

## ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INDONESIAN CURRICULUM IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS FOR THE 2022-2024 PERIOD

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**Abstract:** Education serves as a foundation for fostering holistic individual development, aligning with national goals outlined in Law No. 20 of 2003. The Merdeka Curriculum, introduced to address evolving educational needs, emphasizes flexibility, character-building, and student-centered learning, especially in response to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This study evaluates the progress of Merdeka Curriculum implementation in elementary schools participating in the Sekolah Penggerak program in Kuningan Regency over three months (September–November 2022). Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with purposively selected informants, including teachers, principals, and facilitators. Analysis followed Creswell's framework and stages set by the Education Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency (BSKAP). Results showed notable progress in the development of the Kurikulum Operasional Satuan Pendidikan (KOSP), which reached the Advanced Level, and in the planning and implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Projects (P5), which achieved the Developing Stage. However, most aspects, including student-centered learning, integrated assessment, and teacher collaboration, remained at the Early Stage, highlighting challenges in adapting pedagogical practices and stakeholder engagement. The study concludes that while initial progress is evident, significant gaps hinder the curriculum's holistic goals. Recommendations include intensive teacher training, enhanced resource allocation, data-driven reflection mechanisms, and stronger collaboration among schools, families, and communities to ensure continuous improvement and broader adoption of best practices.

**Keywords:** *merdeka curriculum; sekolah penggerak; curriculum implementation; Pancasila student profile; teacher collaboration.*

### INTRODUCTION

Education serves as a platform for shaping individuals in alignment with defined objectives (Darim, 2020; Kamaruddin et al., 2022; Qudsiyah et al., 2023). In Indonesia, the purpose of education is articulated in Law No. 20 of 2003, Article 3, which outlines national education's goal to cultivate individuals who are faithful, devoted to God Almighty, of noble character, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and responsible democratic citizens. Achieving this goal requires deliberate preparation through scientific and thorough studies, supported by a

comprehensive planning document—namely, the curriculum (Nasir, 2021; Nurtanto et al., 2021; Nurzen et al., 2022). A curriculum acts as a roadmap for attaining national education goals, containing objectives, content, learning strategies, methods, evaluations, and real-world implementation (Mahrus, 2021; Nsengimana et al., 2020; VanTassel-Baska & Baska, 2021). Consistent with Law No. 20 of 2003, Article 1 Paragraph 19, the curriculum is defined as a structured combination of plans and methods to guide educational activities toward specific goals. Curriculum planning involves decision-makers at

multiple levels determining the desired learning outcomes (Anggraini et al., 2022; Julaha, 2019; Putrianingsih et al., 2021).

Curriculum development adapts to evolving needs and societal changes (Akib et al., 2020; Erlistiana et al., 2022; Gul & Khilji, 2021). Consequently, countries frequently revise their curricula. Indonesia, for instance, has seen numerous changes, including the 1947, 1952, 1964, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2006, and 2013 curricula, with the Merdeka Curriculum emerging as a prominent topic since its launch in 2021 (Abidin et al., 2023; Batubara & Davala, 2023; Jannah, 2023; Syaifuddin et al., 2024). This curriculum was introduced by the Minister of Education on the ministry's official YouTube channel.

The Merdeka Curriculum simplifies the 2013 curriculum and the emergency curriculum, aiming to improve learning outcomes, especially under constraints such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Puslitjakdibud, 2021; Febria & Kurniasari, n.d.; Ghozi Al Wafi & Purwandari, 2023; Hariaty et al., 2024; Zafirah et al., 2023). During the pandemic, learning transitioned to distance methods due to Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB), disrupting education for over sixty million students (Puslitjakdibud, 2021). Challenges included incomplete material delivery, inadequate digital tools, low teacher digital literacy, and issues within households, such as inconsistent study schedules, lack of motivation, and increased dependency among students (Asdar & Barus, 2023; Syarif & Mawardi, 2021). According to the Curriculum Standards and Education Assessment Agency (BSKAP, 2021), these challenges disproportionately affected students from low socio-economic backgrounds, increasing dropout risks and disengagement.

In response to the educational challenges posed by PSBB, the government introduced an emergency curriculum in August 2020 to mitigate learning loss. Schools were given the flexibility to choose from three options: (a) continuing the full implementation of the 2013 Curriculum, (b) adopting the Emergency Curriculum, or (c) implementing a simplified version of the 2013 Curriculum independently (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020).

