



Merdeka Curriculum implementation at Granada Islamic Integrated and Dhuhaa Islamic Junior High School in Tangerang City

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ABSTRACT

The main support for achieving the goal of developing quality Indonesian human resources is education. The implementation of quality education always demands transformation in every process and stage with various changing situations and conditions. As a form of innovation in improving the quality of Indonesian education, Merdeka Curriculum is implemented which has characteristics that are believed to be able to answer the challenges of education in the 21st century. Some schools that are ready to implement Merdeka Curriculum, later become "Sekolah Penggerak" so that they can become best practices for other schools. The research aims to determine the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the learning process in schools at the junior high school education unit level which is "Sekolah Penggerak". The research was conducted using a descriptive study method with a qualitative approach. The results of the study show that teachers at "Sekolah Penggerak" have made optimal efforts in developing the learning process in accordance with the various core elements of the Merdeka Curriculum. Starting from school principals, teachers, educators and other stakeholders, they have worked together and coordinated well so that the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum can be carried out optimally.

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ABSTRAK

Pendukung utama bagi tercapainya sasaran pembangunan sumber daya manusia Indonesia yang bermutu adalah pendidikan. Penyelenggaraan pendidikan yang bermutu selalu menuntut transformasi di setiap proses dan tahapannya dengan berbagai situasi dan kondisi yang selalu berubah. Sebagai bentuk inovasi dalam meningkatkan mutu kualitas pendidikan Indonesia, diberlakukan Kurikulum Merdeka yang dikembangkan memiliki karakteristik yang diyakini dapat menjawab tantangan pendidikan di abad 21. Beberapa sekolah yang siap melaksanakan Kurikulum Merdeka, kemudian menjadi Sekolah Penggerak agar dapat menjadi praktik baik bagi sekolah lainnya. Penelitian bertujuan untuk mengetahui penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka dalam proses pembelajaran di sekolah pada tingkat satuan pendidikan SMP yang merupakan Sekolah Penggerak. Penelitian dilakukan dengan metode studi deskriptif dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa para guru di Sekolah Penggerak sudah berupaya optimal dalam mengembangkan proses pembelajaran sesuai dengan berbagai elemen inti dari Kurikulum Merdeka. Mulai dari kepala sekolah, guru, tenaga pendidik dan pemangku kepentingan lainnya sudah bekerja sama dan berkoordinasi dengan baik agar penyelenggaraan Kurikulum Merdeka dapat terlaksana dengan optimal.

Kata Kunci: implementasi kurikulum; Kurikulum Merdeka; Sekolah Penggerak

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INTRODUCTION

The implementation of education in the field encounters numerous challenges, necessitating a variety of solutions based on observations and field research. These constraints directly impact stakeholders like schools (teachers, principals, staff) and students. Collaborative efforts are essential to devise effective solutions that address these challenges comprehensively. As societal conditions evolve, the curriculum, as a cornerstone of education, must undergo transformations to ensure quality education. These transformations encompass scientific, technological, professional, and organizational changes, as well as comprehensive enhancements of students' capabilities.

The curriculum's significance in the realm of education is paramount, serving as the linchpin for a nation's success (Hakim, 2016). It's imperative to discuss the curriculum due to its role as an educational blueprint, encompassing students' learning experiences to equip them for the ever-evolving societal landscape (Rusdianah & Nurdiansyah, 2020). This preparation isn't confined to present circumstances; it extends to the future. Consequently, the curriculum must effectively address societal needs, demands, and developments (Julaeha, 2019). Thus, the curriculum forms the crux of education implementation, facilitating the nurturing of human resources who will shape society's future.

Education's successful implementation is pivotal for cultivating future social leaders. Consequently, the curriculum must be dynamic and flexible, providing a framework that aligns with students' learning needs and addresses the ever-changing challenges influenced by multifaceted factors. Presently, Indonesia grapples with the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic that emerged in 2020. This global crisis has engendered learning disparities, impacting student competency achievements, and catalyzed rapid shifts in global dynamics (Habibi, 2020). These changes reverberate across various domains, including healthcare, economy, socio-culture, and education.

The government's response to these evolving dynamics is reflected in its educational policies during the current tenure, exemplified by the Freedom to Learn Policy encompassing the Sekolah Penggerak program and the Kurikulum Merdeka. Kurikulum Merdeka, postulated as part of Indonesia's learning recovery strategy following the pandemic, represents a more flexible framework focusing on essential content, character development, and competence building. These initiatives are viewed as remedies to the educational challenges currently faced by Indonesia, concurrently acting as conduits towards cultivating superior human resources aligned with the future's demands.

