

**IMPLEMENTATION OF MERDEKA CURRICULUM AS THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM
BASED ON REGULATION OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, CULTURE, RESEARCH
AND TECHNOLOGY NUMBER 12 OF 2024: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN INDONESIA (LITERATURE
REVIEW METHOD)**

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Abstract

This research aims to examine the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum as the national curriculum based on the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation Number 12 of 2024, and analyse its implications for educational institutions in Indonesia. The method used is a literature study with a descriptive qualitative approach, collecting and analysing various secondary sources such as official government documents, scientific journals, articles, and related research reports. The study results show that Merdeka Curriculum emphasises flexibility, autonomy and relevance of learning to the needs and potential of learners. This curriculum provides more space for schools and teachers to develop innovative, contextual, and character-strengthening-centred learning through the Pancasila Student Profile strengthening project. However, its implementation faces challenges in the form of human resource readiness, limited infrastructure, and the need for continuous training and mentoring. The successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is highly dependent on the collaboration and commitment of all education stakeholders. Overall, the Merdeka Curriculum has the potential to improve the quality of national education and form a generation that is adaptive, creative, and has strong character, provided that the existing challenges can be overcome systematically and sustainably.

Keywords: Merdeka Curriculum, Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024, Implementation, Educational Institutions, Pancasila Student Profile

Introduction

The curriculum in Indonesia has undergone various changes in line with the times and the needs of society. One of the major changes that has occurred in recent years is the birth of the Merdeka Curriculum, which has now been established as the national curriculum through the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Regulation Number 12 of 2024 (Kemdikbud Curriculum, 2024). This policy is a response to various challenges in national education, ranging from low international assessment

results, disparities in the quality of education, to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which has caused massive learning loss at all levels of education (Aslan et al., 2020) ; (Manullang et al., 2021) .

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is based on the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) results, which show that around 70% of Indonesian students aged 15 are below the minimum competency level in literacy and numeracy. This condition has not improved significantly in the past decade, and has even been exacerbated by the pandemic, which has increased disparities between regions and socio-economic groups. To address learning loss, the government initially introduced the Emergency Curriculum which later became the forerunner of the Merdeka Curriculum (Qotimah & Rusman ., 2024)

The Merdeka Curriculum is designed to provide greater flexibility to schools and teachers in developing learning that suits the needs, potential, and characteristics of students. This curriculum emphasises learning that is more in-depth, contextual, and oriented towards strengthening character and developing 21st century competencies, such as critical, creative, collaborative, and communicative thinking. Thus, Merdeka Curriculum focuses not only on knowledge, but also on developing learners' interests, talents, and characters (Muharrom et al., 2023) ; (Astuti et al., 2023) .

One of the key innovations in the Merdeka Curriculum is diverse and flexible intracurricular learning. Learners are given sufficient time to explore concepts and strengthen core competencies, while teachers have the freedom to design relevant and meaningful learning. In addition, there is a project to strengthen the Pancasila Learner Profile which aims to shape the character of Indonesian students who are faithful, pious, independent, critical reasoning, creative, mutual cooperation, and global diversity (Sucipto, 2024) .

The establishment of Merdeka Curriculum as the national curriculum through Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024 marks the government's commitment to a comprehensive educational transformation. This policy is also a strategic step to prepare Indonesian human resources who are superior and adaptive to changing times and global challenges. Thus, all educational units in Indonesia are required to implement the Merdeka Curriculum in a gradual and structured manner (Ministry of Education, 2024) .

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum requires the active role of all education stakeholders, especially teachers and principals. They are required to be able to understand the philosophy, principles, and learning strategies that are in accordance with the characteristics of the Merdeka Curriculum. In addition, support from local governments, communities, and the business world is also very important in creating a conducive educational ecosystem (Kartini Ayu et al., 2023) . Although it brings a lot of hope, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum also faces various challenges in the field. The readiness of human resources, limited facilities and infrastructure, and

public perceptions of curriculum changes are issues that must be addressed together. Therefore, collaborative and sustainable efforts are needed in the form of training, mentoring, and regular monitoring and evaluation (Ayu et al., 2023).

The Merdeka Curriculum also demands a paradigm shift in the learning process. The teacher is no longer the only source of knowledge, but rather a facilitator who encourages students to actively seek, process, and utilise information critically and creatively. Learners are expected to be able to develop their potential optimally according to their respective interests and talents (Aslan, 2016). In addition, Merdeka Curriculum provides space for schools to innovate and adapt according to local conditions. This is important so that education in Indonesia is not uniform and centralised, but is able to accommodate the diversity of culture, environment, and community needs in each region. Thus, the learning process becomes more relevant and meaningful for students (Aslan, 2017).