BSKAP's survey of elementary and secondary schools during the pandemic revealed data on curriculum usage across educational institutions, highlighting the varied approaches schools adopted to navigate these unprecedented challenges.



Figure 1. Curriculum Implementation During the Covid-19 Pandemic Source: (Curriculum Standards and Education Assessment Agency, 2021)

Based on user observations of the three synchronizations above, it was found that the improvement in learning outcomes of educational units that use emergency crises is better than the learning outcomes of educational units that use the 2013 curriculum in full. The following is a description of the average score of student improvement.

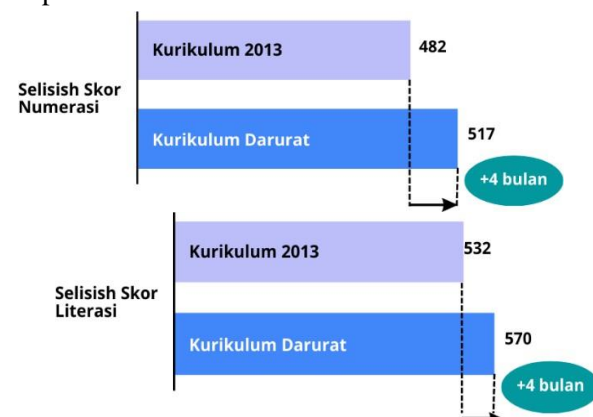


Figure 2. Difference in literacy and numeracy scores of users of the 2013 curriculum

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools, including PAUD and higher education levels such as SMP and SMA/SMK, reflects a significant shift from subject-based learning to a more flexible and student-centric approach. The Merdeka Curriculum allows teachers to adapt their methods based on student needs and conditions, granting them autonomy in selecting learning strategies. Unlike the 2013 Curriculum, which uses weekly units leading to dense teaching schedules and a focus on material completion, the Merdeka Curriculum introduces annual teaching hour allocations. This adjustment provides schools with room for innovation in curriculum design. Furthermore, its structure divides learning into intra-curricular activities and project-based

activities that align with the Pancasila Student Profile. Specific advancements include integrating ICT as a core subject in junior high school, combining science and social studies in upper elementary grades under the unified subject of Science (Natural and Social Sciences), and transitioning from KI and KD to CP (learning abilities) for competency-based learning (Gul & Khilji, 2021; Griffiths, 2000; Erlistiana et al., 2022).

The Merdeka Curriculum distinguishes itself further in Sekolah Penggerak, where the focus lies on holistic student outcomes and fostering the Pancasila Student Profile. These schools serve as models for comprehensive human resource development. Supported by prior studies (Abidin et al., 2023; Aji et al., 2023; Batubara & Davala, 2023; Nurtanto et al., 2021; Zafirah et al., 2023), the curriculum emphasizes collaboration, adaptability, and character building as essential components of 21st-century education. The integration of reflection, evaluation, and the Pancasila Strengthening Profile Project (P5) highlights an evolving approach to personalized and community-driven education (Murtadho et al., 2024; Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). The challenges of collaboration and student-centered learning remain significant, requiring further support for teachers (Asdar & Barus, 2023; Anggraini et al., 2022; Jannah, 2023).

Furthermore, findings suggest that effective planning, as seen in the KOSP framework, sets a foundation for achieving curriculum goals, emphasizing shared responsibility among stakeholders (Kamaruddin et al., 2022; Hasan et al., n.d.; Qudsiyah et al., 2023). However, limitations in teacher training for innovative pedagogy and collaborative practices need urgent intervention (Aisah et al., 2024; Chaerany, 2024; Tiara & Pratiwi, 2020). Recent studies highlight the role of systematic evaluations and cross-stakeholder engagement in addressing gaps in learning delivery and assessment practices (Sani et al., 2024; Nugroho & Rigianti, 2024; Murwantini, 2023). This study provides an in-depth understanding of curriculum implementation stages across schools in Kuningan Regency, with insights aimed at informing stakeholders about progress and challenges in advancing Merdeka Curriculum objectives.

## METHOD

The research utilized a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research, as defined by Renjith et al. (2021) and

Ataro (2020), seeks to understand phenomena experienced by subjects holistically and describes them in detailed narratives. The phenomenological approach focuses on observing participants to uncover phenomena within their lived experiences, aiming to reduce individual experiences into universal descriptions that encapsulate the essence of the phenomena (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022).

