



Evidence Review

Merdeka Curriculum Implementation

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PSKP
Pusat Standar dan Kebijakan Pendidikan

IDinsight



Executive Summary

MERDEKA CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION: EVIDENCE REVIEW

Introduction

This evidence review report, a collaboration between IDinsight and PSKP (Center for Education Standards and Policies), aims to identify indications of positive results and areas for improvement for the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The Merdeka Curriculum was launched in 2022 and was approved as the National Curriculum through the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MoECRT) Regulation No. 12 of 2024. The Merdeka Curriculum aims to improve the quality of learning through improving student competence and character. This goal is operationalized through various components, such as baseline assessment to measure student competencies, differentiated learning approaches, and applied and collaborative learning through the Pancasila Learner Profile Strengthening Project (P5).

We reviewed global best practices in curriculum implementation and PSKP's studies of Merdeka Curriculum implementation to compare the curriculum's current state with global evidence on similar components. The report is intended to serve as a resource for facilitating and improving ongoing curriculum implementation in Indonesia.

Summary of findings

Highlights of Global Evidence

Global evidence shows that curriculum reform requires a **comprehensive approach that addresses potential barriers to implementation**, such as disparity in teacher proficiency. To ensure successful curriculum reform, **efforts must focus on systemic changes**, such as redesigning the teacher selection and professional development.

Alignment with Global Evidence

We found that some components of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation are aligned with the global best practices, particularly its push for:

- **continuous professional development** through the Merdeka Mengajar Platform and learning communities (see [Finding #2](#))
- **collaborative processes in curriculum design** (see [Finding #3](#)), and
- **differentiated learning/Teaching at The Right Level (TaRL)** approach (see [Finding #4](#)).

At the same time, Merdeka Curriculum implementation can be improved by:

- **reducing autonomy** in areas that benefit more from rigorous, centralized intervention (see [Finding #1](#))
- providing **structured training programs** to schools with lower levels of readiness (see [Finding #2](#))
- improving **implementation fidelity of the TaRL/differentiated learning approach** (see [Finding #4](#)), and
- strengthening **understanding and implementation of P5** as a project-based learning component (see [Finding #5](#)).

Indications of Positive Progress

PSKP studies also identify **positive shifts in schools' and teachers' behaviors**, such as:

- increased familiarity with **online and hybrid capacity-building programs** (see [Finding #2](#))
- positive efforts by schools to develop **contextual P5 modules** (see [Finding #5](#)), and
- teachers' developed habits in conducting **assessments** and **reflection** (see [Finding #3](#)).

Recommendations for Ongoing Curriculum Reform

- Prioritize **fostering learning communities** and **sharing best practices** to promote sustainable change.
- Future studies should map teachers' capacities and schools' readiness to **strategically focus on improving teacher capacity**.

Findings and recommendations

#1 The Curriculum's Autonomy Might Work for Teachers with High Motivation and Knowledge, but Could Disadvantage Less Capable Teachers

The Merdeka Curriculum provides autonomy to schools by giving them authority to develop their own school-level operational curriculum based on the school's unique context, resources, capacity, and students' level of learning. The curriculum also provides teachers autonomy to determine learning outcomes, develop lesson plans, and tailor instruction based on students' levels of learning and interest.

However, there is little global evidence to suggest that more flexibility or autonomy will lead to better learning outcomes unless certain conditions have been met. Evidence shows that **achieving ownership from teachers is challenging if they have limited capacity.**

PSKP studies also identified challenges in enhancing teacher autonomy and agency in curriculum implementation among teachers characterized by low levels of motivation and knowledge. Teachers with relatively low competence may find it challenging to translate the general curriculum into concrete and tailored curriculum plans.

Recommendation:

- **Differentiate between aspects that benefit from autonomy** (e.g. operational curriculum development, distribution of learning hours) **and those that actually benefit more from rigor and/or centralized policies** (e.g. lesson plan design for literacy and numeracy).
- Provide **tailored and structured support** to schools or teachers with lower levels of readiness.
- Provide more **quality and structured lesson plans** in the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) to help teachers who have less capacity to develop quality lesson plans.

#2 Activation of Learning Communities and Use of Merdeka Mengajar Platform Enable Continuous Professional Development, but Structured Training Programs Are Still Needed

To implement the Merdeka Curriculum, schools access various forms of support from the Ministry, local governments, or support that is initiated by the schools themselves. Examples of support from the Ministry are the online webinar series, independent training content on the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM), and the push to activate learning communities. Beyond support from the central government, some teachers also have access to in-house training or training at the regional level which is an initiative of the local education office or school principal.

Global evidence shows that **continuous professional development in place of one-time training**, such as one provided through the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) and learning communities, is an appropriate approach for curriculum implementation. PSKP also found that the learning communities have a significant role in disseminating a conceptual and practical understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum.

However, **not all teachers are ready for changes in training patterns** from a tiered, face-to-face training approach to independent training in online/hybrid modes. There is also an issue of **unequal access to local or in-house training activities** to help teachers and principals understand the curriculum. Additionally, not all schools have a **qualified and motivated community facilitator** who can help warrant consistent activities of the learning communities.

Recommendation:

- Encourage principals to support teachers' professional development by **securing a learning community facilitator** and facilitating more in-house training activities.
- Strengthen commitment and support from local government to **facilitate local capacity-building initiatives**.