In terms of regulation, Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024 provides a strong legal basis for the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in all educational units. This regulation regulates the principles, structure, and stages of curriculum implementation, as well as provides technical guidance for schools in implementing learning oriented towards strengthening the competence and character of students (Nisa, 2023).

Conceptually, the Merdeka Curriculum affirms the importance of learner-centred education that is based on real needs in the community. It also encourages collaboration between schools, families and communities in creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Thus, education in Indonesia is expected to produce graduates who are not only academically intelligent, but also characterised, adaptive, and ready to face global challenges.

This research will examine in depth the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum as a national curriculum based on Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024 through the literature review method. The main focus of the research is a conceptual analysis of the Merdeka Curriculum and its implications for educational institutions in Indonesia, including challenges, opportunities, and strategies for optimising future implementation.

Research Methods

The research method used in this study is a literature study with a descriptive qualitative approach. The research was conducted by collecting, reviewing, and analysing various relevant secondary sources, such as official government documents (including Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024), scientific journals, articles, and research reports related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia (Eliyah & Aslan, 2025). The data obtained from the literature were selected based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria, then thematically analysed to gain an in-depth understanding of the concepts, implementation strategies, and implications of

the Merdeka Curriculum for educational institutions. The results of the analysis are presented descriptively to provide a comprehensive picture of the issues studied (Randolph, 2009).

Results and Discussion

Concepts and Foundations of the Independent Curriculum According to Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024

The Merdeka Curriculum stipulated in Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024 is an important milestone in the transformation of Indonesian national education. This curriculum was born from the need to build Indonesian humans who are independent, faithful, devoted to God Almighty, have noble character, and have Pancasila character (Gandasari, 2022). In its formulation, the Merdeka Curriculum places students as the main subject of education who are empowered to develop their independence and potential optimally, while still recognising the rights and authority of educators as the main facilitators in the learning process (Anggelia et al., 2022).

The Merdeka Curriculum is designed to adapt to advances in science and technology, global developments, and Indonesia's social and cultural diversity. This is an important foundation so that national education is not only relevant to local needs, but also able to answer increasingly complex global challenges. This curriculum emphasises the importance of flexibility in preparation and implementation, so that education units can adapt learning to the characteristics and needs of students and the surrounding environment (Suryadi., 2025)

The main objective of the Merdeka Curriculum is to realise meaningful and effective learning, which not only increases faith and piety, but also develops the copyrights, tastes, and senses of students as lifelong learners. This curriculum is oriented towards strengthening character and competence, so that Indonesian education graduates are expected to be adaptive, creative, and competitive citizens at the national and international levels (Lutfiana., 2022)

The principles underlying the Merdeka Curriculum include character development, flexibility, and focus on essential content. Character development is carried out through the integration of spiritual, moral, social, and emotional competencies in every learning process. Flexibility is realised by providing space for education units to adjust the curriculum according to local needs and contexts. Meanwhile, the focus on essential content ensures that learning is not trapped in broad material coverage, but in-depth and meaningful for learners (Wulandari & Rokhmat., 2020)

The learning characteristics in the Merdeka Curriculum emphasise the use of assessment at the beginning, process and end of learning to understand learners' learning needs. Learning adjustments are made based on this understanding, so that each learner gets a learning experience that is relevant and according to their level of

development. The learning process is also prioritised on learning progress, not just material completion, and is supported by collaborative reflection between educators (Iskandar, 2023).

The philosophical foundation of the Merdeka Curriculum is rooted in the ideals of independence and the philosophy of Pancasila. Education is directed at building independent, independent, and sovereign Indonesian humans, both physically and mentally. This view also refers to the thinking of Ki Hajar Dewantara, who emphasised the importance of the independence and happiness of students as the main goal of education (Fitriyah & Wardani, 2022). Education is expected to be able to create humans who do not depend on other people, but are able to stand on their own strength (Aslan & Wahyudin, 2020) (Aslan, 2023).

The eight main points of the philosophical foundation of the Merdeka Curriculum include the drive for progress by adhering to Indonesian cultural roots, the formation of holistic Indonesian humans, responsiveness to social, economic, political, and cultural changes, a balance between mastery of competence and character, discretion of education units in compiling and implementing the curriculum, service to the diversity and development of students, implementation of interactive and fun learning, and the authority of educators in educating and implementing the curriculum (Suhardi et al., 2020).

The sociological foundation of the Merdeka Curriculum emphasises the importance of education that is able to respond to the realities of the industrial revolution 4.0 and society 5.0. This curriculum is designed to equip learners with 21st century skills, such as critical, creative, collaborative and communicative thinking. In addition, the curriculum also emphasises the importance of learning that is relevant to global and local issues, and encourages learners to become global citizens who care and contribute positively to the wider community (Widayati, 2022).

