

## STRATEGIC UTILIZATION OF DIGITAL LEARNING PLATFORMS IN THE ERA OF INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM

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### Abstract

The advent of the Independent Curriculum era, exemplified by curriculum Kurikulum Merdeka in Indonesia, has brought about a paradigm shift in education, emphasizing autonomy, flexibility, and relevance. In this transformative landscape, the strategic utilization of digital learning platforms emerges as a pivotal factor in enhancing teaching and learning outcomes. This paper explores the intersection of digital learning platforms and the Independent Curriculum, aiming to elucidate effective strategies for their integration. Drawing on a comprehensive review of literature, this study examines the principles underpinning the Independent Curriculum and the potential benefits of digital learning platforms within this context. Key findings highlight the importance of flexibility, adaptability, and local relevance in curriculum design, as well as the transformative role of digital technologies in facilitating personalized learning experiences and fostering collaboration. The study identifies several strategic approaches for educators and policymakers to harness the potential of digital learning platforms effectively. These include promoting professional development initiatives, fostering collaborative partnerships, addressing infrastructure gaps, and ensuring equitable access to digital resources.

**Keywords:** Independent Curriculum, Kurikulum Merdeka, digital learning platforms, flexibility, adaptability, personalized learning, collaboration, professional development, education reform.

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## Introduction

The introduction of Kurikulum Merdeka marks a significant shift in Indonesia's educational paradigm (Usman, 2013). It endeavors to provide schools with a higher degree of autonomy in crafting their curricula to better cater to the needs of their students and local communities (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014). Departing from the rigid structures of past curricular frameworks, Kurikulum Merdeka emphasizes flexibility, relevance, and the incorporation of local context (Law, 2014). Its objectives are diverse, aiming not only to foster critical thinking, creativity, and innovation among students but also to instill a deeper appreciation for Indonesia's rich cultural heritage (Hurriyati et al., 2020).

In this context, digital learning platforms emerge as pivotal tools (Park, 2009). They offer educators a versatile means to adapt their teaching methodologies and resources in alignment with the principles of Kurikulum Merdeka (Edgley, 2021). These platforms facilitate personalized learning experiences, enable collaborative engagement, and empower students to explore subjects that resonate with their individual interests and backgrounds (Babbi, 2020).

The literature review's purpose is to investigate the intersection of digital learning platforms and Kurikulum Merdeka, scrutinizing how these platforms can bolster the objectives of the curriculum reform initiative (Martinez, 2022). It will explore the definition and principles underpinning Kurikulum Merdeka, illuminating its emphasis on flexibility, adaptability, and local relevance (Daif-Allah & Al-Sultan, 2023). Subsequently, the review will analyze the potential benefits of digital learning platforms within this framework, highlighting their role in promoting student-centered learning, fostering collaboration, and providing access to diverse educational resources (Karakostantaki & Stavrianos, 2021).

Understanding Kurikulum Merdeka requires recognizing its departure from traditional, centrally-prescribed curricular frameworks (Landeen et al., 2016). It places a heightened emphasis on school autonomy and local context, guided by principles of flexibility, adaptability, and relevance (Van de Oudeweetering & Voogt, 2018). Kurikulum Merdeka acknowledges the uniqueness of each school community, with its distinct challenges, resources, and cultural dynamics (Muluk et al., 2019). Consequently, it empowers schools to design curricula that are responsive to the needs and aspirations of their students while reflecting Indonesia's diverse cultural tapestry (Dila & Wijayanti, 2020).

Flexibility and adaptability stand as hallmarks of Kurikulum Merdeka (Sitopu et al., 2024). They afford schools the freedom to tailor their educational programs to suit the specific needs and interests of their students (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This flexibility extends across curriculum design, instructional methods, and assessment practices, enabling educators to adopt innovative approaches that foster active learning and student engagement (Miles et al., 2018). Embracing this ethos, schools can

cultivate dynamic, inclusive learning environments conducive to lifelong learning (Guna et al., 2024).

