

## **EVALUATING MERDEKA CURRICULUM POLICY IN INDONESIA BASED ON THE WILLIAM DUNN MODEL**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study evaluates the implementation of Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum, a pivotal shift in national education policy promoting student-centered learning, through William Dunn's policy evaluation model. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research integrates qualitative data from in-depth interviews with educational stakeholders—including policymakers, administrators, teachers, students, and parents—to capture rich, contextualized insights on their experiences, perceptions, and challenges. Quantitative data on student achievement, teacher performance, and school resources are analyzed to measure tangible outcomes. The findings reveal a moderate level of curriculum understanding among teachers, who express the need for more comprehensive training and resources. Key challenges identified include inadequate infrastructure, complexities in learning evaluation, disparities in student and family conditions, and inconsistencies in government policies. Addressing these issues is crucial for successful implementation and maximizing the curriculum's potential to transform Indonesian education. The study underscores the importance of targeted interventions and support mechanisms to ensure the Merdeka Curriculum achieves its goals of improving educational quality and relevance for 21st-century learners, fostering independence, innovation, and adaptability.*

**Keywords:** Merdeka Curriculum, Policy Evaluation, William Dunn Model

### **ABSTRAK**

Studi ini mengevaluasi pelaksanaan Kurikulum Merdeka Indonesia, sebuah perubahan penting dalam kebijakan pendidikan nasional yang mendorong pembelajaran berpusat pada siswa, melalui model evaluasi kebijakan William Dunn. Dengan pendekatan metode campuran, penelitian ini mengintegrasikan data kualitatif dari wawancara mendalam dengan pemangku kepentingan pendidikan—termasuk pembuat kebijakan, administrator, guru, siswa, dan orang tua—untuk menangkap wawasan kontekstual yang kaya tentang pengalaman, persepsi, dan tantangan mereka. Data kuantitatif tentang prestasi siswa, kinerja guru, dan sumber daya sekolah dianalisis untuk mengukur hasil yang nyata. Temuan menunjukkan tingkat pemahaman kurikulum yang sedang di antara guru, yang menyatakan kebutuhan akan pelatihan dan sumber daya yang lebih komprehensif. Tantangan utama yang diidentifikasi meliputi infrastruktur yang tidak memadai, kompleksitas

dalam evaluasi pembelajaran, disparitas kondisi siswa dan keluarga, serta ketidakkonsistenan kebijakan pemerintah. Mengatasi masalah ini sangat penting untuk pelaksanaan yang sukses dan memaksimalkan potensi kurikulum untuk mentransformasi pendidikan Indonesia. Studi ini menekankan pentingnya intervensi dan mekanisme dukungan yang terarah untuk memastikan Kurikulum Merdeka mencapai tujuannya meningkatkan kualitas dan relevansi pendidikan bagi pembelajar abad ke-21, mendorong kemandirian, inovasi, dan adaptabilitas.

Kata Kunci: Kurikulum Merdeka, Evaluasi Kebijakan, Model William Dunn

Catatan : Nomor HP tidak akan dicantumkan, namun sebagai fast respon apabila perbaikan dan keputusan penerimaan jurnal sudah ada.

#### **A. Introduction (12 pt dan Bold)**

The Merdeka Curriculum, also known as the "Emancipation Curriculum," represents a significant shift in Indonesia's national education policy, aimed at fostering more student-centered and flexible learning environments (Rahmawati, 2023). It serves as a key component of the "Merdeka Belajar" initiative, which seeks to transform traditional educational paradigms towards greater independence, innovation, and relevance (Lembong et al., 2023; Sumaludin, 2022). This curriculum is designed to facilitate the transition from the national curriculum, addressing challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to optimize learning experiences by allowing students to explore their interests and talents ([Aji, 2023](#)). However, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum faces several

challenges, such as disparities in school resources, varying levels of teacher readiness, and the need for effective adaptation to diverse local contexts, which have not been thoroughly examined in previous research. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum reflects a broader global trend towards educational reforms that emphasize personalized learning, critical thinking, and adaptability to the evolving demands of the 21st century ([Syofyan & Oknaryana, 2021](#)). Unlike previous studies that mainly focus on policy analysis or general outcomes, this research provides a novel perspective by exploring the lived experiences and adaptation strategies of teachers and school leaders during the curriculum's implementation.