Indonesia's national context, which is rich in social, cultural, religious, ethnic and regional diversity, is both a strength and a challenge in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. This curriculum is expected to be a tool for promoting peace, gender equality, and inclusiveness, as well as addressing various contextual issues faced by Indonesian society. Ecological, intercultural, and interdisciplinary learning are also an important part of efforts to create a more just and sustainable social transformation (Brain Academy, 2025).

The psychopedagogical foundation of the Merdeka Curriculum is based on developmental theory, learning theory, emotional competence theory, and motivation theory. Learners are placed as active actors in the learning process, with learning experiences tailored to their individual needs and capacities. This approach ensures that each learner can develop optimally according to their potential and interests (Suryanto & Hidayah, 2021).

The Merdeka Curriculum structure consists of intracurricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities. Intracurricular activities are scheduled main learning, co-curricular in the form of projects to strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile, and extracurricular for the development of students' interests and talents. This structure provides space for schools to adapt learning to the needs and characteristics of learners, and encourage the development of competencies holistically (Nugraha ., 2022)

The Pancasila Learner Profile is one of the main innovations in the Merdeka Curriculum. This profile includes six main dimensions, namely faith and piety in God Almighty, noble character, mutual cooperation, critical reasoning, global diversity, independence, and creativity. The project to strengthen the Pancasila Learner Profile is a mandatory part of co-curricular learning, which aims to shape the character of superior and adaptive Indonesian students (Tuerah & Tuerah ., 2023)

Flexibility and differentiation characterise the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers and education units are given the flexibility to design learning in accordance with the local context, needs, and potential of students. Differentiated learning allows each learner to get relevant and meaningful learning experiences according to their interests and talents, so that there is no longer uniform and centralised learning (Fitra ., 2023)

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is carried out in stages, with the provision that educational units that have not implemented the Merdeka Curriculum can still use the 2013 Curriculum until the 2025/2026 school year. Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum must begin no later than the 2026/2027 school year, with special adjustments for disadvantaged, frontier, and outermost areas. This provides time for education units to prepare themselves optimally (Rahman, 2024) .

The Merdeka Curriculum also emphasises the importance of collaboration between the central government, local governments, education units, educators and communities in supporting curriculum implementation. The government is responsible for providing guidelines, textbooks, teaching tools, training, and advocacy and assistance. Education units are responsible for developing the education unit curriculum, providing special needs services, and conducting regular reflection and evaluation (Rahmayanti et al., 2024) .

With a strong philosophical, sociological, and psychopedagogical foundation, the Merdeka Curriculum is expected to create an Indonesian generation that is characterised, competent, and ready for the future. This curriculum places students at the centre of learning, encourages innovation, and provides space for optimal potential development. The transformation of education through the Merdeka Curriculum is a strategic step to prepare Indonesian human resources that are superior and adaptive to changing times (Hasan, 2024) .

The overall concept and foundation of the Merdeka Curriculum as stipulated in Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024 confirms the government's commitment to sustainable education reform. This curriculum is not only oriented towards academic

achievement, but also on strengthening character, developing competencies, and forming a Pancasila learner profile which is the main foundation for the future progress of the Indonesian nation.

Implications of Implementing the Independent Curriculum for Educational Institutions in Indonesia

The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum has brought significant changes to educational institutions in Indonesia. This curriculum demands a comprehensive transformation, from mindsets, learning strategies, to school management. Educational institutions are expected to be able to adapt to a new paradigm that emphasises flexibility, independence, and strengthening the character of students (Jinanah ., 2024)

First, Merdeka Curriculum provides more space for schools to develop the operational curriculum of education units independently. This encourages schools to be more innovative in designing learning that suits the needs and characteristics of students and the surrounding environment. Second, teachers as the spearhead of curriculum implementation gain freedom and flexibility in designing learning (Putri et al., 2025) . Teachers are encouraged to be more creative and innovative, adjusting teaching methods and materials to the interests, talents, and needs of students. However, this freedom also demands an increase in teacher competence, especially in terms of authentic assessment and the use of learning technology (Nugraha ., 2022)

Third, the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum strengthens the role of teachers as facilitators, not just material deliverers. Teachers are expected to be able to guide students to be active, critical, and collaborative in the learning process. This role change requires continuous training and professional development for educators. Fourth, educational institutions are encouraged to develop project-based learning and strengthen the Pancasila Learner Profile. Through these projects, learners can develop 21st century skills, such as critical, creative, collaborative and communicative thinking, while building character based on Pancasila values (Veronica, 2024) .