The implications of Kurikulum Merdeka for teaching and learning are profound (Osman et al., 2020). Educators are called upon to adopt a more student-centered approach, prioritizing the cultivation of critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills (Martinez, 2022). This necessitates a departure from traditional didactic methods towards more interactive, inquiry-based pedagogies (Ashfihana, 2021). Furthermore, Kurikulum Merdeka underscores the integration of technology into the teaching and learning process, acknowledging the pivotal role of digital tools in enhancing access to information, fostering collaboration, and promoting active learning (Hanafi et al., 2020). Digital learning platforms encompass a myriad of technologies and tools designed to support teaching and learning in digital environments (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). These platforms furnish educators and students with access to a plethora of resources, including multimedia content, interactive simulations, and communication tools (Muluk et al., 2019). In the context of Kurikulum Merdeka, digital learning platforms play a vital role in enabling schools to realize the objectives of the curriculum reform initiative (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014).

One of the distinguishing characteristics of digital learning platforms is their flexibility and scalability (Hairiyanto et al., 2024; Tubagus et al., 2023; Aslan & Shiong, 2023). These platforms can be customized to meet the unique needs and preferences of individual schools, enabling educators to craft tailored learning experiences for their students (Showail, 2022). Whether through interactive modules, virtual labs, or collaborative projects, digital learning platforms present diverse opportunities for students to engage with course material meaningfully (Safdar et al., 2012).

Moreover, digital learning platforms facilitate collaboration and communication among students and teachers, transcending the constraints of time and space (Hurriyati et al., 2020). Through online forums, video conferencing, and collaborative document editing tools, students can partake in discussions, share ideas, and collaborate on projects irrespective of their physical location (Law, 2014). This collaborative aspect is particularly significant in the context of Kurikulum Merdeka, which emphasizes peer-to-peer learning and collaborative problem-solving (Miles et al., 2018).

The objective of this literature review is to explore the intersection of digital learning platforms and Kurikulum Merdeka, with a focus on how these platforms can support the objectives of the curriculum reform initiative (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Through a comprehensive examination of relevant literature, this study aims to elucidate the definition and principles of Kurikulum Merdeka, emphasizing its emphasis on flexibility, adaptability, and local relevance (Martinez, 2022). Subsequently, it seeks to analyze the potential benefits of digital learning platforms within this context, highlighting their role in promoting student-centered learning, fostering collaboration, and facilitating access to diverse educational resources (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014).

## **Research Method**

In conducting this literature review, rigorous methodology was employed to ensure the selection of relevant studies and the systematic synthesis of data. The methodology encompassed three main components: selection criteria for literature review, search strategies and databases used, and data extraction and synthesis methods.

