



Implementation of The Independent Curriculum to Improve The Quality of Learning In Indonesia

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ABSTRAK

Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka merupakan salah satu upaya pemerintah dalam meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran di Indonesia melalui pembelajaran yang lebih fleksibel, berpusat pada peserta didik, dan berorientasi pada pengembangan kompetensi. Namun, keberhasilan implementasi kurikulum ini masih memerlukan kajian empiris untuk mengetahui pengaruhnya terhadap kualitas pembelajaran. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka dalam meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran di Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan metode survei deskriptif. Subjek penelitian terdiri atas 80 guru dan tenaga pendidik pada jenjang pendidikan dasar dan menengah yang telah menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka. Data penelitian dikumpulkan melalui penyebaran kuesioner menggunakan skala Likert yang telah diuji validitas dan reliabilitasnya. Selain itu, data sekunder diperoleh dari berbagai dokumen dan literatur yang relevan. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan analisis korelasi Pearson dengan bantuan perangkat lunak SPSS. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tingkat implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka berada pada kategori tinggi dengan persentase sebesar 82,4%, sedangkan kualitas pembelajaran mencapai 84,1%. Analisis korelasi menunjukkan adanya hubungan positif yang kuat antara implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka dan kualitas pembelajaran dengan nilai koefisien korelasi sebesar 0,768 dan tingkat signifikansi kurang dari 0,05. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka berkontribusi terhadap peningkatan kualitas pembelajaran melalui pembelajaran yang lebih aktif, inovatif, dan berpusat pada peserta didik. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka menjadi salah satu faktor penting dalam mendukung peningkatan mutu pendidikan. Implikasi penelitian ini adalah perlunya penguatan kompetensi guru, penyediaan sarana pendukung, dan pengembangan kebijakan pendidikan yang berkelanjutan untuk mengoptimalkan pelaksanaan Kurikulum Merdeka di Indonesia.

ABSTRACT

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is one of the Indonesian government's strategic efforts to improve the quality of learning through a more flexible, student-centered, and competency-oriented educational approach. However, empirical evidence is still needed to evaluate the extent to which the implementation of this curriculum contributes to improving learning quality. Therefore, this study aimed to analyze the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in enhancing the quality of learning in Indonesia. This research employed a quantitative approach using a descriptive survey method. The participants consisted of 80 teachers and educational staff from primary and secondary schools that had implemented the Merdeka Curriculum. Data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire that had been tested for validity and reliability. In addition, secondary data were obtained from relevant documents and academic literature. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis with the assistance of SPSS software. The findings revealed that the level of Merdeka

Curriculum implementation was categorized as high, with a percentage score of 82.4%, while the quality of learning reached 84.1%. Furthermore, the correlation analysis indicated a strong positive relationship between the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and learning quality, with a correlation coefficient of 0.768 and a significance level below 0.05. These findings suggest that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum contributes significantly to improving learning quality by promoting more active, innovative, and student-centered learning processes. The study concludes that the Merdeka Curriculum is an important factor in supporting educational quality improvement. The implications of this study highlight the need to strengthen teachers' competencies, provide adequate educational facilities, and develop sustainable educational policies to optimize the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia.



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1. INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is one of the strategic policies in Indonesia's educational transformation aimed at improving the quality of learning by providing greater autonomy to educational institutions, teachers, and students in developing a more flexible, student-centered learning process that is aligned with the needs and characteristics of the learning environment. The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes differentiated learning, competency development, and character building through the *Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (P5) or the *Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project*. According to (Marhamah et al., 2026), the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum provides teachers with opportunities to design learning activities that are more innovative and adaptive to students' needs. (Yanti et al., 2025) Explain that the Merdeka Curriculum is oriented toward creating an effective learning environment through strengthening fundamental competencies and developing twenty-first-century skills. Therefore, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is regarded as an important instrument in efforts to improve the quality of learning in Indonesia.

Various studies have demonstrated that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has a positive impact on improving learning quality. A study conducted by Tahar, Saman, and Syawaluddin (2025) in elementary schools in the Rappocini District of Makassar City found that more than 82% of teachers reported that the Merdeka Curriculum helped increase student engagement in the learning process. The study also revealed that the application of differentiated learning significantly enhanced students' active participation during classroom activities. Similar findings were reported by (Gulyanto et al., 2024), who found that 78.6% of respondents perceived an improvement in the quality of the learning process following the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Furthermore, (Syamsidar et al., 2025) found that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum policy made a significant contribution to improving learning effectiveness in elementary schools through greater flexibility in lesson planning and instructional implementation.