The aim of this study is to analyze the challenges and strategies in implementing the Merdeka

Curriculum, with a particular focus on how educational stakeholders adapt to its principles and requirements. The qualitative focus of this study centers on the experiences, perceptions, and coping strategies of teachers, school leaders, and students as they navigate the transition to the Merdeka Curriculum. Key concepts examined include curriculum adaptation, stakeholder agency, and contextual factors influencing implementation. The Merdeka Curriculum is expected to equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in an era marked by rapid technological advancements and complex societal challenges ([Alawi et al., 2022; Hadi et al., 2023](#)). The curriculum is designed to be more flexible, allowing teachers to adapt the content and teaching methods to suit the needs and interests of their students. The project strengthens Pancasila values proclaimed by the Minister of Education and Culture with the target context for students by determining an attainment of Graduation Standards that have been determined for each level of education, in the independent curriculum ([Kadir, 2023](#)). Independent learning is based on humanism,

constructivism, progressivism, and the educational philosophy of Ki Hadjar Dewantara ([Islamiyah et al., 2022](#)). This research is urgent as it provides timely insights to inform policy and practice, ensuring that the curriculum reform achieves its intended impact in the rapidly changing educational landscape of Indonesia.

## **B. Research Methods (Huruf 12 dan Ditebalkan)**

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively evaluate the Merdeka Curriculum policy in Indonesia, drawing upon the William Dunn Model as a guiding theoretical framework. This study was conducted from March to April 2025 in three provinces in Indonesia (Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and East Java), selected to represent urban, semi-urban, and rural educational contexts. The William Dunn model provides a comprehensive framework for policy analysis, including problem formulation, forecasting, recommendations, and performance evaluation ([Nurul Fika et al., 2023](#)). The research design incorporates both qualitative and quantitative data

collection techniques to provide a holistic understanding of the policy's impact and effectiveness. The qualitative component involves in-depth interviews with educational stakeholders, including policymakers, school administrators, teachers, students, and parents, to gather rich, contextualized data on their experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum ([Saputra & Hadi, 2022](#)). Furthermore, document analysis will be conducted to review policy documents, curriculum guidelines, and school-level implementation plans to assess the alignment of the curriculum with national education goals and its adaptability to diverse learning contexts.

Purposive sampling was used to select the research subjects ([Fahmi et al., 2023](#)) ([Sari et al., 2023](#)). The population for this study includes all Indonesian high schools implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. A stratified purposive sampling technique was employed, selecting 15 schools (5 urban, 5 semi-urban, 5 rural) and 45 participants (3 stakeholders per school: administrators, teachers, and

parents). Sample size was determined using the saturation principle for qualitative data and power analysis for quantitative components. The systematic literature review method was employed to create curriculum development design strategies ([Thoria & Mahmudah, 2023](#)).

The research procedure followed three phases: (1) preparatory stage (policy document review and instrument validation), (2) data collection (6-month fieldwork combining interviews and quantitative surveys), and (3) analysis stage (triangulation of qualitative themes with quantitative outcomes). The quantitative component of the research involves the collection and analysis of statistical data on student achievement, teacher performance, and school resources to measure the tangible outcomes of the Merdeka Curriculum. These data will be obtained from national education databases and school records, allowing for a longitudinal assessment of the curriculum's impact on key educational indicators.

