

TRANSFORMATION OF NATIONAL EDUCATION THROUGH THE INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM: POLICY ANALYSIS OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, CULTURE, RESEARCH, AND TECHNOLOGY REGULATION NUMBER 12 OF 2024 AND THE CHALLENGES OF ITS IMPLEMENTATION AT VARIOUS EDUCATIONAL LEVELS (LITERATURE REVIEW METHOD)

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Abstract

This research aims to analyse the policy of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation Number 12 of 2024 which establishes Merdeka Curriculum as the basic framework of national education, and identify the challenges of its implementation at various levels of education in Indonesia. The method used is a literature review with a descriptive qualitative approach, reviewing policy documents, scientific articles, and related research reports. The results of the analysis show that Merdeka Curriculum provides flexibility to education units and teachers in designing learning that is relevant to the needs of students and local conditions, and emphasises strengthening character through the Pancasila Student Profile. However, the implementation of this curriculum still faces significant challenges, such as limited facilities and infrastructure, human resource readiness, inequality of access in 3T areas, and the need for continuous training for teachers. The success of educational transformation through Merdeka Curriculum depends on the collaboration of all stakeholders and continuous efforts in capacity building, equitable distribution of facilities, and strengthening an inclusive and adaptive learning ecosystem.

Keywords: Merdeka Curriculum, Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024, educational transformation, implementation challenges, literature review.

Introduction

Education in Indonesia has experienced a long and dynamic journey, starting from the royal, colonial, and independence eras. Each period brought significant changes in the education system, both in terms of objectives, methods, and the curriculum applied. From informal education that was only enjoyed by the nobility, to formal education that began to spread after independence, the transformation of

national education has always been a reflection of the needs and challenges of the times (Judijanto & Aslan, 2025) ; (Purike & Aslan, 2025) .

Over time, education in Indonesia has not only functioned as a means of transferring knowledge, but also as a strategic tool for nation building. This is reflected in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution which emphasises the importance of educating the nation's life as a national goal. Education is seen as a process of value and character transformation that greatly determines the quality of Indonesia's human resources in the future (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024) .

The transformation of national education becomes more evident when the government periodically updates the curriculum. Since 1947, Indonesia has undergone eleven curriculum changes, each of which was designed to adapt to social, political, economic, and technological developments. Each curriculum change is an effort to respond to the changing needs of society and adapt to global challenges (Fauzan et al., 2023) .

In the reform era, the focus of education has shifted from equitable access to improving the quality and relevance of learning. New challenges emerged, such as the quality gap between regions, inequality of facilities, and the need for teachers who are professional and adaptive to changing times (Komari & Aslan, 2025) ; (Firmansyah & Aslan, 2025a) ; (Firmansyah & Aslan, 2025b) . The entry of the digital era brings new challenges and opportunities in education. Information and communication technologies, such as the internet and e-learning, have become an integral part of the learning process. However, the utilisation of this technology has not been fully equitable in all regions of Indonesia, so the digital divide is an important issue that must be addressed immediately (Fauzan et al., 2023) .

In response to these dynamics, the government launched the Merdeka Curriculum, which offers a new paradigm in education delivery. This curriculum emphasises student-centred learning, strengthening character through the Pancasila Student Profile, and flexibility in managing learning according to the needs and potential of learners (OECD, 2025) .

The Merdeka Curriculum is expected to be able to answer the challenges of 21st century education, where students are not only required to master knowledge, but also have critical, creative, collaborative, and communicative thinking skills. In addition, this curriculum provides space for teachers to innovate in the learning process, so that the role of the teacher shifts from being a mere contributor of material to a facilitator and motivator for students (Aslan & Sidabutar ;, 2025) (Caroline & Aslan, 2025) .

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is covered by Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Number 12 of 2024. This regulation is the legal basis that regulates the basic framework, curriculum structure, and mechanism for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at all levels of education. This policy also emphasises the importance of collaboration between the government,

schools, and the community in supporting the transformation of national education. However, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum cannot be separated from various challenges in the field. The readiness of human resources, especially teachers and education personnel, is a key factor in successful implementation. Many teachers still need training and assistance to understand and apply the new learning paradigm offered by this curriculum (Akbar & Suparmi, 2024).

In addition, the disparity of education facilities between regions is also a serious obstacle. Schools in 3T areas (underdeveloped, frontier, outermost) still face limited infrastructure, access to technology, and adequate learning resources. This condition has the potential to cause inequality in learning outcomes between regions, so special strategies are needed to ensure equitable quality of education (Aslan, 2019). The involvement of parents and communities also determines the success of educational transformation. Support from the surrounding environment is needed to create a conducive learning ecosystem and encourage the growth of a lifelong learning culture. Without the active participation of all stakeholders, the big goal of education transformation will be difficult to achieve (Aslan & Hifza, 2020).

Based on this background, this study aims to analyse the policy of Permendikbudristek Number 12 of 2024 in the context of national education transformation through the Merdeka Curriculum, and identify the challenges of its implementation at various levels of education. Through the literature review method, it is hoped that this research can contribute ideas for the development of more relevant, inclusive, and competitive education policies and practices in the future.