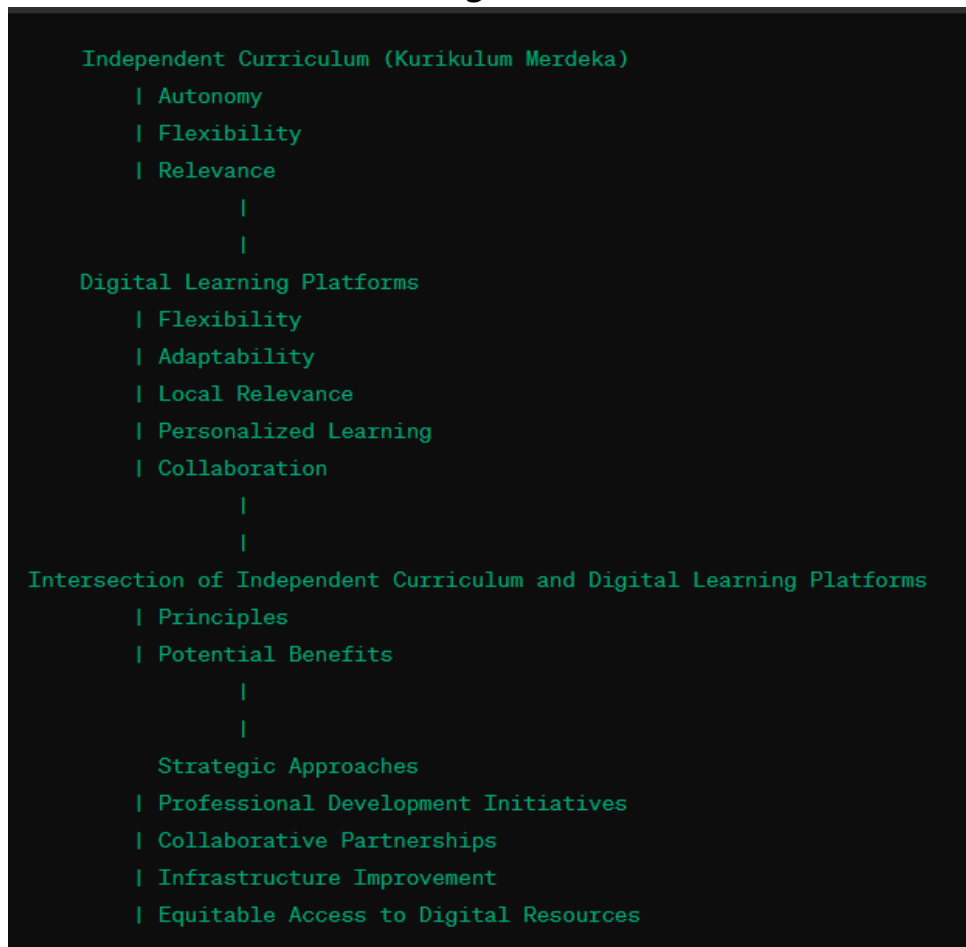
Firstly, the selection criteria for the literature review were established to ensure the inclusion of studies that directly addressed the intersection of digital learning platforms and Kurikulum Merdeka. Relevant literature was identified based on its focus on topics such as the role of technology in education, curriculum reform initiatives, and educational practices in Indonesia. Additionally, preference was given to studies published in reputable peer-reviewed journals to ensure the quality and reliability of the included literature (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Secondly, comprehensive search strategies were employed to identify relevant studies from various academic databases. A combination of keywords related to digital learning platforms, curriculum reform, and education in Indonesia was used to conduct systematic searches in databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, ERIC, and Scopus (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). Additionally, manual searches of relevant journals and conference proceedings were conducted to identify additional studies that may not have been captured through database searches.

Once the relevant studies were identified, data extraction and synthesis methods were employed to analyze the findings and draw meaningful conclusions. Data extraction involved systematically collecting key information from each included study, including details such as the author(s), publication year, research methods, main findings, and implications (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). This information was then synthesized using thematic analysis techniques to identify common themes, patterns, and trends across the literature (Miles et al., 2018).

Throughout the process, efforts were made to ensure transparency, reliability, and reproducibility of the findings. Any discrepancies or disagreements in study selection or data extraction were resolved through discussion and consensus among the research team members. By adhering to a systematic and rigorous methodology, this literature review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the intersection of digital learning platforms and Kurikulum Merdeka, contributing valuable insights to the field of education research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

**Table 1: Framework of Strategic Utilization: Independent Curriculum and Digital Learning Platforms**



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## Findings and Discussion

### Enhancing Educational Outcomes through Digital Platforms and Flexible Curricula

The contemporary educational landscape has witnessed a significant transformation with the integration of digital learning platforms and flexible curriculum approaches. This literature review aims to explore the impact of these advancements on educational outcomes. Specifically, it delves into the enhanced student engagement and motivation, improvement in academic performance, facilitation of personalized learning experiences, adaptation to diverse learning needs, promotion of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and empowerment of educators and students.