Another study revealed that the Merdeka Curriculum contributes significantly to improving students' learning outcomes. These findings indicate that a student-centered learning approach can enhance students' conceptual understanding and critical thinking skills. (Hosaini et al., 2024) Reported that the student learning completion rate increased from 72% to 87% after the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education classes. Meanwhile, Supriatna et al. (2025) reported that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum successfully improved learning effectiveness, reaching a high category based on learning evaluation results conducted in several implementing schools.

In addition to improving learning outcomes, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum also has a positive impact on teachers' pedagogical competencies. (Rahmah et al., 2024) Found that approximately 81% of teachers felt more creative in developing instructional materials after implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. (Adelia Putri & Darwanto, 2026) reported that more than 76% of teachers were able to develop more varied learning strategies that were better aligned with students' needs. On the other hand, found that most teachers experienced improvements in conducting diagnostic assessments and implementing differentiated instruction. These findings suggest that the Merdeka Curriculum not only focuses on students but also promotes teachers' professionalism in carrying out the learning process.

Studies conducted at the secondary education level have also demonstrated positive results. (Azmi et al., 2024) found that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education classes at SMP Muhammadiyah 3 Medan increased students' active participation to 84%. Furthermore, the study reported a 21% increase in students' learning motivation compared to the period before the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The findings of (Pujiati et al., 2025) also indicated that the application of a more flexible learning approach positively influenced students' character development. (Husnul Haq & Wakidi, 2024) Emphasized that project-based learning within the Merdeka Curriculum significantly enhances students' collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving skills.

Nevertheless, several studies have also identified challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. (T. Hasballah & Zulfatmi, 2024) Found that approximately 43% of teachers still faced difficulties in developing teaching modules and implementing differentiated instruction. (Armelia Suryaputri et al., 2025) Reported that limited facilities and infrastructure remained one of the major obstacles to the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in schools. In addition, (Ibrahim & Aisyah, 2026) revealed that around 38% of teachers still required assistance in understanding the concepts of diagnostic assessment and project-based learning. These findings indicate that the success of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation is strongly influenced by the readiness of human resources, the availability of educational facilities, and adequate supporting policies.

International research findings further reinforce the importance of implementing a flexible and student-centered curriculum to improve learning quality. (Subhan, 2025) Reported that educational systems adopting student-centered learning approaches tend to achieve higher levels of student engagement compared to conventional learning systems. (Anbumaheshwari et al., 2025) Demonstrated that curriculum transformation that provides teachers with opportunities for innovation can sustainably enhance learning quality. (Situmorang & Selviana Napitupulu, 2026) Furthermore, Found that competency-based learning contributes significantly to the development of students' critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration skills. These findings are consistent with the fundamental principles promoted by the Merdeka Curriculum.

Based on the findings of these studies, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum makes a significant contribution to improving learning quality through increased student engagement, enhanced learning outcomes, improved teacher competencies, and strengthened student character development. However, most previous studies have focused on case studies within specific schools or regions, thus providing only a limited understanding of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum on a broader national scale. Moreover, previous research has generally examined implementation aspects separately, such as learning outcomes, teacher competencies, or differentiated learning practices. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in providing a more comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in improving learning quality in Indonesia by integrating multiple dimensions of the learning process. Based on this background, the present study aims to analyze the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in enhancing the quality of learning in Indonesia.

2. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using a descriptive survey method to analyze the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in improving the quality of learning in Indonesia. A quantitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to obtain measurable data regarding the level of Merdeka Curriculum implementation and its impact on learning quality. According to (Riskhy et al., 2025), quantitative research is used to examine relationships among variables through the collection of numerical data analyzed using statistical techniques. The variables investigated in this study consisted of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum as the independent variable and learning quality as the dependent variable. The research participants comprised 80 respondents, including teachers and educational staff from primary and secondary education institutions that had implemented the Merdeka Curriculum. Respondents were selected using a purposive sampling technique, with the criterion that participants had at least one year of experience in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.

The data sources in this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected directly from respondents through the distribution of a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire designed to measure aspects of Merdeka Curriculum implementation and learning quality. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from supporting documents, including educational regulations, reports on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, scientific articles, and relevant previous studies. The collected data were classified into quantitative data in the form of questionnaire scores and qualitative data in the form of supporting information used to strengthen the interpretation of the findings (Karimaliana et al., 2024). Data collection was conducted systematically while ensuring the validity and reliability of the research instruments, as recommended.