Kurikulum Merdeka and Sekolah Penggerak represent innovative initiatives in Indonesian education. These programs require adherence to specific regulatory procedures mandated by the government. These procedures accommodate the diverse nature of Indonesia, including geographical variations, cultural richness, natural resources, and a sizable population. This approach ensures that educational institutions tailor their implementation of these programs to their unique capacities and potentials.

The implementation of curriculum in educational units should focus on achieving student competencies within those units, considering special conditions. Consequently, the Kurikulum Merdeka is not executed simultaneously on a massive scale to allow flexibility for its

implementation within different educational units. The Ministry of Education and Culture elaborated on this in a video available on their YouTube channel, particularly in an episode discussing Sekolah Penggerak (See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJ5oW44DTzg>, retrieved 2022).

As an option available since 2021, the Kurikulum Merdeka is relatively new and has been adopted by around 2,500 schools, not encompassing the entirety of schools in Indonesia. As such, a comprehensive understanding of the curriculum's field implementation is still lacking. To gain insights into its execution and identify best practices, research endeavors are necessary. A number of studies related to the Kurikulum Merdeka implementation at the junior high school level, particularly in Sekolah Penggerak, have been conducted by educators and academics.

Among these studies, [Susiani \(2022\)](#) conducted research on the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka at SMPIT Darurrahmah Gandu Junior High School, Mlarak Ponorogo. The study aimed to provide an overview of the curriculum's impact on the learning process and the challenges encountered during its application. Utilizing a qualitative case study approach involving interviews, observations, and documentation, the research found that the Kurikulum Merdeka positively influenced the learning process, rejuvenated learning experiences, enhanced motivation, nurtured creativity, logical thinking, and independent reasoning. Furthermore, it bolstered collaborative skills and teamwork among students. However, challenges related to limited facilities, educator competency, and the adaptation process for teachers and students were identified, which required substantial time for resolution.

Furthermore, [Numertayasa et al. \(2022\)](#) conducted a community service study involving workshops for educators at SMPN Selemadeg Timur 3, along with an examination of the Kurikulum Merdeka implementation in related schools. The findings revealed that teachers comprehended the Kurikulum Merdeka concept and effectively applied it in teaching through the creation of teaching modules aligned with the provided learning guide for early, elementary, and secondary education.

Kurikulum Merdeka, introduced as an alternative curriculum option that schools could adopt since 2021, remains relatively new. Despite its adoption by 2,500 schools, it has not been implemented in all educational institutions across Indonesia. Consequently, a comprehensive overview of the Kurikulum Merdeka field implementation is still lacking, necessitating further research to explore its actual implementation and uncover best practices.

SMPIT Granada and SMP Dhuhaa Islamic School are two junior high schools situated in Tangerang City. Both schools, as part of the 2,500 Mobilizing Schools, have implemented the Kurikulum Merdeka in 2021. Researchers are examining the Kurikulum Merdeka implementation in these institutions and assessing the alignment between the executed implementation and the Kurikulum Merdeka underlying concept. This study aims to provide an overview of the on-ground conditions, encompassing best practices linked to the Kurikulum Merdeka implementation since its initiation in driving schools in 2021. The focal points of this curriculum implementation study are lesson planning, learning execution, and learning assessment. The anticipated outcome of this research is to furnish a comprehensive depiction of the school environment during Kurikulum Merdeka implementation,

subsequently offering valuable insights for policy makers evaluating the curriculum's application.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning as Curriculum Implementation

All subjects encompassed within each educational unit's curriculum are collectively referred to as the macro curriculum. This aligns with the viewpoint of [Yanti & Syahrani \(2021\)](#), asserting that the macro curriculum's scope comprises all subjects within a given educational unit. The teacher's role in executing the macro curriculum involves formulating or enhancing a teaching plan within a specified timeframe. This concept was elucidated by Rossi, as cited in [Ariandy \(2019\)](#), whereby the school curriculum is constructed based on nationally established guidelines and regulations (termed as the national curriculum), collaboratively designed by teachers and colleagues within the same grade to generate preliminary curriculum documents. Consequently, the task of crafting curriculum within individual subjects lies with each teacher, assuming the responsibility of designing the micro curriculum.

Within the context of curriculum implementation, particularly concerning the micro curriculum, learning is considered an integral aspect. In this context, the macro curriculum functions as a blueprint to establish an enduring educational process aimed at nurturing and empowering students throughout their lives ([Puspitasari, 2017](#); [Salabi, 2020](#)). The micro curriculum, as a subset of the macro curriculum, manifests itself through the learning process within each subject or field of study. The attainment of targeted objectives and competencies is accomplished by engaging with the curriculum's content, facilitated by the teacher. The curriculum also regards teachers as bearing the responsibility of developing the micro curriculum, manifested through the creation of lesson plans aligned with provisions outlined in the macro curriculum ([Purwadhi, 2019](#)). This underscores how the micro curriculum's development should be guided by the macro curriculum to create an optimal curriculum conforming to curriculum guidelines.