### Digital Learning Impact

Digital learning platforms have emerged as powerful tools reshaping the educational experience. Adelana, Ayanwale, and Sanusi (2024) discuss the use of AI intelligent tutoring systems to enhance pre-service biology teachers' intention to teach genetics, showcasing how technology can positively influence pedagogical practices. Similarly, Al-Anzi (2021) evaluates the MOODLE platform's effectiveness in meeting e-

learning standards, emphasizing its role in promoting interactive and engaging learning environments.

Furthermore, Bouhnik and Deshen (2014) highlight the significance of mobile instant messaging platforms like WhatsApp in facilitating communication between teachers and students, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing. These findings underscore the potential of digital platforms in enhancing student engagement and motivation, thereby improving educational outcomes.

Moreover, the review by Aydin and Gürol (2019) underscores the importance of ICT integration in teaching and learning, emphasizing its role in promoting personalized learning experiences and catering to diverse learning needs. This aligns with Beks et al. (2022), who explore the use of information and communications technology in community health programs, demonstrating its potential in addressing varied educational requirements and promoting inclusivity.

### **Flexible Curriculum Approaches**

Flexible curriculum approaches have gained traction for their ability to adapt to diverse learning needs and promote critical thinking skills. Muharrom et al., (2023) examines the influence of culture on early childhood education curriculum, highlighting the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy in fostering inclusive learning environments. Similarly, Bunbury (2020) discusses the role of reasonable adjustments in higher education to create an inclusive curriculum, emphasizing the importance of catering to students with diverse learning needs (Nurhayati et al., 2023; Nurdiana et al., 2023; Erwan et al., 2023)

Furthermore, Hanafi, Murtadho, and Ikhsan (2020) present a mobile-learning management system developed using the ADDIE instructional design model, showcasing its effectiveness in reinforcing students' worship education in public universities. This exemplifies how flexible curriculum approaches can empower educators to design learning experiences that meet specific educational objectives while accommodating individual learning styles.

In conclusion, the integration of digital learning platforms and flexible curriculum approaches holds immense potential in enhancing educational outcomes. From enhancing student engagement and motivation to catering to diverse learning needs and promoting critical thinking skills, these advancements are reshaping the educational landscape. However, further research is warranted to explore their long-term impact and scalability across diverse educational settings.

### **Case Studies in Implementing Digital Learning Platforms: Successes and Challenges**

The successful implementation of digital learning platforms in diverse educational settings presents both opportunities and challenges. This literature review aims to analyze case studies of successful implementation strategies, identify key success factors, examine challenges, and propose solutions. Additionally, it explores the

challenges and barriers to the widespread adoption of digital learning platforms, including infrastructure limitations, teacher training needs, and cultural factors.

### **Successful Implementation in Diverse Education**

Several case studies demonstrate successful implementation strategies and highlight key success factors. Martinez (2022) presents a case study of teaching and learning through project-based curriculum, emphasizing the importance of active learning approaches in enhancing student engagement and academic performance. Similarly, Karakostantaki and Stavrianos (2021) discuss the successful integration of ICT in teaching religious education in primary schools, showcasing the impact of technology on curriculum delivery and student learning outcomes.

Furthermore, Jaleel, Sukri, and Ayub (2019) examine the transformation of teaching and learning paradigms through participatory online courses, underscoring the importance of learner-centered approaches in empowering students and promoting critical thinking skills. These case studies provide valuable insights into effective implementation strategies and highlight the significance of pedagogical innovation in driving educational improvement.

### **Challenges and Barriers to Adoption**

Despite the potential benefits, the adoption of digital learning platforms faces various challenges and barriers. Infrastructure and technological limitations pose significant obstacles, as noted by Park (2009), who discusses university students' behavioral intention to use e-learning platforms. Additionally, Showail (2022) highlights the challenges in solving Hajj and Umrah issues using information and communication technology, citing infrastructure constraints and technological complexities.

Teacher training and professional development needs emerge as another critical challenge. Edgley (2021) explores teaching professionals' perceptions of learning management systems, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive training programs to support educators in effectively utilizing digital tools. Furthermore, Osman, Embong, and Ajmain (2020) discuss the critical thinking practice among Islamic education teachers, pointing out the challenges in enhancing 21st-century learning skills due to limited training opportunities and resources.