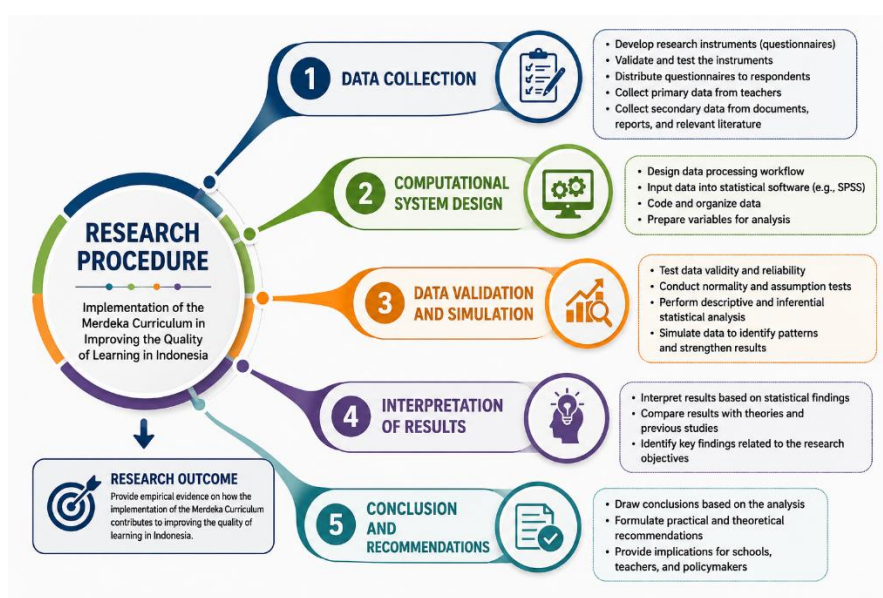


Figure 1. Research procedure

The research procedure began with the data collection stage, which involved developing the research instrument, conducting validity and reliability tests, and distributing questionnaires to the respondents. After the data had been collected, a computational system was designed for data processing using statistical software such as SPSS to generate accurate information regarding the relationship between the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and learning quality. The next stage involved data validation and simulation through validity, reliability, and normality testing, as well as descriptive and inferential statistical analyses to

ensure the quality of the data used in the study. The data simulation process was conducted to identify patterns of relationships among variables and to minimize potential analytical errors.

The final stage of the research involved interpreting the results of the data analysis and drawing conclusions. Interpretation was carried out by comparing the findings with relevant theories and previous research results to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation in improving learning quality. Furthermore, the research findings were used to address the established research objectives and to provide recommendations for policymakers, schools, and teachers in optimizing the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Zikriati & Arani, 2024). The conclusions were formulated based on empirical analysis, enabling the study to make both academic and practical contributions to educational development in Indonesia.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques with the assistance of SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize respondents' characteristics and to determine the level of Merdeka Curriculum implementation and learning quality. Inferential statistical analysis, particularly Pearson correlation analysis, was conducted to examine the relationship between the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and learning quality. Prior to hypothesis testing, validity, reliability, and normality tests were performed to ensure that the data met the required statistical assumptions. The results of these analyses were then interpreted to identify the extent to which the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum contributes to improving learning quality in Indonesia.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Results

The findings of the study revealed that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum was categorized as high, with an average percentage score of 82.4%. This result indicates that most teachers have successfully applied the key principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, including differentiated instruction, diagnostic assessment, and project-based learning. Based on the questionnaire analysis of 80 respondents, 85% of teachers stated that the Merdeka Curriculum provides greater flexibility in designing learning activities according to students' needs. In addition, 81% of respondents believed that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum promotes a more active, innovative, and student-centered learning environment.

The analysis of learning quality demonstrated a significant improvement following the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The average learning quality score, measured through indicators such as student engagement, learning effectiveness, creativity, and competency achievement, reached 84.1%, which falls into the "very good" category. A total of 83% of respondents reported that students became more active in discussions and problem-solving activities compared to previous learning practices (Sulaefah & Hadiansah, 2025). Meanwhile, 79% of respondents observed improvements in students' critical thinking and collaborative skills as a result of project-based learning, one of the main characteristics of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Based on the results of the Pearson correlation analysis, a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.768$ was obtained with a significance level of $p < 0.05$. This result indicates a strong positive relationship between the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and learning quality. The better the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in schools, the higher the quality of learning achieved. These findings demonstrate that the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum not only affects administrative aspects of education but also has a tangible impact on the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process and the achievement of educational goals (Zainun & Arifin, 2024).

The study also identified several supporting factors for the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. A total of 87% of respondents stated that school leadership support

played a crucial role in the successful implementation of the curriculum. Furthermore, 82% of teachers reported that training programs and mentoring provided by the government and schools helped improve their understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum concept. On the other hand, several challenges were identified, including limited digital learning facilities (41%), difficulties in developing appropriate teaching modules (38%), and limited time for conducting diagnostic assessments (35%). Nevertheless, these challenges did not diminish teachers' commitment to implementing the Merdeka Curriculum effectively.