Learning constitutes the cognitive development process within students facilitated by educators. This assertion aligns with [Yestiani's statement \(2020\)](#), defining learning as the guidance offered by educators to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, skill mastery, character development, as well as the formation of attitudes and beliefs within students. Throughout the learning process within an educational setting, several interactions occur, including the interplay between students, educators, and learning resources ([Pane & Dasopang, 2017](#)). Moreover, the learning process necessitates the involvement of the social environment. This is imperative since each learning episode aims to equip students with the competencies essential for effectively navigating the dynamic challenges and obstacles presented by life, encompassing academic, vocational, cultural, and temporal proficiencies ([Wibowo, 2021](#)). Consequently, the learning process induces transformative changes within students by imparting knowledge, preparing them for societal engagement.

[Elihami & Syahid \(2018\)](#) delineate several core characteristics of the learning process, namely: (a) learning as the conveyance of instruction to students, (b) learning transpires ubiquitously, and (c) learning is goal-oriented. Grounded in these characteristics, it's evident

that the learning process should be a dynamic endeavor aiming to cultivate character, promote civilization, and elevate students' quality of life, facilitated by the teacher's guidance. Weil, as cited in [Kurniawan et al. \(2021\)](#), elucidates three fundamental principles underpinning the learning process: (a) the creation of an environment conducive to reshaping or altering students' cognitive structures, demanding active student participation in seeking and discovering knowledge, (b) the inclusion of various types of knowledge encompassing the physical, social, and logical domains, and (c) the integration of the social environment's role within the learning process. These principles collectively outline an effective and beneficial learning process that equips students to confront the dynamic challenges, changes, and adaptations of social life, armed with their acquired competencies. [Septikasari & Frasandy \(2018\)](#) further elaborate that the characteristics of learning encompass: (a) learning as a cognitive process, (b) the utilization of brain potential within the learning process, and (c) learning as an ongoing, lifelong pursuit.

Kurikulum Merdeka

The fundamental foundation for crafting the Merdeka Curriculum stems from the philosophy of Freedom to Learn, a principle that also serves as the bedrock for other educational policies, as outlined in the Ministry of Education and Culture's Strategic Plan for 2020-2024. The curriculum within the context of the Free Learning Policy is characterized by its flexibility, competency-based approach, emphasis on fostering character and soft skills, and responsiveness to global demands. While the Independent Curriculum indeed affords educational institutions, educators, and students greater flexibility, the central government still establishes certain components that must serve as reference points in the implementation of this Independent Curriculum. These components encompass the Pancasila Student Profile, Learning Outcomes, Curriculum Structure, and Learning Principles and Assessment. They collectively form the curriculum to be executed across educational units and within classrooms. This perspective was conveyed by the Kemendikbudristek in a presentation on its YouTube channel, shedding light on the Kurikulum Merdeka and the Merdeka Belajar Platform (see <https://youtu.be/T2-s6yY9yoI>, accessed on 2022).

Profil Pelajar Pancasila represents a fusion of the national education objectives, the vision of education and the development of Indonesian human resources, all enshrined in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution, Pancasila, and the ideals of the nation's forefathers. The other trio of constituents stem from this overarching policy, specifically the National Education Goals delineated in Law Number 20 of 2003, and also draw from the National Education Standards, notably encompassing Graduate Competency Standards, Content Standards, Process Standards, and Assessment Standards. This framework serves as a guiding reference in shaping the Kurikulum Merdeka, thereby reinforcing harmonization between the foundational curriculum framework and the operational curriculum tailored within educational institutions.

Within the Kurikulum Merdeka, the term learning achievement takes center stage. (*Capaian Pembelajaran*) CP embodies the essential competencies students are required to attain for each subject. The formulation of CP is grounded in the Graduate Competency Standards and Content Standards, including Core Competencies and Basic Competencies as established in the Kurikulum 2013 (Buwono & Dewantara, 2020). CP introduces an evolution of KI

(Kompetensi Inti) and KD (Kompetensi Dasar), intended to further amplify the learning trajectory focused on competency development, a pursuit embarked upon since the Kurikulum 2013 and even its predecessor national curriculum. Thus, CP represents a continuation of these endeavors, strategically encompassing a narrower scope of content and a revised approach in crafting learning outcomes, with an emphasis on fostering flexibility within the learning process.

Peraturan Pemerintah Republik Indonesia Nomor 57 Tahun 2021 Tentang Standar Nasional Pendidikan (accessible at <https://jdih.kemdikbud.go.id/sjdih/siperpu/dokumen/salinan/Salinan%20PP%20Nomor%2057%20Tahun%202021.pdf>, retrieved on 2022) stipulates that the curriculum's structure encompasses the organization of competencies, learning content, and learning load. The principal features accentuated in the configuration of this curriculum structure encompass the following: changes in subject categorization, the delegation of authority to educational units for the formulation of operational curricula, a division of learning into two realms - intra-curricular and co-curricular via the Profil Pelajar Pancasila Strengthening Project, and the incorporation of student-determined choices.