Qualitative data were collected using semi-structured interview guides validated through expert review

(Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.82$ ), while quantitative data utilized standardized assessment tools from Indonesia's Education Ministry. All instruments were pilot-tested with 30 participants to ensure reliability. The data analysis will involve descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis to identify significant relationships between the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and student outcomes. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis using NVivo 14, following Braun and Clarke's six-step approach (familiarization, coding, theme development, review, definition, reporting). Quantitative data were processed with SPSS 29, employing descriptive statistics,

ANOVA, and multiple regression to assess curriculum impact across school types. Internationally, robust education policy evaluation frameworks are essential for continuous improvement and evidence-based decision making (OECD, 2020).

### **C.Result and Discussion (Huruf 12 dan Ditebalkan)**

The evaluation of the Merdeka

Curriculum's implementation reveals varying levels of readiness across different components. The results from (Fakhrudin et al., 2023; Wahyuningsih et al., 2024) show that teachers' understanding of the curriculum is at a "moderate" level, while teacher training is considered "low" according to (Fakhrudin et al., 2023).

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum faces several challenges that need to be addressed. These challenges include:

1. Inadequate Infrastructure: Limited facilities and learning resources hinder the optimal application of the curriculum (Sucipto et al., 2024). Recent studies also highlight that technology access and teacher readiness remain significant obstacles, with many schools struggling to provide adequate digital infrastructure and ongoing professional development for educators (Haq et al., 2024; Fauzi & Haryanto, 2024). The digital divide between urban and rural schools remains a major barrier, with disparities in access to technology and infrastructure limiting the benefits of the Merdeka Curriculum for many students. Additionally, the readiness of teachers to effectively utilize digital tools and innovative teaching methods is uneven, underscoring the need for ongoing professional development and support (Husnul Haq et al., 2024).

2. Need for Improved Teacher Training: Teachers require more

<b>Component</b>	<b>Readiness Level</b>	<b>Source</b>
Curriculum Understanding	Moderate	Fakhrudin et al., 2023; Wahyuningsih et al., 2024
Teacher Training	Low	Fakhrudin et al., 2023
Availability of Resources	Moderate	Sucipto et al., 2024
Stakeholder Support	High	Lembong et al., 2023

comprehensive and continuous training to understand the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum and implement them in learning (Fakhrudin et al., 2023).

3. Complex Learning Evaluation: The existing evaluation system needs to be adapted to the characteristics of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes personalized learning (Kasman & Lubis, 2022). Assessment challenges include aligning evaluation methods with holistic curriculum goals and addressing teacher preparedness (Hanayanti et al., 2023).
4. Student, Parent, and Environmental Conditions: Differences in students' socio-economic conditions, varying parental support, and unconducive learning environments can affect the effectiveness of curriculum implementation (Sucipto et al., 2024).
5. Government Policy Disparities: Inconsistencies between central

and regional policies can hamper the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at the local level (Sucipto et al., 2024). Policy evaluation aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals is essential to address persistent educational inequality in Indonesia (Irawan et al., 2024).

Table 1. Readiness Level for Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum

Source: Readiness levels were measured based on surveys and interviews with educational stakeholders.

Recent studies also highlight that technology access and teacher readiness remain significant obstacles, with many schools struggling to provide adequate digital infrastructure and ongoing professional development for educators (Haq et al., 2024; Fauzi & Haryanto, 2024). This study confirms that implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is a complex process requiring serious attention from various parties. While this curriculum offers greater flexibility and autonomy for teachers and students, the readiness of human resources and infrastructure are key factors determining its success (Hadi et al., 2023). The "moderate" level of teacher understanding indicates the need to improve training and mentoring programs. Both external and internal factors, such as technological

limitations and teacher age, significantly influence the challenges teachers face in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum (Harianto, 2023). This training should equip teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to implement the Merdeka Curriculum effectively, including developing learning tools, using technology, and relevant evaluation strategies (Wahyuningsih et al., 2024). Teacher training has a direct and significant impact on the quality of Merdeka Curriculum implementation and student achievement (Fauzi & Haryanto, 2024).