Overall, the findings confirm that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum contributes positively to improving the quality of learning in Indonesia. Learning flexibility, competency development, and student-centered instructional practices emerged as the primary factors supporting the improvement of learning quality. These findings reinforce previous studies suggesting that the Merdeka Curriculum can create a more adaptive, creative, and relevant learning environment that meets the demands of the twenty-first century. Therefore, the sustainability of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation should continue to be supported through strengthening teacher capacity, providing adequate educational facilities, and enhancing educational policies aimed at improving learning quality.

b. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has a strong positive relationship with the improvement of learning quality in Indonesia. These results suggest that the more effectively the core principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, such as differentiated learning, project-based learning, and diagnostic assessment, are implemented, the higher the quality of learning outcomes achieved. Theoretically, these findings are consistent with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that students construct knowledge through active and meaningful learning experiences. The Merdeka Curriculum provides opportunities for students to develop critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration skills, which are considered essential competencies for the twenty-first century. According to (Jain et al., 2025), competency-based learning significantly enhances student engagement and learning outcomes. Argues that curriculum flexibility and teacher autonomy are crucial factors in creating effective and sustainable learning environments. Therefore, the findings of this study strengthen the argument that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is a relevant strategy for improving educational quality in Indonesia.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research demonstrating that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum positively influences learning quality. (Wahyuni et al., 2024) Found that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum increased students' active participation and improved the effectiveness of the learning process in elementary schools. (Adelia Putri & Darwanto, 2026) Reported that the Merdeka Curriculum enhances learning quality through the strengthening of teachers' competencies and the adoption of student-centered learning approaches. Furthermore, (Prahastina et al., 2024) showed that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum creates a more adaptive and innovative learning environment. The consistency of these findings suggests that the benefits of the Merdeka Curriculum are not limited to specific schools or contexts but can be observed across various educational levels and school characteristics. Consequently, the results of this study provide further empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum in improving learning quality.

On the other hand, this study also identified several challenges in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly concerning teacher readiness, the availability of learning facilities, and understanding of diagnostic assessment practices. These findings are in line with those of (Sayekti & Anggriani, 2026), who reported that many teachers still experience difficulties in developing teaching modules and implementing differentiated instruction. Similarly, (Nur 'Azah et al., 2024) found that limited facilities and infrastructure remain major

obstacles to optimizing the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Nevertheless, the findings of this study indicate that these challenges can be minimized through continuous training, mentoring, and institutional support. In other words, the success of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation depends not only on the curriculum design itself but also on the readiness of human resources and the availability of a supportive educational environment. These findings reinforce the view that curriculum reform requires synergy among educational policies, teacher competencies, and educational facilities to achieve optimal improvements in learning quality.

One of the strengths of this study lies in its ability to integrate various indicators of Merdeka Curriculum implementation and learning quality into a comprehensive analytical model. Unlike many previous studies that focused on specific aspects such as learning outcomes or teacher competencies, this study examines the relationship between curriculum implementation and learning quality in a more holistic manner. The contribution of this study extends beyond enriching the academic literature on the Merdeka Curriculum by providing empirical evidence that can serve as a basis for educational policymaking. The practical implications of the findings suggest that schools should strengthen differentiated learning practices, enhance teacher competencies through continuous professional development programs, and provide adequate learning facilities to support effective curriculum implementation. Moreover, these findings offer valuable insights for policymakers in designing more effective strategies for mentoring, monitoring, and evaluating the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the number of respondents was limited to 80 participants, which may not fully represent the conditions of all schools across Indonesia. Second, the study employed a survey approach, meaning that the data relied heavily on respondents' perceptions. Third, the study did not comprehensively examine the influence of external factors such as school socioeconomic conditions, organizational culture, and student characteristics on the success of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation. Therefore, future studies are recommended to involve larger sample sizes and broader geographical coverage to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the use of mixed-methods approaches or longitudinal studies would provide deeper insights into the long-term impact of the Merdeka Curriculum on learning quality and the factors that influence its successful implementation.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum plays a significant role in improving the quality of learning in Indonesia through the adoption of a more flexible, student-centered, and competency-oriented learning approach. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum promotes the creation of a more active, innovative, and adaptive learning process that responds to students' learning needs. Furthermore, this curriculum provides greater opportunities for teachers to develop creative instructional strategies, thereby fostering a learning environment that supports the development of students' critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and independent learning skills.

Conceptually, the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum demonstrates that curriculum transformation emphasizing flexibility, differentiated instruction, and competency development can serve as a strategic approach to enhancing educational quality. Improved learning quality is determined not only by curriculum reform but also by teacher readiness, school support, and the synergy of various stakeholders in implementing educational policies sustainably. Therefore, the Merdeka Curriculum can be regarded as an important instrument for promoting relevant, inclusive, and responsive learning that addresses the challenges of modern education.

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