Moreover, as delineated in the presentation by the Kemendikbud Ristek (2021) (accessible at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJ5oW44Dtzg>, retrieved on 2022), seven novel elements emerge in the Kurikulum Merdeka, correlating with: (1) curriculum structure, which involves the development of content standards, process standards, and assessment standards or CP, with learning principles and assessments referencing the Profil Pelajar Pancasila (PPP). Subsequently, (2) assessments must align with CP. Additionally, (3) the thematic approach in the learning process, previously utilized in elementary schools, can be extended to other education levels. Elementary schools' grades IV, V, and VI can opt for subject-based learning. Furthermore, concerning (4) the determination of yearly study hours. Followed by (5) collaborative learning models across subjects, presented through projects fostering soft skills and character development, thus enabling cross-subject assessments (summative) to flourish. Then, (6) the enhancement of digital technology competencies, encompassing the ability to think systematically and computationally, highlighted through the obligatory Informatics subjects. Lastly, (7) Science and Social Studies subjects are concurrently taught under the appellation "Science" at the elementary school level, grades IV, V, and VI. The selection of student specialization majors at the high school level is once again carried out in classes XI and XII.

Sekolah Penggerak

Sekolah Penggerak serves as a catalyst for realizing Indonesia's vision of educational reform, with a focal point on the comprehensive development of student learning outcomes (Nur'Inayah, 2021). Launched on February 1, 2021, this program is conceived as an endeavor to manifest an advanced Indonesia characterized by sovereignty, independence, and distinctive personality. Its core objective lies in fostering Pelajar Pancasila who possess belief, reverence for the Almighty, noble character, independence, critical thinking, creativity, collaborative aptitude, and a global perspective. Sekolah Penggerak program strategically prioritizes the holistic advancement of student learning outcomes, encompassing not only cognitive competencies such as literacy and numeracy but also

character development. This initiative commences with the elevation of school human resources, from students and teachers to school principals (Satriawan et al., 2021). The program's impact, spearheaded by school principals and teachers, reverberates throughout the education domain, transcending public and private institutions, and spanning beyond elite schools. The yardstick of student quality entails achieving learning outcomes surpassing the expected benchmarks, within a safe, inclusive, comfortable, and enjoyable learning environment (Aditya, 2018). Through a student-centered learning approach, coupled with self-reflective program planning and budgeting informed by teacher reflections, enhancements in learning quality are expected. Subsequently, schools that have successfully implemented improvements undertake a role of emulation, disseminating best practices to other educational establishments.

Sekolah Penggerak Program represents a comprehensive initiative to enhance student learning quality, encompassing five distinct interventions aimed at propelling schools from one developmental stage to two advanced stages over a span of three academic years (Dermawan, 2021). Sekolah Penggerak program emerges as a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Education and Culture and Regional Government, wherein the unwavering commitment of local administrations takes the center stage. These interventions encompass various facets holistically, ranging from school human resources and pedagogy to planning, digital integration, and local government support. Sekolah Penggerak Program endeavors to expedite the progression of both public and private schools across diverse conditions, elevating them by a single or dual stage. Following a three-year mentoring phase, schools continue their transformative journey independently. The overarching ambition of this program is to cultivate a sense of educational integration across the nation, aiming for the status of Mobilizing School for all educational institutions in Indonesia. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture's presentation (2021), Sekolah Penggerak Program includes five interventions: collaborative efforts between the Ministry of Education and Culture and Regional Governments to provide support for Sekolah Penggerak; fortifying school human resources through comprehensive training and mentorship facilitated by the Ministry of Education and Culture; embracing a new paradigm in learning that adapts to the evolving needs and developments of students; formulating plans based on the outcomes of self-reflection by educational units; and the incorporation of digital platforms to simplify processes, boost efficiency, ignite inspiration, and facilitate a customized approach.

In 2021, the Ministry of Education and Culture successfully established 2,500 Mobilization Schools across 34 provinces and 250 districts/cities. Institutions aspiring to be Sekolah Penggerak could partake in the registration process initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Principals who register undergo a selection process led by an expert panel. The benefits offered to participating schools encompass the improvement of learning outcomes within a three-year span, augmented competence of school principals and educators, expedited digital integration, the potential to serve as catalysts for change in other educational establishments, swifter realization of Pelajar Pancasila profiles, access to intensive support, and the allocation of additional budgets for acquiring books to align with the new learning paradigm.