Fifth, the Merdeka Curriculum demands closer collaboration between schools, parents and communities. Educational institutions must be able to build an inclusive and supportive learning ecosystem, so that the educational process does not only take place at school, but also involves the surrounding environment. Sixth, the flexibility offered by Merdeka Curriculum opens opportunities for schools to innovate learning. Schools can adjust time, materials, and learning methods according to the needs of students, so that the learning process becomes more relevant and meaningful (Satriawan ., 2021)

Seventh, the implementation of this curriculum also brings challenges related to the readiness of human resources. Not all teachers and education personnel have sufficient understanding and skills to implement Merdeka Curriculum optimally. Therefore, training and mentoring are urgent needs. Eighth, limited infrastructure and access to technology are major obstacles, especially in remote areas. The inequality of

facilities between urban and rural schools has the potential to increase the gap in the quality of education. Equitable access and infrastructure support is a priority in implementing this curriculum (Sahnan & Wibowo, 2023).

Ninth, the Merdeka Curriculum demands changes in the learning evaluation system. Assessment no longer focuses only on cognitive aspects, but also includes aspects of attitude, skills, and character. This requires the development of assessment instruments that are more comprehensive and relevant to curriculum objectives. Tenth, educational institutions must be able to manage change well. Effective change management is needed so that all school members understand and support the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum. Intensive socialisation, training, and communication are the keys to success (Salsabilla et al., 2023).

Eleventh, the Merdeka Curriculum provides opportunities for schools to develop a more positive and participatory learning culture. Learners are encouraged to actively seek, process, and utilise information, thus creating a dynamic and collaborative learning space. Twelfth, the implementation of this curriculum also requires continuous reflection and evaluation. Schools need to regularly monitor and evaluate the implementation of the curriculum, in order to identify obstacles and formulate appropriate improvement strategies (Ikhwanul ., 2024)

Thirteenth, the Merdeka Curriculum has the potential to improve the overall quality of education if it is supported by consistent policies and adequate resource support. However, without this support, curriculum implementation may not run optimally and actually widen the gap between schools. Fourteenth, another challenge faced is resistance to change, both from teachers, students, and parents. Changes in the learning paradigm require time and a short adaptation process. Therefore, persuasive and participatory approaches are needed in the implementation process (Qotimah & Rusman ., 2024)

Fifteenth, the Merdeka Curriculum also has a positive impact on the development of students' character and potential. An inclusive learning environment, project-based learning, and strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile are important foundations in forming an adaptive, creative, and competitive generation. Sixteenth, overall, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is a strategic step in national education reform. Educational institutions are expected to be able to become agents of change that encourage the creation of education that is relevant, inclusive, and oriented towards developing the character and competence of students to face future challenges (Sucipto, 2024).

Thus, this curriculum presents a new paradigm that emphasises flexibility, autonomy, and the relevance of learning to the needs and potential of students. The Merdeka Curriculum provides wider space for schools and teachers to develop innovative, contextualised learning centred on character strengthening and soft skills development through the Pancasila Student Profile strengthening project. With this

approach, students are encouraged to be more active, creative, and independent in the learning process, so that they are expected to be able to face the increasingly complex and dynamic challenges of the future.

However, the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum is also faced with a number of challenges, such as teacher readiness, limited infrastructure, changing mindsets, and the need for continuous training and mentoring. The flexibility offered by this curriculum requires high competence and adaptation from all education stakeholders, especially in terms of planning, implementing, and evaluating learning. Therefore, the successful implementation of Merdeka Curriculum depends on the collaboration, support, and commitment of all parties, including the government, schools, teachers, parents, and the wider community.

Overall, the Merdeka Curriculum has great potential to improve the quality of national education and form a generation that is not only academically superior, but also has strong character, adaptive, and ready to contribute at the global level, provided that the existing challenges can be addressed systematically and sustainably.

Conclusion

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum as the national curriculum through Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Regulation Number 12 of 2024 marks a major transformation in Indonesia's education system. Conceptually, the Merdeka Curriculum emphasises flexibility, relevance and learner-centred learning. It gives teachers the freedom to design learning according to local needs and contexts, and encourages the development of character and competence of the Pancasila Learner Profile. With a structure that includes intracurricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities, Merdeka Curriculum aims to form adaptive, creative and competitive learners in the global era.

In terms of implementation, Merdeka Curriculum has shown positive impacts in various education units, such as improving literacy, numeracy, character, and learning quality. However, successful implementation depends on the readiness of educational institutions, teacher training and adequate resource support. Schools with access to training and good facilities tend to be more successful in implementing this curriculum, while schools with limited resources still face challenges in implementation. Nevertheless, the flexibility offered opens up great opportunities for learning innovation and the optimal development of students' potential.

The implications for educational institutions in Indonesia are the need to adjust curriculum management, increase teacher capacity, and strengthen collaboration between schools, local governments and communities. Local governments are mandated to support implementation through the preparation of local content, training, advocacy, and regular monitoring. Thus, Merdeka Curriculum is expected to create a learning environment that is inclusive, relevant, and oriented towards character

development and 21st century skills, so that Indonesian education is increasingly ready to face global challenges.

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