samarinda is carried out as an introduction before discussing Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms. Students are first introduced to the concept of the spice route, which is then connected to the topic of Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms because both are closely related in the context of trade. This approach is intended to provide an

initial context for understanding the dynamics of trade and cultural interaction in the archipelago, which later opened the way for Hindu-Buddhist influence. By understanding the spice route, students can relate historical events to the geographical and economic conditions of the region in a contextual way (Asmara, 2019). In addition, this introductory use of spice-route material supports the development of students' critical and analytical thinking in line with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum (Almarisi, 2023). The teacher uses both the lecture and discussion methods. The lecture method is used to deliver material systematically and efficiently, especially on the topic of the spice route. After the explanation stage, the teacher continues the learning process by involving students in discussion. In this session, students are given the opportunity to exchange views, express personal opinions, and analyze the information they have received. This discussion encourages active participation, trains critical thinking, and gives students space to clarify parts of the material that they have not yet understood. With the combination of these two methods, learning becomes more dynamic and students can understand and relate the material to a wider context. The discussion method is particularly suitable for history learning because it involves interaction between teacher and students to analyze, solve problems, explore, and debate particular topics (Atiqoh et al., 2023; Yamin & Ansari, 2012).

In history learning at the secondary-school level, relating spice-route events to students' daily lives is important for improving their understanding of the material. The spice route not only reflects economic dynamics of the past, but also influences cultural practices, cuisine, and social life that still exist today, such as the use of spices in cooking, medicine, and religious rituals. In this way, students can see the relationship between history and the culture they experience, making learning more meaningful and contextual (Safitry et al., 2021). Teachers play an important role in motivating students to understand that the spice route is not merely a matter of the past, but also has an impact on culture, the economy, and life today. By presenting contextual and relevant material, teachers can foster students' interest and curiosity so that learning becomes more meaningful and is not reduced to memorization. Learning motivation can be understood as an internal drive that directs students to engage actively in the learning process in order to achieve instructional goals. In the educational context, this motivation needs to be maintained because it may rise or fall depending on the classroom atmosphere and the strategies used by the teacher. Therefore, teachers need to create a positive and enjoyable learning environment and provide stimuli that can sustain students' enthusiasm for learning (Azizeh, 2021).

Students' activeness in learning spice-route history can be seen from their participation in asking questions and engaging in classroom discussion. This activeness is one of the important indicators of students' cognitive involvement in the learning process and can contribute positively to their learning outcomes. Active participation also creates intensive interaction between teachers and students as well as among students themselves, making the classroom atmosphere more lively and conducive to meaningful learning (Samsiah & Zahara, 2019). In classroom assessment, one of the methods applied by Mrs. RA is multiple-choice questions after the explanation of the material. Students are asked to complete them in their notebooks by writing only the correct answer choice. This form of assessment is intended to determine the extent of students' understanding while also training their independence and accuracy in answering questions. Through this method, teachers can evaluate learning outcomes practically and efficiently. Multiple-choice questions are frequently used in senior secondary education because they are relatively easy to score, especially in classes with many students, although their preparation still needs to be adjusted to students' cognitive level (Fahrudin, 2020).

Another assessment method used in Grade X is the short quiz given after the lesson to help students remember important points. Based on students' responses, this evaluation is considered effective because it is carried out gradually and through several methods that support understanding. Quizzes not only assess learning outcomes, but also improve the quality of learning through feedback and effective interaction between teacher and students. In history

learning, quizzes can improve both learning achievement and students' critical thinking skills (Parwita et al., 2014). Constraints in the implementation of spice-route material include internal factors such as limited motivation, uneven mastery of the material, and students' physical and mental readiness, as well as external factors such as limited media, facilities, and time. Another important challenge is the lack of relevant learning resources, which makes it difficult for teachers to present the material in greater depth. For this reason, the development of contextual and innovative teaching materials, including digital media related to the spice route, becomes increasingly important (Wahyuda, 2024). One significant obstacle in classroom practice is the decline in students' focus and enthusiasm, especially when lessons take place during the last periods of the school day. In such conditions, students often experience fatigue and concentration difficulties, so teachers need to apply more varied and engaging strategies to maintain students' motivation throughout the lesson.

## Conclusion

The implementation of spice-route history material in learning in Grade X at SMK Negeri 1 Samarinda is carried out through various methods, such as lectures, group discussion, and the use of learning media such as video and PowerPoint (PPT) to support students' understanding. Spice-route material is found in Chapter 2, and the discussion of spice-route history focuses on the relationship between the history of the spice trade and the development of civilization in the archipelago. This material is used as an introduction before discussing broader topics, such as Hindu-Buddhist influence in Indonesia. In the history learning process, at the planning stage the teacher prepares Learning Outcomes, Learning Objective Flow, and Teaching Modules as learning guidelines. At the implementation stage, the teacher uses lecture and discussion methods. The learning media used by the teacher are PowerPoint (PPT) and instructional videos from YouTube, while the learning resources used by teachers and students are textbooks provided by the school, articles, and other internet sources. The assignments given by the teacher include completing questions in the textbook, participating in group discussion, and searching for information from various sources such as historical articles and instructional videos.

The obstacles experienced by teachers and students in implementing spice-route history material in history learning in Grade X at SMK Negeri 1 Samarinda are as follows: (1) limited learning resources, because spice-route material is still not discussed in depth in school textbooks, and not all articles or journals provide access to complete and reliable sources; and (2) students' declining focus and enthusiasm because some classes receive history lessons in the final period, causing students to feel tired and have difficulty concentrating during class. These constraints affect the effectiveness of learning, so innovation in more engaging teaching methods is needed to help students understand spice-route material more easily.

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