METHODS

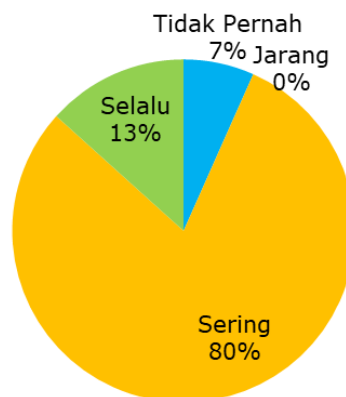
This research adopts a qualitative approach coupled with descriptive methods. As elucidated by Fadli (2021), a qualitative approach stems from the assumption that it employs an interpretive framework to expound upon individual or group issues within a broader societal context. Complementing this approach, the descriptive method aids researchers in elucidating the issues under investigation by offering a clear depiction of field findings throughout the research.

Building upon the elucidation of the research focus and objectives, which aim to scrutinize the execution of the Kurikulum Merdeka in Sekolah Penggerak and explore diverse best practices, the authors have chosen to undertake a qualitative descriptive study. The research was conducted at SMPIT Granada and Dhuhaa Islamic School, with a sample comprising 12 subject teachers and 2 school principals. Data collection was facilitated through the administration of questionnaires and in-depth interviews.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

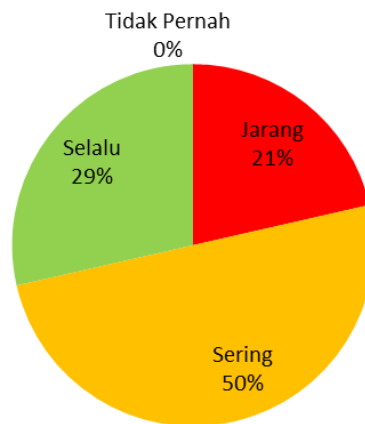
Independent Curriculum Implementation Process Questionnaire

This study centers on examining the implementation process of the Kurikulum Merdeka as executed by teachers in two middle schools located in Tangerang City: SMPIT Dhuhaa and SMP Granada. Data concerning the curriculum curriculum across three aspects: lesson planning, learning implementation process were acquired through questionnaire completion, interviews, and documentation studies. The distribution of questionnaires was employed to assess the implementation of the independent execution, and learning evaluation conducted by teachers. The ensuing data from the results of the Kurikulum Merdeka implementation questionnaire at SMPIT and SMP Granada pertaining to planning, execution, and learning assessment aspects are depicted in the following graph.



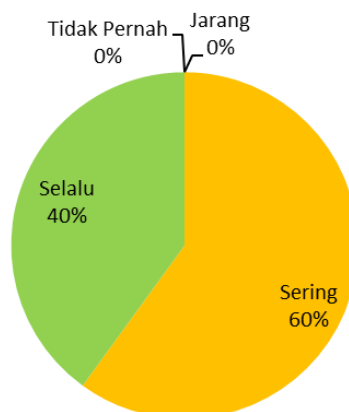
Picture 1. Percentage of Kurikulum Merdeka Learning Planning Questionnaire Results
Source: Author data processing, 2022

Picture 1 The graph displays the count of respondents who participated in completing the distributed questionnaire. Based on the above questionnaire outcomes, an overview is gleaned indicating that 80% of the respondents have executed learning plans for the Independent Curriculum, taking into consideration the constituents of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila and the Learning Outcomes that students must attain and possess.



Picture 2. Percentage of Questionnaire Results of Implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka Learning
Source: Author data processing, 2022

Picture 2 The graph presents the count of respondents who took part in completing the distributed questionnaire. In the learning implementation phase, 50% of the respondents were classified as frequently engaging in learning activities using a deductive and scientific approach, encompassing techniques like questioning, observing, project work, experiments, and assignments. Learning outcomes are then achieved in the form of integrated knowledge, attitudes, and skills in each learning activity.



Picture 3. Percentage of Kurikulum Merdeka Learning Assessment Questionnaire Results
Source: Author data processing, 2022

Picture 3 The graph displays the count of respondents who took part in completing the distributed questionnaire. Lastly, approximately 60% of the respondents have performed learning assessments while considering factors such as learning aspects, learning outcomes, Pancasila Student Profiles, the role of diagnosing learning needs, measurability of goal achievement, as well as the alignment of concepts and planning with implementation, utilizing various instruments and learning evaluation techniques.

Good practice interviews in the implementation of the independent curriculum wawancara praktik baik dalam implementasi kurikulum merdeka

Teachers play a significant role in the successful implementation of the curriculum. The interviews conducted for this study were centered on identifying effective practices employed by teachers during the implementation of the independent curriculum, as well as understanding the challenges they encounter and how they address these challenges. The subsequent section presents the outcomes of the interviews conducted by the author at SMPIT Dhuhaa and SMP Granada.