Research Methods

The research method used in this study is a literature review with a descriptive qualitative approach. The research was conducted by collecting, identifying, and analysing various relevant secondary sources, such as official policy documents (Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024), scientific articles, national and international journals, and research reports related to the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum at various levels of education (Eliyah & Aslan, 2025). The data obtained is then systematically analysed through the stages of reduction, display, and interpretation to gain an in-depth understanding of the policy content and implementation challenges. The results of the analysis are presented in the form of a synthesis of findings aimed at providing a comprehensive picture of the transformation of national education through the Merdeka Curriculum and strategic recommendations for education stakeholders (Gough et al., 2020).

Results and Discussion

Policy Analysis of Permendikbudristek No. 12 Year 2024

Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024 is an important milestone in the transformation of Indonesian national education. This policy officially establishes Merdeka Curriculum as the basic framework and curriculum structure for all educational units, from early childhood education (PAUD), primary education, to secondary education. This step was taken in response to the need for an adaptive, relevant, and inclusive education system amid global dynamics and technological advances (Septinus Saa, 2024).

This policy was born out of the need to build Indonesian humans who are independent, faithful, pious, noble, and characterised by Pancasila. Education is directed to empower and build the independence of learners, while still recognising the rights and authority of educators. The Merdeka Curriculum is expected to be the foundation in shaping a generation that is ready to face the challenges of the 21st century (Saa, 2024). One of the main aspects of Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024 is the flexibility given to education units and teachers. The Merdeka Curriculum emphasises the importance of learner-centred learning, with essential materials that are relevant and contextual. Teachers are given space to adjust learning according to the needs, characteristics of students, and conditions of the school environment (Tunas & Pangkey, 2024).

The curriculum structure in this policy consists of three main components: intracurricular, co-curricular and extracurricular. Intracurricular focuses on achieving core competencies through core subjects. Co-curricular is realised in the form of the Pancasila Learner Profile strengthening project, which aims to instil character values and 21st century skills. Meanwhile, extracurricular is voluntary and geared towards developing learners' interests and talents (Koni Olive Tunas & Richard Daniel Herdi Pangkey, 2024). The policy also emphasises the importance of strengthening character through the Pancasila Learner Profile. The six main dimensions emphasised are: faith and piety in God Almighty, global diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, critical thinking, and creativity. This profile strengthening project became a compulsory part of the curriculum, except in equivalency education (Bungatang, 2023).

Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024 pays special attention to inclusive education. Learners with special needs get proper accommodation, both in learning outcomes and in the preparation of the education unit curriculum. This aims to ensure that every child gets equal and meaningful education rights (Rokhmawati et al., 2025); (Saputra et al., 2024); (Cahyono & Aslan, 2025).

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is regulated in stages. Education units that have not implemented the Merdeka Curriculum are still allowed to use the 2013 Curriculum until the 2025/2026 school year, and must switch to the Merdeka Curriculum no later than the 2026/2027 school year. For 3T areas (underdeveloped,

frontier, outermost), the implementation deadline is extended to the 2027/2028 school year.

This policy also regulates the transition of English subjects in primary schools. Until the 2026/2027 school year, English is optional and will become a compulsory subject from the 2027/2028 school year. Central and local governments are responsible for providing English language training and teachers during this transition period (Nisa, 2023).

Responsibility for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is shared between the central government, local governments and education units. The central government provides guidelines, textbooks, teaching tools, training, and conducts advocacy and evaluation. Local governments facilitate the development of local content, training and learning communities. Education units are responsible for developing the education unit curriculum, providing special needs services, and conducting learning evaluation and reflection (Rahmayanti et al., 2024).

Merdeka Curriculum is designed with a strong philosophical foundation, referring to Ki Hajar Dewantara's thoughts on free human beings. Education is directed at building learners' independence, creativity and happiness, while respecting the authority of educators. The sociological foundation emphasises the importance of education that is responsive to social diversity, culture, and global challenges, and prepares learners as global citizens with character (Habib et al., 2023).

From a psychopedagogical perspective, Merdeka Curriculum places learners as active actors of learning. Learning experiences are tailored to the needs and capacities of learners, by combining theories of development, learning, emotional competence, and motivation. This aims to create meaningful, fun, and challenging learning. The policy also emphasises the importance of continuous reflection and evaluation in curriculum implementation. Education units are expected to make continuous improvements based on evaluation results, both internally and through learning communities. Collaboration between schools, teachers, parents and communities is key to the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Hadian, 2022).

Permendikbudristek No. 12 Year 2024 also revokes a number of old curriculum-related regulations, such as the 2013 Curriculum and the regulation on compulsory extracurricular Scouting. Thus, this policy becomes the main legal umbrella for the implementation of national education in the future, as well as marking a new era in curriculum management in Indonesia (Oktavia & R. R., 2021).