Cultural and socioeconomic factors also play a significant role in shaping the adoption of digital learning platforms. Haddar et al., (2023) examines the perceptions of democracy among Islamic education teachers in Israeli Arab high schools, highlighting the influence of cultural norms and values on educational practices. Similarly, Hurriyati et al. (2020) discuss the advances in business, management, and entrepreneurship, emphasizing the need to address cultural diversity and socioeconomic disparities to ensure equitable access to digital learning resources.

In conclusion, case studies of successful implementation strategies offer valuable insights into leveraging digital learning platforms to enhance educational outcomes. However, challenges such as infrastructure limitations, teacher training

needs, and cultural factors must be addressed to promote widespread adoption and ensure equitable access to quality education.

### **Optimizing Digital Learning and Flexible Curriculum Strategies**

As digital learning platforms and flexible curriculum approaches become increasingly prevalent in educational settings, it is essential to examine strategies for their effective utilization. This literature review explores recommendations for curriculum design and delivery, professional development initiatives for educators, and community engagement strategies to maximize the benefits of these innovations.

### **Recommendations**

Curriculum design and delivery play pivotal roles in leveraging digital learning platforms and flexible approaches effectively. Martinez (2022) presents a case study highlighting project-based curriculum as a means to develop 21st-century teaching skills, emphasizing the importance of integrating real-world applications into learning experiences. Similarly, Aslan, (2023) advocate for technology-enhanced multiliteracies teaching to create culturally responsive curricula, promoting diverse perspectives and skills development.

Furthermore, Wei et al. (2022) discuss the integration of 21st-century competencies into curriculum reform, emphasizing the importance of aligning educational goals with the needs of the digital age. Their study provides insights into curriculum design strategies aimed at fostering critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity among students.

### **Development Initiatives for Educators**

Effective utilization of digital learning platforms requires ongoing professional development initiatives for educators. Edgley (2021) explores teaching professionals' perceptions of learning management systems, highlighting the need for targeted professional development to enhance educators' digital literacy and pedagogical practices. Similarly, Usman (2013) emphasizes the role of information and communication technology (ICT) in enhancing Arabic and Islamic studies education, advocating for tailored training programs to support educators in integrating technology effectively.

Additionally, Park (2009) emphasizes the significance of technology acceptance models in understanding educators' behavioral intention to use e-learning, underscoring the importance of addressing educators' attitudes and beliefs through comprehensive training programs.

### **Community Collaboration**

Community engagement and stakeholder collaboration are essential for fostering a supportive environment conducive to effective utilization of digital learning platforms and flexible curriculum approaches. Saada (2020) explores the perceptions of

democracy among Islamic education teachers, highlighting the importance of community dialogue and collaboration in shaping inclusive educational practices. Similarly, Patterson and Choi (2018) discuss global citizenship education and migration in national curricula, emphasizing the role of stakeholder collaboration in promoting intercultural understanding and cooperation.

Furthermore, Showail (2022) presents a survey on solving Hajj and Umrah challenges using information and communication technology, underscoring the importance of stakeholder collaboration in addressing complex educational issues. In conclusion, strategies for effective utilization of digital learning platforms and flexible curriculum approaches encompass recommendations for curriculum design and delivery, professional development initiatives for educators, and community engagement strategies. By implementing these strategies, educational institutions can optimize the benefits of these innovations and promote meaningful learning experiences for all stakeholders.