The study was conducted in an elementary school in Kuningan Regency. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique where participants are chosen based on specific criteria to ensure relevance to the research focus (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). These key informants, including teachers, school principals, and facilitators, were individuals with significant knowledge and experience related to the problem being studied. Data collection involved structured interviews, and efforts were made to ensure the validity of the data through prolonged data collection periods, comprehensive and iterative interviews, thorough recording of each session, and discussions with colleagues to validate findings (Herman & Amirullah, 2016).

The data analysis process followed Creswell's (2016) framework, which includes multiple steps. First, the researcher describes the participants' experiences comprehensively. Then, statements from the interviews are identified, refined to remove redundancies, and organized into meaningful units. These units are accompanied by textual explanations and illustrative examples. The analysis involves reflective thinking and imaginative variation to construct a coherent understanding of the essence and meaning of the phenomena. Finally, the results are compiled into a comprehensive narrative that synthesizes the participants' collective experiences.

The research aimed to evaluate the progress of the Merdeka Curriculum (IKM) implementation over three months, from September to November 2022. The research subjects included first-grade and fourth-grade teachers, school principals, and facilitators from the Sekolah Penggerak program, who were assigned by Kemendikbudristek to support schools. The interview questions were based on the stages of independent curriculum implementation outlined by the Education Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency (Kemdikbudristek RI) in 2022. These stages include the initial stage, developing stage, ready stage, and advanced stage.

At the elementary school level, these stages are detailed into 14 key aspects. These include the role of the Operational Curriculum of Educational

Units, the role of Learning Objective Flow, Learning Planning and Assessment, Development and Utilization of Teaching Tools, Planning and Implementation of the Pancasila Profile Strengthening Project, Application of Student-Centered Learning, Integration of Assessment in Learning, Learning aligned with students' developmental stages, Teacher Collaboration for curriculum and learning needs, Collaboration with parents and families, Collaboration with the community and industry, and Reflection, Evaluation, and Quality Improvement of curriculum implementation. These aspects provide a structured framework for assessing the progress and effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum in enhancing educational outcomes at the elementary school level.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Sekolah Penggerak Program aims to foster holistic student learning outcomes that encompass both competencies, such as literacy and numeracy, and character development, starting with high-quality human resources (Aji et al., 2023; Erlistiana et al., 2022; Hasan et al., n.d.). Broadly, the program envisions achieving learning outcomes that exceed expectations within a safe, inclusive, comfortable, and engaging learning environment (Sekolah Penggerak Program, 2021).

This study provides an overview of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum as carried out by schools participating in the Sekolah Penggerak initiative. The evaluation is based on 13

aspects that guide the planning and execution processes. These aspects also serve as a framework for interview activities, which classify schools into one of four categories regarding their curriculum implementation stage: the initial stage, the developing stage, the ready stage, or the advanced stage.

Data collected through interviews revealed the status of Merdeka Curriculum implementation by Sekolah Penggerak schools in the Ciawigebang sub-district, Kuningan Regency, at the elementary school level over a three-month period. The findings highlight the schools' capabilities and progress in adopting the independent curriculum within the designated categories of implementation stages.

The following table outlines the stages of implementation for the Kurikulum Merdeka in the context of the Sekolah Penggerak Program at the elementary school level in Ciawigebang sub-district, Kuningan Regency. Each aspect of the curriculum implementation has been categorized into one of four stages: Early Stage, Developing Stage, Ready Stage, or Advanced Level. These stages represent the progression and effectiveness of schools in adopting various elements of the curriculum over the initial three months of implementation. The table provides a clear overview of the current status of each key aspect of the Kurikulum Merdeka, highlighting areas of strength and those requiring further development.

*Table 1. Implementation of the independent learning curriculum in elementary schools in Kuningan Regency*

No	Statement	Stages of Implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka
1	The Role of the Operational Curriculum of Educational Units	Advanced Level
2	Compiling Learning Objective Flow	Early Stage
3	Learning Planning and Assessment	Early Stage
4	Use and Development of Open Devices	Early Stage
5	Pancasila Profile Strengthening Project Planning	Developing Stage
6	Implementation of the Pancasila Profile Strengthening Project	Developing Stage
7	Implementation of Student-Centered Learning	Early Stage
8	Integration of Assessment in Learning	Early Stage
9	Learning According to the Learning Stage of Students (Primary and Secondary Education)	Early Stage
10	Collaboration between Teachers for Curriculum and Learning Needs	Early Stage
11	Collaboration with Parents/Family in Learning	Early Stage
12	Collaboration with Society/Community/Industry	Early Stage
13	Reflection, Evaluation, and Improvement of the Quality of Curriculum Implementation	Developing Stage

The table provides an insightful evaluation of the stages of Kurikulum Merdeka implementation within elementary schools participating in the Sekolah Penggerak program in Ciawigebang, Kuningan Regency. Each of the 13 aspects assessed represents a critical component of the curriculum's success, and the stages—Early Stage, Developing Stage, Ready Stage, and Advanced Level—demonstrate the schools' current progress and maturity in curriculum adoption (Batubara & Davala, 2023; Nurtanto et al., 2021).