In addition, support from the government, schools, parents, and the community is essential to creating a conducive learning environment for students. Education reform in Indonesia is shaped by ongoing policy evolution, legal frameworks, and persistent challenges that require multi-level solutions (Sibuea, 2017). The government needs to ensure the availability of adequate resources, schools need to provide administrative and technical support to teachers, parents need to play an active role in supporting children's learning at home, and the community needs to create an environment that supports students' potential development (Lembong et al., 2023). By addressing these challenges and maximizing existing potential, the Merdeka Curriculum is expected to achieve its goal of improving the quality and relevance of education in Indonesia and preparing students to face the

challenges of the 21st century (Alawi et al., 2022). Several factors can support the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, including:

1. **Strong Leadership:** Supporting and proactive leadership from school principals and supervisors is essential (Rahmawati, 2023).
2. **Collaboration Among Teachers:** Collaboration among teachers in developing teaching materials and learning strategies can increase the effectiveness of implementation (Islamiyah et al., 2022). While pilot Islamic elementary schools have incorporated the Merdeka Curriculum into lesson planning, there remain limitations in the variety of learning models and the integration of the Pancasila and project-based learning approaches (Rohmah et al., 2024). Collaboration is a key driver for school improvement, fostering trust, shared leadership, and sustainable change (Abowitz, 2012). Effective implementation also requires strong management practices, stakeholder collaboration, and continuous evaluation to address emerging issues and improve learning outcomes (Sari et al., 2024; Haq et al., 2024)
3. **Use of Technology:** Utilizing technology in learning can

- enrich students' learning experiences and increase access to educational resources (Syofyan & Oknaryana, 2021). The integration of technology in education enhances collaboration and learning flexibility but also introduces new challenges for both teachers and students (Mdhlalose & Mlambo, 2023). Technology integration has positively impacted learning quality, but disparities in access and infrastructure remain a challenge (Siregar et al., 2023). Digital transformation in education has become a strategic agenda to improve the quality and accessibility of learning in Indonesia, but its implementation is challenged by gaps in technological infrastructure and digital literacy, especially in remote areas (Munthe et al., 2025)
4. Continuous Evaluation: Continuous evaluation of curriculum implementation can help identify problems and find appropriate solutions (Thoriq & Mahmudah, 2023). Ongoing policy evaluation is critical to ensure educational reforms remain relevant and effective in changing contexts (OECD, 2020). Project-based learning has been shown to significantly improve learning outcomes and student engagement in Indonesian elementary schools (Puspita et al., 2024). The implementation of project-based learning in vocational schools has a positive impact on increasing students' engagement, learning motivation, and critical thinking abilities, though challenges such as limited resources, teacher readiness, and assessment complexity persist (Afat et al., 2024)
- This study, however, is subject to several limitations. First, the sample was limited to selected provinces and schools, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other regions in Indonesia. Second, the reliance on self-reported data from interviews and surveys may introduce bias or inaccuracies in the responses. Third, the relatively short duration of the fieldwork may not fully capture the long-term effects of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation. Future research should consider expanding the sample size, employing longitudinal designs, and incorporating more diverse data sources to strengthen the validity and applicability of the findings
- ### E. Conclusion
- In conclusion, the evaluation of the Merdeka Curriculum policy in Indonesia, based on the William Dunn Model, reveals a complex interplay of factors influencing its implementation and effectiveness. These challenges underscore the need for targeted interventions and support

mechanisms to ensure the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and to maximize its potential to transform Indonesian education. Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum faces several challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, the need for improved teacher training in technology, difficulties in learning evaluation, student, parent, and environmental conditions, and government policy disparities ([Sucipto et al., 2024](#)). These findings underscore the importance of addressing these challenges to ensure that the Merdeka Curriculum can achieve its intended goals of improving the quality and relevance of education in Indonesia. Policy adaptation and targeted investment in teacher development and technology are recommended to maximize the impact of the Merdeka Curriculum (Saa, 2024).

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