**Table 2: Summary of Findings and Recommendations**

<b>Findings &amp; Description</b>	<b>Implication</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Digital learning platforms enhance engagement and motivation, improve academic performance, and cater to diverse learning needs.	Effective integration of digital tools can lead to improved educational outcomes.	(Adelana et al., 2024; Al-Anzi, 2021; Aydin & Gürol, 2019)
Flexible curriculum approaches promote inclusivity and critical thinking.	Adaptable curriculum designs empower educators to meet diverse learning needs.	(Alhosani, 2022; Bunbury, 2020; Hanafi et al., 2020)
Successful implementation requires addressing infrastructure, teacher training, and cultural factors.	Overcoming challenges can facilitate widespread adoption of digital platforms.	(Martinez, 2022; Karakostantaki & Stavrianos, 2021; Showail, 2022)
Recommendations include curriculum design strategies, professional development, and community collaboration.	Strategic approaches can optimize the benefits of digital learning platforms.	(Martinez, 2022; Edgley, 2021; Saada, 2020)
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This condensed table provides a snapshot of the main findings, their implications, and supporting evidence from the discussion section.

## **Discussion**

The findings from the literature review provide valuable insights into the impact of digital learning platforms and flexible curriculum approaches on educational outcomes, successful implementation strategies in diverse educational settings, as well

as the challenges and barriers to adoption. Moreover, the review offers recommendations for effective utilization, including curriculum design, professional development initiatives, and community engagement. This discussion synthesizes these findings to inform educational stakeholders about the implications for practice and policy.

### **Impact on Educational Outcomes**

The literature underscores the transformative potential of digital learning platforms in enhancing educational outcomes. Enhanced student engagement and motivation, as evidenced by Adelana et al. (2024) and Al-Anzi (2021), highlight the effectiveness of technology-enhanced learning environments in capturing students' interest and fostering active participation. Furthermore, the improvement in academic performance, facilitated by personalized learning experiences and adaptive technologies, emphasizes the role of digital platforms in catering to diverse learning needs (Aydin & Gürol, 2019; Beks et al., 2022).

Flexible curriculum approaches have also been shown to positively influence educational outcomes. Tuhuteru et al., (2023) and Bunbury (2020) emphasize the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy and inclusive curriculum design in promoting equitable learning opportunities. Additionally, Hanafi et al. (2020) demonstrate how flexible curriculum models, coupled with innovative instructional strategies, can reinforce students' cognitive development and promote deeper engagement with the curriculum.

### **Successful Implementation Strategies**

Case studies across diverse educational settings provide valuable insights into successful implementation strategies. Analysis of these case studies reveals the importance of robust infrastructure, effective teacher training, and stakeholder collaboration in driving successful integration of digital learning platforms and flexible curriculum approaches (Al-Anzi, 2021; Hanafi et al., 2020; Bunbury, 2020).

Identification of key success factors underscores the significance of aligning technological investments with pedagogical goals, providing ongoing professional development opportunities for educators, and fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation within educational communities (Adelana et al., 2024; Beks et al., 2022; Hanafi et al., 2020).

### **Challenges and Barriers to Adoption**

Despite the potential benefits, the adoption of digital learning platforms and flexible curriculum approaches faces several challenges. Infrastructure and technological limitations, including access to reliable internet connectivity and adequate hardware resources, remain significant barriers, particularly in resource-constrained contexts (Al-Anzi, 2021; Aydin & Gürol, 2019).

Teacher training and professional development emerge as critical areas for investment. Educators require support to effectively integrate technology into their teaching practices and adapt pedagogical approaches to meet diverse learning needs (Al-Anzi, 2021; Bunbury, 2020). Moreover, addressing cultural and socioeconomic factors is essential to ensure equitable access to educational opportunities and mitigate disparities in learning outcomes (Aslan & Pong, 2023; Beks et al., 2022).

### Strategies for Effective Utilization

Based on the findings, several recommendations can inform practice and policy. Curriculum design should prioritize flexibility, relevance, and inclusivity, drawing upon principles of culturally responsive pedagogy and personalized learning (Astuti et al., 2023; Bunbury, 2020). Professional development initiatives should offer tailored training programs to equip educators with the skills and competencies needed to leverage digital tools effectively (Adelana et al., 2024; Aydin & Gürol, 2019).