A notable strength lies in the “Role of the Operational Curriculum of Educational Units,” which has reached the Advanced Level. This signifies that schools are proficient in managing and operationalizing the core aspects of Kurikulum Merdeka within their educational units. This achievement indicates strong administrative capabilities and alignment with national curriculum standards (Julaeha, 2019; Abidin et al., 2023). Schools at this level are effectively utilizing the operational curriculum to guide their educational activities and structure learning outcomes, which is foundational for advancing other aspects (Mahrus, 2021).

In the Developing Stage, aspects such as “Pancasila Profile Strengthening Project Planning,” “Implementation of the Pancasila Profile Strengthening Project,” and “Reflection, Evaluation, and Improvement of the Quality of Curriculum Implementation” reflect progress in integrating national values and iterative improvement processes. The focus on Pancasila values demonstrates a commitment to fostering holistic education that builds character and citizenship alongside literacy and numeracy (Autila et al., 2024; Anggraini et al., 2022). Furthermore, reflection and evaluation efforts indicate that schools are beginning to implement systems for monitoring and refining their practices, a key step toward continuous improvement and sustainability (Murwantini, 2023; Gul & Khilji, 2021).

Despite these achievements, the majority of the aspects remain in the Early Stage, signaling significant challenges in advancing curriculum implementation. These include “Compiling Learning Objective Flow,” “Learning Planning and Assessment,” “Use and Development of Teaching Tools,” “Implementation of Student-Centered Learning,” and “Integration of Assessment in Learning” (Nugroho & Rigianti, 2024). These areas represent the core pedagogical elements that directly impact classroom practices and student engagement. Their placement in the Early Stage

highlights a need for further training and support for teachers to develop competency in personalized learning strategies, innovative lesson planning, and effective assessment techniques (Kasmawati, 2020; Hasan et al., n.d.).

The Early Stage classification of collaboration aspects—“Collaboration between Teachers,” “Collaboration with Parents/Family,” and “Collaboration with Society/Community/Industry”—is another area of concern. Effective collaboration is vital for creating a supportive learning ecosystem, where teachers can share best practices, parents can actively support their children's learning, and communities can contribute resources and expertise. These findings indicate that schools need to prioritize building partnerships and fostering communication among these stakeholders to enhance the overall learning experience (Syarif & Mawardi, 2021; Kholil, 2021).

The analysis underscores the variability in the readiness and capability of schools to implement Kurikulum Merdeka fully. While the operational curriculum and Pancasila-based projects are promising areas of progress, the slower development in pedagogy, collaboration, and assessment integration poses challenges to achieving the desired educational outcomes. This variability highlights the need for targeted interventions, such as enhanced teacher training programs, structured mentoring systems, and resource allocation, to address gaps and support schools in transitioning to the Ready and Advanced Levels (Murtadho et al., 2024; Renjith et al., 2021).

The table offers a detailed roadmap for stakeholders to understand the strengths and challenges of implementing Kurikulum Merdeka at the elementary level. By leveraging areas of strength and addressing the gaps identified, policymakers, school leaders, and educators can collectively accelerate the program's progress. This approach will ensure that all 13 aspects of curriculum implementation are systematically developed, enabling schools to provide high-quality, inclusive, and holistic education for all students (Erlistiana et al., 2022; Jannah, 2023).

The implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka at the elementary school level in Kuningan Regency, particularly within Sekolah Penggerak, reveals a multi-faceted approach involving planning, implementation, collaboration, and reflection. Each of these components plays a crucial role in ensuring the effectiveness of the curriculum in enhancing student learning outcomes, fostering character development, and promoting a dynamic,

inclusive learning environment. However, the progress varies across these components, with notable strengths in planning and emerging practices in reflection, while challenges persist in implementation and collaboration. The following sections provide a detailed analysis of these aspects, highlighting their current status, challenges, and alignment with previous findings.