1. Best Practices at SMP Dhuhaa Islamic School

Based on the interview findings, it is evident that there are notable differences between the application or execution of the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum. When implementing the Independent Curriculum, teachers feel a greater need for heightened creativity, spanning from planning to assessment, tailored to the students' comprehension levels. During meetings, teachers are required to conduct assessments both at the outset and at the conclusion of a topic to gauge students' psychological states and their attained comprehension. These outcomes serve as valuable data for teachers, enabling them to fine-tune their teaching strategies based on students' conditions and learning requirements. This diverse spectrum of learning needs subsequently leads to the categorization of students into distinct study groups, including proficient, developing, and initial stages of development. This categorization is carried out without students' awareness and without explicitly informing them.

Teacher planning for the Kurikulum Merdeka is outlined in the Teaching Modules and Learning Objectives Flow document. According to insights gleaned from the interviews, teachers elaborated on the heightened effort required for conducting learning sessions under the Kurikulum Merdeka. The learning time duration has been condensed to approximately 90 minutes, prompting teachers to focus on preserving the concepts and understanding while structuring the learning process. This involves steps such as opening the learning session, conducting apperception, non-cognitive diagnostics, delivering material, assessing cognitive understanding, forming groups for material reinforcement, and culminating in an evaluation meeting. Addressing the categorization of student competencies, teachers noted that this practice existed in the Kurikulum 2013, serving as guiding data for assessments and learning outcome reports, as well as accompanying student learning. However, in the context of the Kurikulum Merdeka, this data must be translated into tangible documents and actively applied in the learning process.

Regarding digitization efforts, teachers at SMPIT Granada have received government-provided resources in the form of laptops with modest specifications, specifically tailored as learning tools at school, referred to as Chromebooks (CB). These laptops are programmed for educational purposes and necessitate the activation of a learning.id account to access learning programs. The CB integrates various Google for Education applications, stemming from the continuity of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, which relied on platforms such as Google Classroom, Google Meet, and Google Mail. Consequently, CB's content is comprehensive and interconnected. This integration poses a challenge for teachers who must master technology utilization. To meet these competency demands, teachers have various pathways, including independent exploration and workshop attendance to enhance digital application proficiency. Additionally, the Ministry provides specialized training sessions on the utilization of the independent teaching application, intertwined with accountbelajar.id and CB. As for lesson planning, teachers initially faced confusion due to the limited availability of general objectives and simplistic sentences. However, as they participated in training sessions, they were provided with examples and instructed on the CP – TP – ATP – Teaching Module procedure. Gradually, teachers adapted to this methodology, supported by the provision of textbooks tailored for driving schools, leading to a clearer understanding of the process.

Furthermore, based on insights from teacher interviews, the learning process is characterized by high dynamism and flexibility, deeply considering the students' conditions. Thus, the initiation of the learning process invariably involves non-cognitive diagnostic assessments, aimed at better aligning the learning environment with students' psychological states to foster a more conducive atmosphere for learning. This includes the adaptation of strategies, such as incorporating games or captivating media that remain relevant to achieving learning objectives. The non-cognitive assessment not only aids in comprehending the factors influencing psychological conditions but also validates students' interests and potential. To enhance understanding in this aspect, a training session on student psychology is provided. For end-of-semester or year-end assessments, the predominant format remains written and primarily multiple-choice. Additionally, a standardized reporting format must be adhered to for student reporting.

Turning to the reinforcement of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila, teachers emphasized its integration not only within Project-based Learning (PjBL) but also its infusion into daily teaching modules. In the context of PjBL, it materializes as a collaborative endeavor encompassing various subjects that converge around a specific theme or topic. Within this framework, the teacher assumes a guiding role while students spearhead the planning and implementation. PjBL is also characterized by continuity across academic years, targeting a minimum of 3 project themes annually. This continuity extends to the application of the Pancasila student profile within the student body, further embedding its essence within the school's ecosystem.

It's notable that the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka was initially introduced in grade 7, indicating a gradual deployment approach. Consequently, grades 8 and 9 continued to operate under the 2013 curriculum.

2. Best Practices at SMPIT Granada School

Based on the insights garnered from the interviews, teachers unveiled that planning and preparing lessons under the Merdeka curriculum was more intricate compared to the Kurikulum 2013. The intricacy stems from the comprehensive coverage in the Teaching Module. In line with the students' mastery levels, the pace of learning could vary across classes based on the outcomes of diagnostic assessments conducted during lessons. Consequently, the teaching module, termed the "lesson plan plus," departs from the conventional meeting-based lesson planning approach. Instead, it aligns with the material chapters to be taught, comprising numerous components such as learning objectives, worksheets, and instructional materials. The preparation process follows a sequential pattern, commencing from CP and descending to TP. Pertaining to the adjustment or formulation of CP, it is tailored to the diagnostic assessment results from the onset of the semester. While the Kurikulum Merdeka affords teachers the prerogative to diversify learning within the classroom, this differentiation must continue to align with CP's scope, ensuring content and capabilities fall within its prescribed parameters.