Overall, Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024 is a strategic policy that places Merdeka Curriculum as the main instrument of national education transformation. With the principles of flexibility, relevance, and strengthening character, this policy is expected to be able to answer the current and future educational challenges, and realise a generation of Pancasila students who are superior and globally competitive.

Challenges of Implementing the Independent Curriculum at Various Levels of Education

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia brings great hope for the transformation of national education which is more adaptive, relevant, and oriented towards the needs of students. However, in the field, this process is faced with various complex and diverse challenges at every level of education (Ummie Masrurah et al., 2024) .

At the Early Childhood Education (ECED) level, the main challenge lies in teachers' limited understanding of new concepts and terms in the Merdeka Curriculum. Many PAUD educators still have difficulty adjusting to a more flexible and child-centred learning paradigm. In addition, the lack of training and socialisation has made some teachers stick to the old curriculum (Dewi & Aslan, 2015) . Limited facilities and infrastructure are also a significant constraint in PAUD, especially in rural and 3T (underdeveloped, frontier, outermost) areas. Inadequate learning facilities, limited access to technology, and the lack of teaching materials in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum hinder optimal learning processes. Parents and community support for the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in PAUD is also still low. Many parents do not understand their role in supporting children's learning at home, so collaboration between schools and families has not been effective (Dewi et al., 2020) .

At the elementary school (SD) level, the biggest challenge is the readiness of human resources, especially teachers. Many primary school teachers have not fully mastered the use of technology in learning, and still have difficulties in conducting evaluations based on the Merdeka Curriculum. This has an impact on the expected low quality of learning. In addition, infrastructure facilities in primary schools are still uneven. Schools in remote areas often lack adequate teaching tools, laboratories, and internet access. This inequality causes the gap in the quality of education between regions to widen (Aslan, 2023) .

At the junior high school (SMP) and senior high school/vocational school (SMA/SMK) levels, the challenges of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum are increasingly complex. Teachers at this level are faced with the demand to develop project-based learning and differentiation, but many still do not deeply understand the concepts and practices. Limited training and assistance for junior and senior high school / vocational school teachers is also an obstacle. Many trainings are only theoretical and have not touched on the practical aspects needed by teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in the classroom (Ummie Masrurah et al., 2024) .

In 3T areas, the challenges of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum are even greater. Access to teaching tools, information, and training is very limited. Teachers in these areas often have difficulty keeping up with curriculum developments due to limited internet access and geographical conditions that are difficult to reach. The capacity of teachers in 3T areas is also a concern. Not all teachers have the same ability

to understand and implement Merdeka Curriculum, resulting in uneven learning quality. This is exacerbated by the lack of support from local governments and local communities (Masrurah et al., 2024).

Change management in schools is also a challenge. The transition from the old curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum requires significant changes in learning culture and school management. Many schools are still stuttering in managing this change, so curriculum implementation is slow. Student motivation and discipline in technology-based learning is also a challenge (Mardiana & Emmiyati, 2024). Uncontrolled use of technology can cause distraction and reduce the effectiveness of learning, especially at the junior and senior high school level. Time constraints and teachers' administrative burdens are also an obstacle. Teachers are required to develop teaching tools, conduct assessments, and implement project-based learning, but the time available is often insufficient (Ningsih et al., 2024).

Policy inequality and government support also affect the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Not all regions receive the same support in terms of training, funding, and provision of infrastructure. This causes disparities in curriculum implementation in various regions (Deni Restu Ningsih et al., 2024).

Finally, the lack of reference teaching materials and learning modules in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum is a challenge at all levels of education. Teachers often have to innovate themselves in developing teaching materials, which is not always easy to do without adequate support (Dutta et al., 2023).

Overall, the challenges of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at various levels of education include aspects of human resources, infrastructure, parental and community support, teacher capacity, change management, student motivation, administrative burden, policy inequality, and availability of teaching materials. Overcoming these challenges requires the collaboration of all stakeholders so that the goal of transforming national education can be achieved optimally.

Conclusion

The policy of Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024 that establishes Merdeka Curriculum as the basic framework for national education marks a strategic step in the transformation of education in Indonesia. This curriculum provides flexibility to education units and teachers to design learning that is relevant to the needs of students and local conditions, and emphasises strengthening character through the Pancasila Student Profile. The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum has also shown a positive impact on improving literacy, numeracy and learning quality in various education units.

However, the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum at various levels of education still faces significant challenges. These challenges include limited facilities and infrastructure, the readiness of human resources, especially teachers in adopting new approaches, and inequality of access and support in the 3T areas. In addition, adaptation

to changes in the learning paradigm, the need for continuous training, and the involvement of parents and the community are also determining factors in the success of national education transformation. Overall, the success of education transformation through Merdeka Curriculum depends on the collaboration of all stakeholders, from the central and local governments, education units, teachers, to the community. Continuous efforts are needed to increase capacity, equalise facilities, and strengthen an inclusive and adaptive learning ecosystem so that the main objectives of national education, namely educating the nation's life and forming a superior generation of Pancasila students, can be achieved optimally.

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