The Sekolah Penggerak Program in Kuningan Regency demonstrates a solid foundation in planning as part of the Kurikulum Merdeka implementation process. Effective planning is essential for smooth learning operations and improved outcomes, as highlighted by Rasyanti (2024) and Tiara & Pratiwi (2020). The schools have successfully developed their Kurikulum Operasional Satuan Pendidikan (KOSP) through comprehensive preparatory activities, including socialization efforts with key stakeholders such as supervisors, parents, school committees, and local residents. These efforts align with findings by Abidin et al. (2023), which emphasize the importance of involving diverse stakeholders in curriculum planning to ensure shared goals and collective responsibility. Additionally, schools have incorporated stakeholder input into their vision and mission, ensuring a unified approach to enhancing education quality.

In designing Learning Objective Flow (ATP), learning plans, and assessments, schools rely heavily on templates and guidance from the Ministry of Education and Culture's Ristek, reflecting the limited capacity of teachers to diversify content from multiple sources. This finding resonates with previous studies by Anggraini et al. (2022), which identified constraints in teacher proficiency when adapting to new curriculum demands. Conversely, the planning of Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Projects (P5) stands out as a promising initiative. P5 integrates cross-disciplinary learning to address real-world problems while fostering competencies aligned with Pancasila values (Istianah et al., 2023; Septiani et al., 2023). The schools' ability to design P5 projects based on problem identification and competency mapping indicates progress toward the Developing Stage.

Despite advancements in planning, the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka remains at the Early Stage for most observed aspects, as shown in Table 1.1. Core pedagogical components, including student-centered learning, integrated assessment, and stage-specific learning, are not yet fully realized. According to BSKAP (2022),

effective learning should align with student needs, leverage assessments within the learning cycle, and adapt to individual progress. However, findings by Murwantini (2023) and Paraniti & Arjaya (2023) suggest that teacher-centered approaches still dominate classrooms, leaving little room for active student engagement. Assessment practices are often administrative rather than diagnostic, limiting their utility in tailoring instructional strategies to students' diverse needs (Chaerany, 2024; Sasomo et al., 2023).

Collaboration, another critical element, is also in the Early Stage across most schools. While there are efforts to foster teacher collaboration within the P5 framework, these initiatives are yet to extend to intracurricular activities that could drive innovation and enhance learning outcomes. Aisah et al. (2024) and Kasmawati (2020) emphasize that professional collaboration significantly improves teaching quality, especially through shared strategies and problem-solving practices. However, the lack of robust teacher collaboration limits the potential for creating interdisciplinary and enriched learning environments. Similarly, engagement between schools and families is limited to periodic updates, such as report card distributions, rather than proactive, ongoing collaboration. Research by Murtadho et al. (2024) highlights the value of sustained family involvement in improving student outcomes, reinforcing the need for more comprehensive partnerships.

Reflection and evaluation practices show progress, having reached the Developing Stage. Teachers have begun reflecting on their experiences and observations to evaluate curriculum implementation. However, these reflections are primarily anecdotal and lack structured data to provide a comprehensive understanding of learning effectiveness (Griffiths, 2000). This finding aligns with earlier work by Batubara & Davala (2023), which underscores the importance of data-driven approaches in improving curriculum delivery. Structured reflection processes could significantly enhance the schools' ability to identify gaps and implement targeted interventions.

## **CONCLUSION**

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools under the Sekolah Penggerak program in Kuningan Regency reflects a significant progression over three months. The findings indicate varying stages of development across planning, learning implementation,

collaboration, and reflection. The schools have excelled in the advanced stage for the Operational Curriculum of Educational Units (KOSP), showcasing robust planning and stakeholder engagement to align educational objectives with national standards. This highlights a strong foundation for administrative and curricular management.

Progress has also been observed in the developing stage for aspects such as Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Projects (P5) and reflection and evaluation of curriculum implementation, indicating schools' efforts in integrating national values and iterative quality improvement. These achievements demonstrate a commitment to fostering holistic student development and a data-driven approach to curriculum refinement.

However, challenges remain in the early stage for key pedagogical and collaborative aspects, including student-centered learning, integration of assessment, teacher collaboration, and engagement with parents and the community. These findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions to enhance teacher capacity, strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration, and foster proactive partnerships with families and communities.

While the schools have made notable advancements, particularly in planning and reflection, sustained efforts are required to address gaps in implementation and collaboration. By prioritizing professional development, resource allocation, and stakeholder involvement, schools can advance to the ready and advanced stages, ensuring the successful realization of the Merdeka Curriculum's goals in providing quality, inclusive, and holistic education.

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