This differentiation-driven process is reflective of the complexity in preparation. As indicated by the diagnostic assessment results, material preparation is guided by the categories within student groups. This approach fosters a plethora of techniques in the instructional delivery process, offering multiple teaching resources all designed based on students' learning needs. While accommodating different learning conditions is achievable, this approach does pose challenges in terms of preparation density.

Regarding the integration of Project-based Learning (PjBL) in schools, teachers expounded on two distinct types: subject-based PjBL and comprehensive PjBL encompassing all subjects, intended to bolster the Pancasila student profile. In subject-based PjBL, only appropriate material is integrated, whereas comprehensive PjBL weaves in all subjects. Schools designate three themes for the Profil Pelajar Pancasila project within a year. These themes dictate activities related to the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project conducted during a week. For instance, SMPIT Granada selected themes concerning the environment, democracy, and entrepreneurship this year. A team of teachers spearheads the project, delivering materials followed by practical implementation by students, such as crafting posters, conducting interviews, gathering field data, and presenting within the school environment.

During the initial year of Sekolah Penggerak, the teacher-to-student involvement balance tends to favor teachers, considering the dynamics and capabilities of students. However, this proportion gradually shifts towards less teacher involvement as the project progresses. While topics/themes within the project are independent, there's no prerequisite for them to be interrelated. Not all subjects need to participate; the focus is on subjects with significant correlation to the chosen topic. The implementation of PjBL affects a portion of learning hours, yet maintains flexibility while adhering to the established percentage.

Discussion

The curriculum is designed to yield outcomes that reflect changes in the quality of student education, thereby achieving educational objectives. Curriculum implementation can be defined as a change process undertaken to attain results aligned with educational objectives. Correspondingly, as elucidated by [Suryana & Pratama \(2018\)](#), curriculum implementation stands as a crucial facet of curriculum development, driving the realization of intended changes. Within the Indonesian educational context, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbudristekdikti) has introduced the independent learning program through curriculum reform known as the Kurikulum Merdeka. This move is a response to the declining quality of education in Indonesia, as evidenced by the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, positioning Indonesia 74th out of 79 countries ([Hewi & Shaleh, 2020](#)). These statistics underscore the relatively low levels of numeracy, scientific literacy, and general literacy skills in Indonesia.

Furthermore, as highlighted by [Nofia \(2020\)](#), the implementation of the independent curriculum was instigated by the diminishing competitiveness of education graduates in Indonesia. To enhance educational quality, the Ministry of Education and Culture has introduced the Merdeka Learning program, empowering teachers to tailor their teaching to students' aptitudes. In this pursuit of Independent Learning, teachers assume the role of facilitators, entrusted with the task of rendering learning engaging for students. This perspective resonates with [Krissandi's assertion \(2015\)](#) that the teacher plays a pivotal role in curriculum implementation. Hence, the successful execution of the curriculum hinges on a teacher's capacity to strategize, execute, and advance the curriculum.

In this study, the authors focused on examining the implementation of the independent curriculum across three key aspects: lesson planning, learning implementation, and learning assessment. Based on the results derived from the lesson planning questionnaire completed by the teachers from SMP Duhuaa Islamic School and SMPIT Granada, it becomes evident that these institutions have embraced and integrated the Kurikulum Merdeka into their educational planning. The formulated learning objectives outline a coherent sequence of educational milestones, encompassing material, skills, and core concepts essential for attaining CP at each stage. These outcomes are further supported by insights gleaned from interviews with teachers, who affirmed that the developed learning objective flow assists students in progressively achieving CP. [Rahimah \(2022\)](#) emphasizes the significance of lesson planning, asserting that effective planning enhances the efficacy of the learning process. Within the framework of the Kurikulum Merdeka, lesson plans are documented in teaching modules, requiring teachers to adeptly craft and organize lessons to ensure successful classroom implementation.

Drawing from the outcomes of the questionnaire administered to teachers at SMP Duhuaa Islamic School and SMPIT Granada, it becomes apparent that they have adeptly formulated lesson plans consistent with the criteria stipulated by the Kurikulum Merdeka. Correspondingly, [Herayanti et al. \(2017\)](#) expound on learning planning within the Independent Curriculum, detailing the structure of learning tools and their alignment with preparatory guidelines. These guidelines encompass CP analysis for cultivating learning

objectives and their sequential arrangement, devising diagnostic assessments, constructing adaptable teaching modules aligned with achievement stages and student profiles, and devising both formative and summative assessments. In alignment with this perspective, [Zahir et al. \(2022\)](#) emphasize the need for teachers to competently decipher and internalize the significance of CP, translating it into detailed *Tujuan Pembelajaran* (TP) and subsequently crafting a coherent *Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran* (ATP). Additionally, teachers should possess the proficiency to perform data-driven planning, generate *Kurikulum Operasional Satuan Pendidikan* (KOSP) tailored to school characteristics, design learning programs, create teaching modules, and establish assessment mechanisms.