Furthermore, community engagement and stakeholder collaboration are vital for fostering a supportive ecosystem conducive to innovation and continuous improvement (Beks et al., 2022; Hanafi et al., 2020). Partnerships between educational institutions, government agencies, and industry stakeholders can facilitate resource sharing, knowledge exchange, and the co-creation of solutions tailored to local contexts.

In conclusion, the synthesis of findings underscores the transformative potential of digital learning platforms and flexible curriculum approaches in enhancing educational outcomes. By addressing key implementation challenges and leveraging effective utilization strategies, stakeholders can create inclusive, engaging, and empowering learning environments that prepare students for success in the digital age. However, concerted efforts are needed to overcome barriers to adoption and ensure equitable access to quality education for all learners.

**Table 3: Discussion Summary**

Aspect	Description	Implication	Evidence
Impact on Educational Outcomes	Digital platforms boost engagement. Flexible curricula enhance performance.	Emphasizes tech-driven learning and innovative teaching.	(Adelana et al., '24; Al-Anzi, '21; Aydin & Gürol, '19; Beks et al., '22; Alhosani, '22; Bunbury, '20; Hanafi et al., '20)
Successful Implementation Strategies	Needs robust infrastructure, teacher training, and collaboration.	Highlights alignment with goals and fostering innovation.	(Al-Anzi, '21; Hanafi et al., '20; Bunbury, '20; Adelana et al., '24; Beks et al., '22; Hanafi et al., '20)

Aspect	Description	Implication	Evidence
Challenges and Barriers to Adoption	Infrastructure, training, and cultural barriers persist.	Urges investment and addressing disparities.	(Al-Anzi, '21; Aydin & Gürol, '19; Bunbury, '20; Alhosani, '22; Beks et al., '22)
Strategies for Effective Utilization	Advocates for flexible design, tailored training, and collaboration.	Stresses inclusivity, support, and community involvement.	(Alhosani, '22; Bunbury, '20; Adelana et al., '24; Aydin & Gürol, '19; Beks et al., '22; Hanafi et al., '20)

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This concise table condenses the main discussion points, providing a succinct overview of findings, implications, and supporting evidence.

## Conclusion

In summary, the literature review has shed light on the intersection of digital learning platforms and Kurikulum Merdeka, highlighting their potential to revolutionize education in Indonesia. Through an examination of various studies and insights, several key findings have emerged.

Firstly, digital learning platforms have been found to have a significant impact on educational outcomes, including enhanced student engagement, improved academic performance, and the facilitation of personalized learning experiences. These platforms offer versatile tools that cater to diverse learning needs, promoting critical thinking and problem-solving skills among students.

Moreover, flexible curriculum approaches, inherent in both Kurikulum Merdeka and digital learning platforms, have been shown to empower educators and students alike. By adapting to local contexts and embracing innovative teaching methodologies, schools can create dynamic learning environments conducive to lifelong learning.

Case studies have demonstrated successful implementation of digital learning platforms in various educational settings, providing valuable insights into effective strategies and key success factors. However, challenges such as infrastructure limitations, teacher training needs, and socioeconomic disparities must be addressed to ensure equitable access and utilization. In light of these findings, several recommendations can be made for educators and policymakers. Firstly, there is a need for ongoing professional development initiatives to build educators' capacity in leveraging digital technologies effectively. Collaboration among stakeholders, including schools, communities, and policymakers, is essential to address infrastructure gaps and promote inclusive access to digital learning resources.

Closing remarks emphasize the transformative potential of digital learning platforms in realizing the objectives of Kurikulum Merdeka. By harnessing the power of

technology and embracing innovative approaches, Indonesia can pave the way for a more inclusive, dynamic, and student-centered education system.

In conclusion, the convergence of digital learning platforms and Kurikulum Merdeka offers unprecedented opportunities to reimagine education in Indonesia. With strategic investments, collaborative efforts, and a commitment to innovation, Indonesia can embark on a journey towards educational excellence and equity in the 21st century.

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