#3 Merdeka Curriculum Implementation Promotes Collaborative Processes in Curriculum Design

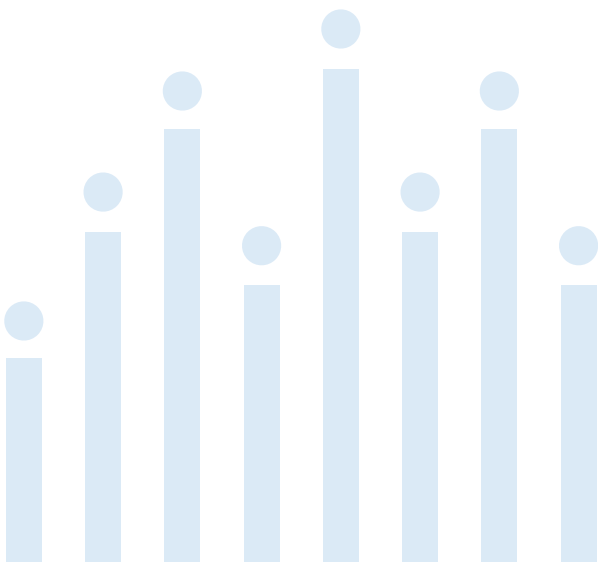
The curriculum planning aspect of the Merdeka Curriculum includes the preparation of the Education Unit Operational Curriculum (KOSP), the sequence of learning objectives (ATP), and lesson plans/teaching modules (*Modul Ajar*). The Ministry also encourages collaboration between principals and teachers and between teachers to develop these plans.

PSKP studies found that schools and teachers have implemented curriculum planning following the Merdeka Curriculum guidelines to a certain extent. Generally, teachers have used examples of Lesson Plans provided in the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) as references and collaborated to develop the Sequence of Lesson Plans (*Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran*).

Global evidence shows that **promoting collaborative processes in curriculum design helps to improve teacher ownership** of the curriculum, which is important for successful curriculum implementation. Additionally, collaboration between teachers helps to **reduce the administrative burden** in curriculum planning.

Recommendation:

Continue to encourage **collaboration between teachers in curriculum planning**. This is especially important when teachers develop the Sequence of Lesson Plans (*Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran*) to ensure continuity within the same learning phase.



#4 Implementation of Student-centered Learning Promotes Positive Teacher Behavior but Requires Higher Implementation Fidelity

The Merdeka Curriculum advocates tailoring instruction based on students' varying levels of understanding and interest but does not prescribe a certain delivery model for teachers. The curriculum gives teachers the freedom to pick a type of differentiation model and delivery type that works best in their contexts. With this push, teachers have developed positive habits of **conducting baseline assessments** before starting a lesson and **requesting feedback** from students on their teaching.

Global evidence itself supports the effectiveness of tailoring instruction in improving student outcomes, with **Teaching at The Right Level (TaRL) being the most studied approach** that shows success in primary school students' literacy and numeracy across different countries. TaRL's core principles include assessing students' ability levels, grouping them, and tailoring instruction by those levels.

In Merdeka Curriculum implementation, efforts for differentiating learning have happened to a certain extent and might have had a positive influence on student engagement. However, the current implementation is **not yet aligned with the core principles** that make TaRL effective in improving learning outcomes. Teachers are conducting baseline assessments in various ways (e.g. asking questions, observing students, giving diagnostic assessments) that **do not always lead to differentiation of instruction based on the students' ability level**.

Ensuring adherence to core principles is essential to improve learning outcomes, especially for **students who fall behind in foundational competencies**. Several **low-cost TaRL delivery models**, such as pulling out struggling students for remedial practices or dedicating extra hours during the school day to catch up with foundational competencies, can be piloted and/or recommended as ways for teachers to improve learning outcomes.

Recommendation:

- **Promote the use of readily available, standardized baseline assessments** for literacy and numeracy to help teachers group learners according to their ability level.
- **Provide teaching modules** of literacy and numeracy for various ability levels to reduce teachers' burden in designing quality teaching modules and help teachers focus on execution.
- **Pilot several models of remedial practices** to learn how to best enable adherence to TaRL's core principles and improve foundational competencies.

#5 P5 as a Project-based Learning Component has Enormous Potential, but the Schools Need Substantial Training and Support for Implementation

Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) is a project-based co-curricular activity designed to strengthen efforts to achieve student's character and competence according to the Pancasila student profile framework. In its design, a school's P5 should be multidisciplinary, based on a problem in the community, and separate from intra-curricular activities. The Merdeka Curriculum guideline also made the distinction between intra-curricular project-based learning which maps to learning outcomes and P5 as a co-curricular project-based learning which maps to Pancasila student profile competencies.

Initial evaluations suggest positive efforts in developing P5 modules, with many schools adapting the projects to their specific contexts and needs. However, teachers are more used to implementing project-based learning as intra-curricular activities and are **not yet familiar with its application in co-curricular format**. This results in some P5 implementations being designed without focusing on the goal of improving student character.

Global evidence indeed shows that project-based learning programs are challenging to design and implement and require **substantial training and support** to achieve implementation fidelity. Additionally, evidence shows that project-based learning, while promising, does not always yield consistent results in learning outcomes. Evidence regarding its impact on character development is still limited.

Recommendation:

- **Define specific impact indicators for P5** to allow for a more intentional program design and appropriate impact evaluation.
- **Provide substantial training and support on P5** to schools/teachers to strengthen understanding and implementation.