Moreover, in the context of learning implementation, the outcomes of the learning implementation questionnaires completed by teachers at SMP Duhuaa Islamic School and SMPIT Granada unveil that a deductive and scientific approach is embraced. This approach encompasses techniques like questioning, observing, projects, experiments, and assignments. Subsequently, the synthesis of learning outcomes encompasses knowledge, attitudes, and skills holistically within each learning activity. Notably, the learning process is enriched by a focus on fostering reasoning and creative thinking, with active engagement of learning resources and media. The questionnaires also spotlight the development of projects aimed at reinforcing the Profil Pelajar Pancasila, tailored to school requirements and intertwined within integrated learning activities. Although subjects are separately taught, the execution of the Pancasila Strengthening Profile Project spans intra-curricular, cross-subject, and extra-curricular domains. This corroborates interview findings wherein teachers emphasize the necessity to incorporate Profil Pelajar Pancasila reinforcement within teaching modules, advocating for an integrated approach. The Project-based Learning (PjBL) method additionally fosters cross-subject collaboration to address specific themes or topics ([Zhao & Zheng, 2014](#)). However, teacher books and student books, being primary learning sources, are scarcely employed due to limited availability.

Overall, the results obtained depict a comprehensive implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka within the learning process. In alignment with [Rachmawati et al. \(2022\)](#), the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka encompasses intracurricular activities, the Profil Pelajar Pancasila Strengthening Project, and extracurricular endeavors. Notably, a central tenet of the Kurikulum Merdeka is the Profil Pelajar Pancasila, guiding the learning process towards cultivating competent student character and instilling Pancasila values in daily life. As elucidated by [Rosida et al. \(2021\)](#), executing the Kurikulum Merdeka demands the development of comprehensive lesson plans, adhering to a student-centric learning paradigm. This entails analyzing learning achievements for formulating specific learning targets and subsequently structuring the flow of learning objectives. Furthermore, teachers undertake differentiated teaching approaches to accommodate diverse stages of student attainment.

In the realm of learning assessment, the analysis of the learning assessment questionnaires completed by teachers at SMP Duhuaa Islamic School and SMPIT Granada reveals the adoption of diverse assessment tools by teachers in evaluating learning outcomes. These assessment tools encompass tests and descriptive notes, specifically for appraising the Profil Pelajar Pancasila Project. This assessment occurs daily, focusing on one or multiple dimensions of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila Project. Furthermore, within the context of the Kurikulum Merdeka, the utilization of *Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimum* (KKM) for assessment

has been abandoned. Nonetheless, assessment practices continue to span the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Evaluating psychomotor learning accomplishments is conducted through project assessments and performance evaluations. Another noteworthy facet of the independent curriculum assessment entails pre-learning diagnostic assessments aimed at gauging student readiness levels.

From this perspective, it is evident that the learning assessment is aligned with the principles of comprehensive learning evaluation. This resonance echoes the insights outlined by Umami (2018), emphasizing the importance of encompassing all learning domains—cognitive, affective, and psychomotor—in the assessment of learning outcomes. Concurrently, the Kurikulum Merdeka assessment methodology mirrors the guidance presented by Anam (2017). This entails a structured process involving diagnostic assessments, formulation and management of summative and formative assessments, and the compilation of learning outcome reports. This comprehensive approach to assessment encompasses the evaluation of learning implementation within the independent curriculum, spanning diagnostic assessments, formative and summative assessments administration and analysis, as well as the generation of comprehensive academic and project assessment reports.

CONCLUSION

In the realm of learning assessment, the analysis of the learning assessment questionnaires completed by teachers at SMP Dhuhaa Islamic School and SMPIT Granada reveals the adoption of diverse assessment tools by teachers in evaluating learning outcomes. These assessment tools encompass tests and descriptive notes, specifically for appraising the Profil Pelajar Pancasila Project. This assessment occurs daily, focusing on one or multiple dimensions of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila. Furthermore, within the context of the Kurikulum Merdeka, the utilization of *Kriteria Kelulusan Minimum* (KKM) for assessment has been abandoned. Nonetheless, assessment practices continue to span the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Evaluating psychomotor learning accomplishments is conducted through project assessments and performance evaluations. Another noteworthy facet of the Kurikulum Merdeka assessment entails pre-learning diagnostic assessments aimed at gauging student readiness levels.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The author confirms that the data and content of the article are free from plagiarism.

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